



EIGHTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY

DEBATES

(HANSARD)

(UNREVISED)

FIRST SESSION

THURSDAY 25 JUNE 2026

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MAURITIUS

Eighth National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 18 of 2026

Sitting of Thursday 25 June 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)

PAPERS LAID

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

A. Ministry of Health and Wellness

The Annual Report and Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Mauritius Food Standards Agency for the year ended 30 June 2024.

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

The Financial Statements and Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the National Pensions Fund for the year ended 30 June 2021.

ORAL ANSWER TO QUESTION

**BUDGET SPEECH 2026-2027 – PENSION REFORM – COMMISSION OF EXPERTS
& STEERING COMMITTEE COMPOSITION**

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 pension reform announced in the 2026-2027 Budget Speech bringing an end to the universal Basic Retirement Pension by the introduction of the State Age Pension, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the composition of the –

- (a) Commission of Experts set up to make recommendations to reform the various pillars of the pension system –
 - (i) indicating the allowances paid to the members thereof, and
 - (ii) table the Report thereof recommending the means test, and
- (b) Steering Committee on Pension Reform tasked to examine the Report of the Commission of Experts and table the recommendations and report(s) thereof.

Madam Speaker: Yes. Hon. Prime Minister!

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, as I stated in the Budget Speech, it is an undeniable fact, and I think everybody agrees with this, that the BRP system, in its current form, has many flaws – some of them fortuitous and others structural, but both severely undermine its sustainability.

First of all, being an unfunded – a pay-as-you-go system, it was totally financed by public funds.

Second, it had become an increasingly weighty component of Government budget, accounting for nearly 25 percent of expenditure in 2024/ 2025 fiscal year, more, in fact, and I said this before, more than the budgets for education, for health and also social housing put together. We are spending more on pension than health, education and social housing.

Now, BRP expenditure has risen from Rs5.97 billion in 2010 to Rs13.1 billion in 2015-2016, Rs27.9 billion in 2020-2021, and approximately, Rs55 billion in 2025-2026. In other words, it has almost doubled in four years. Without reform, it is estimated that it will reach Rs100 billion in 2035. Many people escape this. They are just looking in front of the tip of the nose, but not looking ahead. Rs100 billion in 2035, Madam Speaker!

As a percentage of GDP, BRP expenditure has increased from 1.9% in 2010 to 8.1% in 2025-2026.

Madam Speaker, in 2015, the IMF, in an expert report, projected that by 2050, expenditure on BRP, which is, I remind the House, a non-contributory pension, would be at an unsustainable level of over 8 percent of GDP. Because of the irresponsible decisions taken by the last Government, we have already crossed that level now. They said it would be by 2050. Already, Madam Speaker. That is 25 years ahead than projected by the IMF, we have reached that situation. Because of the irresponsibility of the previous Government. This is why we are in this mess. Everybody seems to forget this.

Now, the eligibility age was 60 years, that is, five full years below the statutory requirement age of 65. Perhaps, in Mauritius, people do not realize that this is unique in the world. It is anomalous. The retiring age is 65 years, but you get your pension at the age of 60 years. No country does this! No other country!

Now, fourth, the dependency ratio measured as the number of workers per pensioner, above the age of 65 years, was fast declining – from 16 in 1962 to 4.7 in 2025 and projected to decline to 3.0 in 2049 and 2.5 in 2064, because, as we know, of an ageing population. This means that fewer workers are supporting more and more retirees, which, therefore, places an impossible strain on the public finances.

Fifth, Madam Speaker, the structural flaws in the system have been aggravated by the introduction of CSG by the previous Government again in 2020. It has compounded the deficits and unsustainability. And it was a tax – not a pension; a tax!

Let me remind the House, Madam Speaker, that the concern about the sustainability of the Old Age Pension is not something new. We have not invented this; we have not created this. This has been talked about for more than two decades, but no one had the courage to bell the cat, as we say in English.

As far back as in the Budget Speech presented to the House in 2003 by the then Prime Minister, hon. Paul Bérenger, it was stated at paragraph 161, and I am quoting –

“An important component of our social welfare system is the Basic Retirement Pension (BRP) which is both non-contributory and universal. The BRP in its present form exerts severe pressure on the budget. The fast ageing of the population will render the BRP unsustainable in the longer term. According to projections, the proportion of those

over 60 will double in 20 years' time and triple in the next 50 years. Therefore, reform of the BRP has thus become urgent.”

That was in 2003.

I am still quoting –

“Equally urgent is the need to reform the other pillars of the Mauritian pension system, namely the national pension scheme, civil service pensions and private pensions.”

And he was right to have said what he said.

Now, Madam Speaker, it would also be relevant to quote what the then Minister of Finance, hon. Pravind Jugnauth, said in his Budget Speech of 2004- 2005. And I am quoting. He said –

“The BRP is one item of Government transfers that absorbs a lot of our resources. Presently, there are some 116,000 beneficiaries of Basic Retirement Pension. A 1% increase in BRP costs Government Rs 28 million.”

1% costs Rs 28 million.

I am still quoting –

“A number of reports has questioned the long-term sustainability of the Basic Retirement Pension, especially as our population is fast ageing and the BRP is fully funded out of Government revenues. As a responsible Government, we are studying the issue very carefully to map out our strategy on pension reforms.

We are making a very special effort to increase the BRP rates, in spite of the extremely difficult budgetary situation. [But] this will be accompanied by a major change in the structure of pension rates.

A second fundamental reform that this Budget introduces is the targeting of Government transfers.”

Everybody seems to have forgotten this from the other side.

Ms Anquetil: Yes, *mémoire courte*.

The Prime Minister: Government transfers are simply – listen well – not sustainable.

Mr Lesjongard: May I, Madam Speaker?

Madam Speaker: Yes!

Mr Lesjongard: Sorry to interrupt you.

Madam Speaker, my PNQ is very precise. I do not want to hear about what happened in the past.

(Interruptions)

Can I ask, because yesterday you ruled, Madam Speaker, that there are only 15 minutes allocated for a reply?

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: One moment. Can we, once more...

(Interruptions)

If the hon. Leader of the Opposition is on his feet, why do we need so much noise? I cannot hear him. Okay? Now, I know what he is saying.

Hon. Prime Minister, bear in mind that he has put specific questions, a (i) and (ii) and then (b). I did not stop you because I could understand you needed to make that introduction, but bear in mind that we have only 30 minutes for the whole exercise. Okay?

The Prime Minister: I am saying this, Madam Speaker, because you have to put it in the context. *Je sais ça fait du mal. Je sais ça fait du mal à l'honorable leader de l'opposition d'entendre ce que son propre leader....*

Ms Anquetil: Très mal.

The Prime Minister: *Oui, non, ça fait du mal* because he introduced targeting.

Mr Lesjongard: But you were against it!

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: Yes! Yes! Yes, I was. Yes, you are right. I was. It was not even that situation. You made the situation worse.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Do not speak to me in a sitting position, please!

The Prime Minister: You made the situation worse! It was not that situation then.

And he says –

“ A second fundamental reform that this Budget introduces is the targeting of Government transfers.”

I will refrain from saying more, Madam Speaker. But he says –

“Targeting for all the basic pensions will be introduced as from January next year.”

And then, what happened? He said all this. Okay, we were in the Opposition; we were against it because the situation was not the same. He still *reculé*. He still went back. He was forced to go back, in fact, by the then. Prime Minister, hon. Bérenger. But he went back. There was backpedalling. It was a budget. But this is how it is. You make proposals in the budget, and then, you decide to correct a few things. This is exactly what has happened.

I will skip all this because he does not like me saying this.

Madam Speaker: No, but...

The Prime Minister: In 2025, during the debates on the budget – I need to say this, Madam Speaker – hon. Paul Bérenger, in our Government, then Deputy Prime Minister, summarised in a very concise way the challenges of the BRP on the public finances and the consequences for the future. This is what we are saying. And I quote –

« Relever l'âge de la retraite, the non-contributory pension à 65 ans est inévitable. Je demande à tout le monde, à commencer par les syndicats, aux travailleurs de bien

Mr Lesjongard: Madam Speaker...

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: I will have to say what I have to say whether you like it or not! I will quote! Whether you like it or not, I will quote! I am the one who is answering the question. You are not the one who is answering the question! I will quote!

(Interruptions)

I have to put it in the context, Madam Speaker.

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

The Prime Minister: This is not a point of order!

(Interruptions)

Mr Lesjongard: ... of this House, Madam Speaker. The PNQ is only for 30 minutes.

(Interruptions)

Mr Ameer Meea: *To pou gagn ankor letan pou reponn!*

Mr Lesjongard: You are not the Speaker!

Madam Speaker: Do not reply!

Mr Lesjongard: Do not reply!

Madam Speaker: Minister Ameer Meea, do not reply in my place!

I will definitely give you more time.

Hon. Prime Minister...

(Interruptions)

Mr Lesjongard: ... you are going to give me more time!

Madam Speaker: Yes!

Mr A. Duval: Madam Speaker, you should give...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Let me...

Mr A. Duval: Equal time!

Madam Speaker: Hon. Prime Minister! Hon. Prime Minister, please reply to his specific question and then, I am sure you will get...

(Interruptions)

I am sure...

(Interruptions)

Oh! I am sure, on supplementary questions, you will get the chance to come back on some of the contextualised...

(Interruptions)

Please reply to the question!

The Prime Minister: Yes, I will cut a lot of the quotations, but I have to say this one.

He says –

« Relever (...) l'âge de la pension à 65 ans est inévitable. Nous sommes condamnés à le faire. »

Madam Speaker: Okay, let us start now.

The Prime Minister: Okay, I will go to the rest.

Now, the situation is clearly beyond alarming and unsustainable because of what they did with the CSG and all this.

Mr Lesjongard: Madam Speaker...

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: We, therefore, Madam Speaker, took the decision to restore the fairness and sustainability of the BRP system, and in this regard, the reform process was initiated last year guided by the fundamental principle that a pension system must be founded on the twin pillars of equity within and across generations.

It will be recalled, Madam Speaker, that in the 2025-2026 Budget Speech, I announced the setting up of a Commission of Experts to make recommendations to reform the various pillars of our pension system, also including revamping the National Pension Fund to replace the notorious CSG.

It was also announced that a Steering Committee would be set up to provide, *inter-alia*, guidance to the Commission on the strategic direction and policy priorities of the reform of the pension system.

Now, regarding part (a) of the question, the Commission of Experts was set up in September 2025 and is chaired by Mr Nureshkumar Prayag, who is an Actuary. It includes experts from the actuarial, economic and statistical fields. I am tabling a copy of their CVs as asked by the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

The Commission comprises –

- (a) the Chairperson, Mr Prayag, former laureate who graduated in Actuarial Science in Edinburgh;
- (b) Mr Bernard Yen, a former laureate again, graduated in Mathematics and Computer Science at the University of Liverpool and Actuary;
- (c) Mr Ivan Legris, former laureate again, graduated in Economics and Actuarial Science from the London School of Economics;

- (d) Mr Azad Jeetun, Economist, Former Director of the then Mauritius Employers' Federation;
- (e) Mrs Verena Tandrayen-Ragoobur, again Economist, Associate Professor in Economics at the University of Mauritius;
- (f) Mr Sattar Jackaria, Actuary, CEO of Eagle Insurance Ltd;
- (g) Ms Aimé Chung Kai Suet, Statistician and Former Director of Statistics Mauritius.

The Commission has been mandated to examine the three pillars of the pension system, namely –

- (i) the Basic Non-Contributory Pensions, including the Basic Retirement Pension, Basic Invalidity Pension and Basic Widows Pension;
- (ii) the Contributory Pension Schemes, and
- (iii) the Voluntary Private Pensions, including personal retirement savings plans and occupational pension schemes offered by employers.

As regards the allowances paid to the members of the Commission of Experts, the Chairperson of the Commission is paid a monthly fee of Rs200,000 and members are paid a monthly fee of Rs100,000, which is nothing!

With regard to part (a)(ii) of the question, I am tabling a copy of the Interim Report of the Commission of Experts. There is the report.

It is an interim report, Madam Speaker.

Concerning part (b) of the question, the composition of the Steering Committee on Pension Reform as approved by Cabinet on 26 September 2025, chaired by myself is as follows –

- (a) the then Deputy Prime Minister;
- (b) the Minister of Agro-Industry, Food Security, Blue Economy and Fisheries;
- (c) the Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity;
- (d) the Minister of Financial Services and Economic Planning;
- (e) the Minister of Labour and Industrial Relations;
- (f) the Minister of Industry, SMEs and Cooperatives;
- (g) the Junior Minister of Finance, and
- (h) the Junior Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity.

Madam Speaker, the Commission made a presentation of its findings and recommendations contained in the Interim Report, which I have just laid on the Table of the Assembly.

The main recommendations of the Commission in this Interim Report are as follows –

- (a) A unified Independent Pensions Regulatory Authority will be established to make recommendations on policy reforms.
- (b) A Central Pensions Administration Bureau will regroup all state sponsored schemes into one place to digitalise and facilitate service to members and pensioners.
- (c) With regard to the Basic Retirement Pension, it will be renamed as State Age Pension as from 01 January 2027, a universal means test will apply individually to eligible beneficiaries based on their taxable income above a threshold of Rs14,000. This threshold, Madam Speaker, of Rs14,000 that is, is the World Bank relative poverty line of 50 percent of median income which is Rs28,000 in 2025 or was.
- (d) A person will be able to elect to receive the SAP from the age 60 to 70. The pension amount will increase by 9 per cent for each year that the benefit is deferred beyond the age of 65. The recommendation seeks to bring fairness by providing individuals with greater choice – they have a choice – regarding the timing of their benefit, while improving the long-term sustainability of the pension system.
- (e) As from 01 July 2027, there will be a revamped mandatory national contributory retirement scheme to replace the defunct National Pensions Fund.

Mr Lesjongard: He has crossed the 30 minutes, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: I am keeping...

The Prime Minister: You asked about the reform, I am telling you about the reform!
Now, what else do you want me to say?

Madam Speaker: I am keeping the time.

The Prime Minister:

The Commission, Madam Speaker, took on board several of the comments and suggestions made by the members of the Steering Committee.

Due to the fiscal situation, Government decided to act immediately on the policy options recommended by the Commission in its interim report.

The recommendations regarding the State Age Pension and the conversion of the National Pensions Fund into the National Pension and Provident Fund have been validated by the Social Pension Specialists of the World Bank.

Madam Speaker, as regards the decision to freeze the means test, preliminary estimates indicate that the budget deficit would increase – automatically, it would increase – by around Rs6.2 billion, that is, 0.7 percent of GDP for the period January 2027 to June 2027.

I wish to bring some clarifications, Madam Speaker, with regard to the Budget Appendix Table B2 at pages 558 and 559 of the Budget Estimates document, whereby there was a technical issue in the figure reported under the item Old Age. The figures have been updated and posted on the website of the Ministry of Finance.

Madam Speaker, I would like to seize this opportunity to place on record my deep appreciation to the members of the Commission of Experts, which I should remind the House, was set up in September of 2025.

The composition of the Commission was endorsed by the Cabinet and it comprises professionals who have excelled in their respective fields, not only locally but internationally. I consider this totally unfair that they are being blamed for decisions announced in the Budget relating to pension reform.

It is a matter of deep regret that some people, both in this House and outside, have made totally unacceptable and disparaging personal remarks on these professionals.

I should also say, Madam Speaker, that I have full confidence in my Chief Economic Adviser, the Financial Secretary and his team at the Ministry of Finance.

Among the members of the Commission, several have occupied important positions – as you will see in the CVs – overseas; and decided to come back to serve the country.

We are doing our level best to attract the diaspora. We want to attract very competent people. I leave it to the appreciation of the population of how such vile attacks on these professionals will encourage the diaspora to come to Mauritius.

I have been informed that following the unwarranted and baseless comments made against them, all the members of the Commission have intimated that they would want to resign. I have made an appeal to them not to take this decision and to complete this important task that has been entrusted to them.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Thank you.

I will give you time. First question!

Mr Lesjongard: You will give me ‘enough time’, not ‘time’, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: I will do my level best! Start!

Mr Lesjongard: *Madame la présidente, l’honorable Premier Ministre a la mémoire courte.* He has forgotten how we canvassed against the means test back in 2004.

The Prime Minister: I just said that! I just said that!

Mr Lesjongard: Et votre Deputy Prime Minister peut vous confirmer ce que vous aviez dit à l’époque.

Now, the hon. Prime Minister in his statement to the House on Monday...

Madam Speaker: Question!

The Prime Minister: Statement *la!* *La to pou fer* statement *la...*

Mr Lesjongard: ...stated that he has taken the decision to freeze the means test. Will he inform the House for how long is he freezing the means test?

The Prime Minister: The means test is out. If that is what you want to know.

Hon. Members: Bravo!

Mr Lesjongard: Everybody is happy if it is out. Not only you in this House; the whole population will be happy.

I refer the hon. Prime Minister to paragraph 302 of the Budget Speech, where he stated “after wide-ranging consultations with all stakeholders”. Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether consultations were held with members of his Government concerning the introduction of SAP, and if not, why not?

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, the answer is yes.

Mr Lesjongard: Wide consultations were...

The Prime Minister: Yes.

Madam Speaker: You are getting short answers. Carry on!

(Interruptions)

Members!

Mr Etwareea: *Li pa pou ena kestion la!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Lesjongard: Can the hon. Prime Minister state whether, at the meeting held in his office on 16 June 2026 wherein were present, *inter-alia*, the hon. Minister of Social Security and other public officials, he assured those present that there would be no reduction in pension payable to senior citizens?

The Prime Minister: No, I did not. We discussed the issues that were being proposed. Hon. Minister Subron, as you know, is a very caring Minister. He wanted to know who will be affected, who will not be affected, the data and all these. That is what we discussed.

Mr Lesjongard: Can the hon. Prime Minister inform the House as to who are the members of the unelected clique, denounced by the hon. Minister of Social Security in the

latter's press conference, on 22 June 2026, as having an evil influence on the policies of Government concerning Budget 2026?

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, this is why this country – if they come back to government – will be doomed. Because we need experts; we are not experts.

Mr Lesjongard: I did not say that.

The Prime Minister: Yes, that is what you are saying, the unelected. But the unelected, where do you get them? They are experts.

Mr Lesjongard: Your Minister said that!

The Prime Minister: They are experts in the field. I just mentioned the names. Many of them are former laureates – three of them are laureates –economists, statisticians, actuaries. They presented their report because we need experts to look at this. Even your leader said that, that you need to reform the pension.

Mr Lesjongard: ... listen to my leader...

The Prime Minister: How? Do you prefer that I put you to reform the pension?

Maybe he is still your leader. I am not sure he is not the leader. I did not know he was not the leader.

So, how do we do the reform? We take people from the streets and say, 'Yes, come and look at the reform.' *Mo pran Prakash Maunthrooa, mo dir li fer reform!*

An hon. Member: Hajee Abdoula!

The Prime Minister: Hajee Abdoula! This is what you want me to do? You know, Leader of the Opposition!

(Interruptions)

You know Leader of the Opposition! You need to have experts. Experts do not decide policies. We decide policies, but they have to present a report. We have to see whether we agree, or we do not agree. This is what happened.

An hon. Member: We do not *bat-bate*!

Madam Speaker: One moment. Hon. Subron is going to be speaking in a while. So, wait.

Mr Lesjongard: But I have to put my questions, Madam Speaker, even...

Madam Speaker: Yes.

Mr Lesjongard: ...if he will be speaking.

Madam Speaker: No, but you cannot put it to the Prime Minister.

Mr Lesjongard: Why not?

Madam Speaker: Okay!

Mr Lesjongard: He is a Member of the Cabinet, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Okay, you know better.

Ms J. Bérenger: *Ranplas li, Madam! Ranplas li!*

Madam Speaker: Allez, vous voulez venir à ma place encore ?

Ms J. Bérenger: *Me laisse li fer so travay Leader Lopozision!*

Madam Speaker: Mais je suis en...

(Interruptions)

Members!

(Interruptions)

Members!

All I was saying was that hon. Minister Subron is going to be speaking first later on.

Mr Lesjongard: And so what? So what?

Madam Speaker: You will hear...

Mr Lesjongard: So, what?

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Okay. If you do not understand and somebody else who sits and speaks to me all the time in a sitting position, if you do not understand; the people who are listening to me will understand!

Mr Lesjongard: They are also listening to me, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Yes! Yes!

Mr Lesjongard: Does the hon. Prime Minister want us to believe that his Cabinet Minister had all factorial hallucinations of an evil clique...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Il continue.

Mr Lesjongard: ... in a public conference? If there is no such clique, hon. Prime Minister, then, the hon. Minister is grossly incompetent for making such a grave accusation and he should be sacked, hon. Prime Minister!

Madam Speaker: Wow!

The Prime Minister: The hon. Minister of Social Security did not say 'evil clique'. You are inventing again! Putting words in his mouth that he did not say.

Mr Lesjongard: No, I am not!

The Prime Minister: He never said evil. Ask him! Ask him!

Madam Speaker: You see?

(Interruptions)

Next question!

Mr Lesjongard: Can the hon. Prime Minister inform the House why he has backpedalled on the budgetary measures on the pension's reforms following the meeting of Monday 22 June, less than 72 hours after he has presented the budget to the whole nation? Madam Speaker, this is...

Madam Speaker: That is a good question.

Mr Lesjongard: Yes!

Madam Speaker: Let him answer! Yes!

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, this is what is called democracy and listening to the voice of the people! This is what it is called.

(Interruptions)

Mr Lesjongard: Like I said, Madam Speaker,...

Madam Speaker: Next question!

Mr Lesjongard: This is not listening.

Madam Speaker: *Non*, next question!

Mr Lesjongard: This is called a humiliating retreat, hon. Prime Minister!

An hon. Member: *Poz to kestion!*

Mr Lesjongard: Will the hon. Prime Minister confirm to the House whether he will withdraw the Appropriation 2026-2027 Bill, stop the ongoing debates, and come with a new Bill to reflect the fundamental changes brought about to the Estimates by the freezing of the means test?

The Prime Minister: This is what is called demagogy, Madam Speaker!

Ms Anquetil: Yes!

The Prime Minister: The whole budget is actually very welcomed by the population outside; except they have not understood this reform on the pension. This is what we have modified. And that is all.

Madam Speaker: Next question, Leader!

Mr Lesjongard: Voilà!

Madam Speaker, after taking note of the discontent within the ranks of his own Government and the anger expressed by the vast majority of the population of this country, will the hon. Prime Minister finally admit that this reform is an act of electoral fraud, and will he commit to withdrawing the State Age Pension and restoring the universal Basic Retirement Pension, Madam Speaker?

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, that is why I was quoting his own leader. What did he say? And why did he then *reculer*? Why? Why do you think? Ask me!

Mr Lesjongard: I put the question to you.

Madam Speaker: Next question! Next question!

I am giving you time. Next question.

(Interruptions)

Mr Lesjongard: Of course you have to, Madam Speaker. This is what you said earlier.

Madam Speaker: Carry on!

Mr A. Duval: *Linn pren 35 minits pou reponn!* Non ?

Mr Lesjongard: Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister ...

Madam Speaker: Hon. A. Duval! I have counted!

Mr Lesjongard: ...whether he does not find it cruel and cynical to ask an elderly person to opt for an age at which he or she will prefer to get the SAP and be paid one single amount for his or her lifetime?

The Prime Minister: That is why I said, Madam Speaker, earlier that there is a lot of confusion. People have not understood.

First of all, there is a difference between contributory and non-contributory pension. We are the only country in the world where the statutory retirement age is 65 and you start paying pension at 60. You have said; your own leader; the former Deputy Prime Minister has also said – and rightly so – that it is unsustainable. Do you know what the word ‘unsustainable’ mean? Or should I bring a dictionary and show you?

Madam Speaker, the confusion is there. Let me say something. The determination of net income. That has been a confusion.

Mr Lesjongard: What is he replying, Madam Speaker?

The Prime Minister: But I am telling you! You want to know! You do not want to listen? You just want to ask questions. But I am answering your bloody question!

Mr Lesjongard: I did not ask what you are replying, hon. Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister: I am answering your question! If you do not want to listen, do not listen!

There is a difference.

Mr Lesjongard: He is not being relevant to the question.

The Prime Minister: It is relevant because what determines...

An hon. Member: *To pa le ekoute, pa ekoute!*

The Prime Minister: When we spoke about means testing and the sum of Rs50,000, there has been a confusion. Because there is a confusion between what is net income and what is not net income.

Monthly net income includes emoluments, net of tax-exempt income. It includes net income from business or profession, net rental income, that is, after deducting expenditure incurred and repairs, maintenance or whatever of your property, and contributory retirement benefits. That is the exclusion. But people have not understood this. What can I do?

Madam Speaker: Your next question? Or you want your friend to speak?

Mr Lesjongard: No, I have a lot of next questions, Madam Speaker.

(Interruptions)

Let me be very precise, hon. Prime Minister. If someone opts to take the SAP at the age of 60, the benefit would be Rs11,598 per month for the rest of his life. May I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he will admit that this is a dishonest and provocative proposal?

The Prime Minister: In fact, I have just said – they have not understood! This is actually false. What he is saying is false!

Mr Lesjongard: What is false?

Mr Mohamed: What you are saying!

The Prime Minister: The sum you quoted is false.

Mr Bhagwan: *To pann kompran ta.*

Mr Lesjongard: What is false?

Mr Mohamed: What you said!

The Prime Minister: What you said is false.

Mr Lesjongard: This is in the document officially circulated, Madam Speaker.

Now, let me ask...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: *Chut! Chut!*

Mr Lesjongard: Madam Speaker, ...

Madam Speaker: Yes!

Mr Lesjongard: If an elderly person is enticed and opts for the SAP at 70 years, he will receive Rs24,000 per month, again, for the rest of his life. Hon. Prime Minister, will you confirm that this is a trap knowing that such an elderly person may die before reaching the age of 70 and not obtain his pension? Do not tell me I am wrong now!

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, ...

Mr Jhummun: *Profet maler!*

The Prime Minister: ...again, he has misunderstood everything. This is why we need experts. You should consult experts as well. Because he does not understand!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: *Chut! Chut! Chut!*

The Prime Minister: This is actually not true what he is saying.

Mr Lesjongard: Why?

Mr Mohamed: You are consulting Jugnauth!

(Interruptions)

Mr Lesjongard: What is not true?

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: It is not a fact what you are saying.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition, the Prime Minister...

(Interruptions)

One moment, Members!

The Prime Minister took...

(Interruptions)

Qui c'est qui veut venir encore à ma place de l'autre côté ?

Hon. Leader of the Opposition, I was trying to say that as far as I have got the count myself and the Table below, the Prime Minister took 25 minutes, okay? So, I have already given you nine minutes more, but I will give you a few minutes more.

Please ask your question, or your friend. It is up to you!

(Interruptions)

One for you and one for him, okay? *Après, on arrête.*

Mr A. Duval: May I?

Madam Speaker: Oui.

Mr A. Duval: Thank you. Madam Speaker, *on parle de démagogie.*

Madam Speaker: Ça va !

(Interruptions)

Chut ! Chut !

Mr A. Duval: La vraie démagogie, Madame la présidente...

Madam Speaker: Question ! Question !

Mr A. Duval: C'est ça la question. N'est-ce pas là la vraie démagogie...

(Interruptions)

N'est-ce pas là la vraie démagogie – c'est une question – que les rapports de l'IMF et du FMI, qui datent de 2014 et de 2015, parlent *of the unsustainability of the pension system* et que ce gouvernement a promis de hausser, malgré ces deux rapports, la pension à R 21 500 par mois et a supprimé *l'income tax* sur les pensions ? Et aujourd'hui, dans le dos de la population, à coup de 18 millions de rémunération à la commission...

Madam Speaker: This is not a question!

Mr A. Duval: Est-ce que le gouvernement ne trouve pas ça étant la réelle démagogie et trahison ? Je demande au Premier Ministre la question...

Madam Speaker: This is not a... This is not a...

(Interruptions)

One moment!

Mr A. Duval: Je demande au Premier Ministre de revenir sur le système de pension électoral parce que ce gouvernement n'a aucun mandat pour amender cette réforme, ce système !

Madam Speaker: Go ahead!

(Interruptions)

Mr A. Duval: Aucun mandat. You promised the country.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I know he decided to sit next to the MSM before then he switched sides.

Sa pa trahizon sa?

(Interruptions)

You switched sides. You switched sides in the middle because you thought they were going to win the election.

(Interruptions)

Because you thought they were going to win the election. That is why you switched sides.

(Interruptions)

You switched sides. Ça, c'est la trahison.

(Interruptions)

Tu as trahi. Tu as trahi. C'est toi qui as trahi. C'est une trahison que tu as fait. Et on t'a foutu dehors parce que tu ne valais plus rien.

Mr A. Duval: I told you why.

The Prime Minister: And you wanted... and you remember, you wanted, you know...

Madam Speaker: Hon. Prime Minister, please!

The Prime Minister: Yes, I am sorry, Madam. But this, Madam Speaker, is a mixture of demagogy, ignorance and venom. That is what it is. They do not understand. He is now saying, do not bring any reform.

(Interruptions)

Mr Lesjongard: Yes!

Mr A. Duval: Yes!

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: Leave it as it is? So, let the country crash? You will not be here. You will not be here. But the young of this country will have no pension if you do not reform the pension. You are doing *demagogy, c'est ça la démagogie. Au lieu de gouverner pour le peuple, ils gouvernent pour eux-mêmes.*

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Last question, hon. Leader of the Opposition. Not speech like we just heard, a question.

Mr Lesjongard: Yes, Madam Speaker, I have taken cognizance of the documents circulated by the hon. Prime Minister with regard to members of the Commission. Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister to state whether any assessment was carried out regarding potential conflict of interest by members of that Commission? Because they are all in the private sector.

The Prime Minister: We looked at this but it is a small country. You have very few experts. You have very few people with their abilities and their competency. Otherwise, what do we do? Where would you get the experts? I take experts from the UK like we did before?

Mr Lesjongard: But not in the ...

The Prime Minister: You do not want Mauritians to work. Now you want experts from the UK to come here to tell us what to do with the pension. We chose to have Mauritians who have expertise.

Madam Speaker: But you yourself, hon. Prime Minister, you do not believe that there is any *conflit d'intérêt*?

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, everybody has a conflict of interest in this country. You have somebody who is working there. Yesterday we heard about conflict of interest. Everybody has. But we have to get the experts to do the job and that is what we did.

Madam Speaker: Okay. That's it. Thank you everybody. It was not easy but thank you nonetheless.

Yes. Motion. Hon. Prime Minister, please.

MOTION

SUSPENSION OF S.O. 10(2)

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

The Deputy Prime Minister rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

PUBLIC BILL

Second Reading

THE APPROPRIATION (2026-2027) BILL

(NO. IX OF 2026)

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on the Second Reading of the Appropriation (2026-2027) Bill (No. IX of 2026).

Question again proposed.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Minister!

(12.24 p.m.)

The Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity (Mr A. Subron): Madam Speaker, I intervene today in this debate in a threefold capacity. First, as a proud, duly elected representative of the people of Constituency No.4, Port Louis North & Montagne Longue.

Second, as the hon. Minister of Social Security, Social Integration and National Solidarity. Third, and in parallel, as the main spokesperson of my party, *Rezistans ek Alternativ*, a partner within the *Alliance du Changement*.

Madam Speaker, what we are debating today in this Assembly is no ordinary annual budget. We are witnessing the birth of a new form of democracy emerging rapidly in this digital and communication age. Today, citizens possess instantaneous tools to voice their views, their concerns, and their discontents. They are no longer passive observers. They have become active participants in our democracy and co-makers of public policy.

In this new era, the archaic top-down vertical approaches that underpin classical governance are permanently eroding. The profound events of the past few days have forced every single Member of this House to confront a fundamental question. How do we govern? More specifically, how do we decide on policies?

In this case, a national budget and social protection framework that directly impacts the immediate and future lives of our people. My first lesson from this crisis is clear. Verticality is no longer the norm. It is being systematically replaced by an emerging horizontal democracy. This new age will simply not tolerate any authoritarian paradigm. The previous regime paid a heavy price for attempting to suppress dissent expressed through social media. They were decisively wiped out by the people in the last election precisely because they tried to muzzle dissenting voices.

My second lesson is structural. Traditional rigid governance dictates that when laws and policies are tabled in this Assembly, they must be presented as automatically flawless, pretending that nothing needs adjustment and that alternative social views or dissenting voices should be ignored. In reality, Madam Speaker, all laws and policies are brought to this National Assembly before the elected representatives of the people to be fiercely debated and if necessary, amended and even withdrawn. This has always been the very essence of parliamentary democracy.

Today, this parliamentary democracy is compounded with the raw voices of the citizens on social media to forge a radical and participatory democracy model. A new model of governance rooted in co-governance and co-creation is being born. It is a complex model, one that requires immense courage and wisdom to navigate and evolve alongside social contradictions.

Madam Speaker, during the last few days, a democratic Mauritius was actively at work. On one side, the people made their voices heard through their own creative expressions alongside the elected hon. Members Ministers of this Assembly. On the other side, the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance responded with courage and wisdom, required to amend the pension reform that had been presented to this House and the nation. Only truly great leaders possess such courage and wisdom. For this, the hon. Dr. Navin Ramgoolam, Prime Minister, must be highly commended. Others placed in similar situation have turned into dictators by simply and squarely banning dissents.

Let us look at the facts. As soon as most of us finished commending the panoply of visionary social and caring measures in the budget to which I will return shortly and after taking full cognizance of the final details of the pension reform, we realized its implications. It pointed towards pension cuts within six months.

Many Mauritians, including hon. Ministers and hon. Members of this Assembly, grasped the gravity of what was on the table. Within hours, the constituent parties of the Alliance debated the matter. The hon. Deputy Prime Minister contacted the hon. Prime Minister. On Sunday, the hon. Prime Minister made the decisive call to convene a meeting on the issue on the very next day.

On Monday, June 22, after careful weighing of the views expressed by his hon. Ministers and hon. MPs, the hon. Prime Minister stood before this Assembly to announce that the means testing of the basic retirement pension has been completely frozen. The voices of our citizens were heard. Citizen dissent was respected. This was not only democracy at work. This was wisdom at work. The hon. Prime Minister chose to co-govern and co-create alongside his nation. Reform of this magnitude, I believe, cannot be included within national budgetary process. I will explain.

Budgetary processes are fundamentally constrained by strict rules of fiscal secrecy. My party has drawn the attention of our alliance partners to this systemic flaw, even since the Basic Retirement Pension (BRP) entitlement age was raised to 65 last year. The volatile events unfolding after this budget presentation testify the absolute correctness of *Rezistans ek Alternativ's* humble proposal.

Furthermore, what do we realise structurally? I am saying this with all my heart. What it means for a Minister who is constitutionally appointed and legally entrusted with the responsibility of National Pensions Fund (NPF) to suddenly learn that the NPF will be transformed into a National Pension Provident Fund or as the legally entrusted administrator of the Portable Retirement Gratuity Fund (PRGF), and the National Savings Funds (NSF) to simply be informed of their sudden dissolution. Again, I am not questioning the good faith of any individual. It is my absolute democratic duty to raise these fundamental systemic issues.

My fourth lesson centres on what we have been debating in a few minutes ago. What is the line between elected policy makers and technical experts? This too is entirely systemic. There is nothing personal, nor does this debate impute motives or questions the good faith of the recommendations given by technicians. However, this question provides vital food for thought for future major policy decisions. Policy must be driven by social justice, democratic process and scrutiny, not just by financial spreadsheets.

Madam Speaker, I believe we are living in a defining moment in our history. In moments like these, only integrity and wisdom can prevail and transcend the powerful

contradictions that surface. I have witnessed this exact wisdom from the leaders within this Government, of our alliance and from many parliamentary colleagues. This is precisely why I feel I can stand in this House, today, completely true to my inner soul and proudly continue to serve as a Minister in this Government. This is why I will continue to forcibly represent the people who elected me in Constituency No. 4. This is why I will continue to defend the hope and amplify the voices of the citizens who support *Rezistans ek Alternativ*.

I remain the unyielding voice of the working class, of women, of the youth, of pensioners, of people with disability and the poor within this Government, together with my colleagues. Now that the means testing of pensioners has been frozen, it would be up to the Cabinet to devise the new contour of our pension reform. This freeze has brought the structural element of the reform into public light, making them the subject of an open national debate. We must now collectively answer critical questions.

For example, should the PRGF and eventually the NSF be integrated into the new NPF 2.0? Will the NPF 2.0 be strictly mandatory for all employers, just as the original NPF was? Will all the benefits associated with the previous contributory NPF be fully reconducted under the new regime? I believe that the positive dynamics unleashed by this moment will create a healthy, rational, inclusive space for all citizens, trade unions, NGOs, pensioners, associations and the youth to participate. This stands in stark contrast to the dark days when the Basic Retirement Pension was weaponised as a mere electoral tool, and the days when the NPF was systematically dismantled in 2020 by the previous regime.

Madam Speaker, let me transition to the second section of my intervention. My immediate comment following the initial budget announcement was that the hon. Prime Minister has taken on board the vision of my party proposed just weeks after the split in the previous government and alliance. We call for a reorientation towards *une politique solidaire, écologique et mauricianiste*. I am proud to say that many of the measures in this budget move decisively in that direction, and many of them fall directly under the jurisdiction of my Ministry.

Madam Speaker, let me now transition to the concrete qualitative achievements of my Ministry and the specific provisions embedded within this budget. When my colleague, hon. Kugan Parapen and I took office, we made a solemn pledge to this nation. We promised to bring dignity, humanism and efficiency to a Ministry that had been left to stagnate.

Today, I am proud to declare that the E-Social Security Project is fully on the march after 11 long years of unpardonable administrative inertia. The ESS platform will entirely replace an archaic 30 years old legacy framework, streamlining the payment of basic pensions, contributory pensions and invalidity benefits. The absolute prerequisite for this digital leap, the bulk scanning project to implement a web-based Document Management System (DMS), was launched on May 18, 2026. This monumental exercise involves scanning of 10.5 million pages and digitalise 350,000 beneficiary files within an eight months contract window.

I am pleased to update this House that as at 23 June 2026, approximately 550,000 pages have already been successfully digitalised. But we are not stopping here. By the end of this calendar year, my Ministry is actively planning to eliminate physical paper files entirely. We are shifting to a fully digitalised electronic format for the end-to-end processing of applications, encompassing creation, capture, organisation, storage and retrieval. The Document Management System will seamlessly integrate with the E-Social Security Framework. The digital revolution of our social safety net is firmly on the march, and it will serve to empower the citizens, making their rights instantly accessible and impossible for any future bureaucrat to misplace.

Madam Speaker, let me come to the protection and intergenerational care for the elderly. Madam Speaker, protecting our elderly has been the beating heart of my Ministry's attention over the last financial year. In response to profound shifting social mutation, we are entering the final phase of enacting sweeping legal regulatory overhauls.

Let the numbers speak for themselves. Between July 2025 and today, 1,223 cases of elderly abuse were reported to my Ministry. But I am proud to report that 963 of those cases have been actively resolved. However, a caring Government cannot merely react to abuse. We must structurally prevent it. The Protection of Elderly Persons Act, we are currently finalising robust new regulations under the 2005 Act.

For the very first time, older persons will be legally empowered to obtain Protection Orders, whether they reside in their own private homes or within a residential care home. We are redefining abuses. We are drafting fundamental amendments to explicitly expand the legal definition of abuse to encompass not just physical harm, but all forms of physical, psychological, emotional, and financial abuse, as well as exploitation, neglect, and abandonment.

We are also making it a civic duty to report. We are introducing a mandatory civic duty for citizens to report any suspected mistreatment of our elders. The Ombudsperson for the Elderly Bill, a new legislation, is being drafted to create an independent ombudsperson whose sole mandate will be to stand an unyielding wall against the mistreatment of our citizens.

The residential care home reform is coming. Following several deeply concerning cases of maltreatment, we are urgently reviewing the Residential Care Homes Regulations 2005 to drastically strengthen the State control supervision and protection of residents. This immediate intervention paves the way for a comprehensive long-term overhaul of public policy regarding residential care facilities in Mauritius.

To back these legal rights with fundamental materials or resources, this Budget delivers concrete measures. First, domiciliary medical visits, previously restricted to those aged 90 and above, are now being extended to citizens aged 80 and above, backed by an allocation of Rs58 million. Senior citizen aged 80 and above will now be eligible upon request for monthly welfare and well-being checks by a social worker. To operationalise this, 100 young Mauritians will be fully trained and deployed, explicitly fostering a beautiful intergenerational approach to community solidarity. The Budget funds the physical construction of specialised modern elderly home in Flic-en-Flac and Palmar.

Madam Speaker, let us come to measures concerning persons living with disabilities. Madam Speaker, for citizens living with disabilities and those requiring urgent care, we have broken the back of administrative delays. After 15 months of rigorous internal reform, we have drastically shortened the waiting times for those applying for the Invalid's Basic Pension or the Carer's Allowance.

The gruelling delay for a medical tribunal evaluation, which used to drag on for over four months, has been slashed to one and a half month and is falling lower day by day. Furthermore, our approval rate for BIP and Carer's Allowance applications has increased by 8%, directly resulting in fewer stressful contested cases being pushed by the Medical Tribunal on appeal.

Most importantly, our comprehensive disability benefit reform has been officially endorsed in the Budget. The phase one and the phase two will be subject of a high-level technical committee being established to oversee this transition. Crucially, following an agreement between myself and the Prime Minister, the updated medical guideline will be

applied immediately without any negative financial implications for applicants and the Government, pending the final recommendation of this committee.

In addition, the new budget is delivering immediate material benefits. The monthly Carer's Allowance for over 30,000 vulnerable beneficiaries is being increased from Rs3,500 to Rs4,250. Taxi fare refunds are being extended to children with disabilities attending registered pre-primary schools to guarantee early childhood inclusion.

We are breaking grounds on the landmark National Disability Empowerment and supported living hub, our Mauritian enabling village. Concurrently, the interministerial committee is steadily advancing the Protection of People with Disabilities Act to be aligned with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Let me now talk about poverty. Madam Speaker, our approach to poverty reduction, over the last financial year, has undergone a profound philosophical shift, moving far beyond the cold approach of merely handing out materials. My Ministry has fiercely championed the introduction of Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI).

Our new phase targets the structural roots of inequality by focusing on integration, education, and genuine empowerment. To sustain this, the Budget 2026-27 drastically raises the monthly income threshold for eligibility, under the Social Register of Mauritius, from Rs14,650 to Rs16,400 for the coming financial year, climbing further to Rs17,500 in 2027-2028.

Let me inform the House of the scale of this social expansion. Eligible households under the SRM will jump from 5,196 to 7,470, a massive 43.8% increase in State protection. The number of individuals covered will expand from 12,019 to 27,000 citizens. The monthly Subsistence Allowance by the State will double, skyrocketing from Rs25.5 million to Rs51.1 million.

I must add that the National Empowerment Foundation, falling under my aegis, with the newly appointed board last year, has performed a monumental cleanup task. They have successfully finalised and published the comprehensive financial reports that the previous regime left completely neglected for more than five to six years. They have successfully put our institutional foundation back on track.

On the issue of National Social Inclusion Foundation, this Budget re-establishes the structural wrong by restoring the 75% share of Corporate Social Responsibility Fund directly to the National Inclusion Foundation, under my Ministry. Under the previous disastrous 50% CSR regime, the NSIF would have faced an estimated shortfall of Rs500 million. Had we not fought to reverse this, the negative impact would have been catastrophic for civil society. It would have crippled the annual funding of 163 major NGOs working hand in hand with the public services, starve overall 50 small grassroots NGOs operating in the heart of our working-class communities, and severely undermined the operational budget of our 21 charitable residential homes. We have protected the financial livelihood of our solidarity network with this change.

The National Solidarity Fund, I must say, has stood as an active shield for our people. Between July 2025 and May 31 2026, the Fund disbursed 71.2 million to provide financial assistance to 3,110 beneficiaries, including 1,856 brave citizens fighting cancer.

During this financial year, we had specifically tailored one-off *ad hoc* schemes for victims of domestic violence and another one for providing immediate relief to the victims of the devastating floods of Rodrigues.

The NSF continues to deliver unwavering targeted aid across its core scheme. Finally, Madam Speaker, 2026-2027 Budget introduces a pioneering structural innovation that aligns perfectly with our electoral manifesto and the eco-socialist philosophy of *Rezistans ek Alternativ*.

The budget is officially instituting a just transition commission under the direct purview of my Ministry. As climate change accelerates, it is the poor, the working class, the coastal communities who are hit first and hardest by ecological disaster. My Ministry is a central stakeholder in devising policies that protects these climate victims.

As the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance so powerfully articulated in the Budget Speech, the internationally acclaimed Maurice *Ile Durable Project* will be revived as part of our green transition strategy.

It is undeniably clear that our country requires – the hon. Prime Minister stated it – a profound systemic socio-ecological transition. It is our historical responsibility in this house to create the material conditions conducive to make our green policies effective, ensuring we

foster a more harmonious relationship between our economy, our people and our environment.

Madam Speaker, from the digital revolution and our social security system to the radical expansion of poverty alleviation, from the protection of our elders to the systemic integration of climate justice, this is the budget that belongs to the ordinary masses and the working people of Mauritius.

I proudly commend this revised framework to this House. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Okay. I will suspend the Sitting for one hour. One hour? One and a half hour, okay?

Hon. Members: One hour!

Madam Speaker: One hour? Okay! *Cela me paraît logique compte tenu des difficultés en termes de temps. Merci. Bon appétit.*

At 12.53 p.m., the Sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 2.02 p.m. with the Deputy Speaker in the Chair.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. François!

(2.04 p.m.)

Mr J. F. François (Second Member for Rodrigues): Merci, M. le président. Lors des élections nationales du 10 novembre 2024, l'OPR a porté le thème pour une Rodrigues autonome, affirmée et respectée. Aujourd'hui, j'expose ma 17^e réplique budgétaire consécutive depuis 2010 en tant qu'ancien PPS et député de Rodrigues à plein temps au service de la nation. À ce jour, j'ai déposé 113 questions et suis intervenu sur sept projets de loi. La confiance avec le peuple s'est rétablie.

Comme je l'ai dit, j'ai écouté, j'ai entendu, j'ai compris et nous avons tiré des leçons nécessaires pour progresser ensemble. M. le président, gouverner, c'est choisir à l'échelle de l'État mauricien, choisir consiste à combiner détermination et ambition au service du peuple

quand le peuple est souverain. Le peuple comprend mieux les idées simples que les concepts complexes et le peuple attend des résultats concrets, justes et rapides.

M. le président, ma question est simple. Pourquoi faisons-nous de la politique ? C'est pour le bonheur de la population et le progrès de notre société. Le peuple observe toujours attentivement et l'histoire jugera comment un gouvernement assume ses responsabilités. M. le président, avec votre permission, je tiens symboliquement un petit pot aigre-doux de limon de Rodrigues, qui incarne les saveurs variées, sucrée, acide, salée, pimentée, aigre-doux, et rappelle l'importance de l'équilibre des goûts pour obtenir un produit juste et bon.

Il faut maîtriser son art pour ajuster l'équilibre de ce produit afin qu'il soit goûté et apprécié. Un peu plus ou moins ne convient pas, l'exactitude fait la différence.

M. le président, ce raisonnement me guide dans ma perception du budget 2026-2027, présenté par l'honorable Premier ministre, Dr. Ramgoolam. Au paragraphe 261 de son discours, il souligne que malgré des chocs externes importants, nous poursuivons la consolidation budgétaire sans l'austérité. M. le président, une seule décision courageuse peut changer le cours d'une nation, d'une société ou d'une vie entière.

Le courage est un panache et un esprit de bravoure. Parfois, prendre des décisions difficiles implique un coût politique. Le budget national est la traduction stratégique de nos valeurs, le miroir de nos priorités et le modèle du destin commun. Sans prétention, j'observe que le peuple et l'opinion publique peinent à assimiler les technicités entre promesse d'un avenir meilleur et rigueur des sacrifices immédiats. M. le président, pour être franc, le peuple de Rodrigues n'a pas accueilli favorablement les propositions de réforme du plan de retraite et je le comprends parfaitement. C'est bien que le *means test mechanism is out*.

Entre-temps, nous attendons le rapport final des experts et les consultations nécessaires afin de déterminer le concours nécessaire de cette démarche. Ce qui me fait penser à Abraham Lincoln qui a déclaré, je cite –

« L'échec ou l'erreur est souvent le prix du progrès et la résilience compte plus que le succès immédiat. »

C'est précisément là que prend tout son sens sur le plan philosophique ce que je qualifie comme un budget aigre-doux dans notre jargon rodriguais. Le symbolisme équilibré des

orientations aigre-doux illustre la nécessité d'un équilibre entre rigueur et sacrifice. M. le président, la part aigre du budget national traduit le principe de réalité qui guide les choix budgétaires et les contextes.

C'est de la discipline fiscale qui exige l'effort de chacun, en commençant par nous, les parlementaires, la lutte contre le gaspillage, la maîtrise de la dette publique pour préserver la souveraineté des générations futures. L'honorable Premier ministre nous rappelle la responsabilité, la solidarité, l'efficacité économique et la justice sociale.

M. le président, l'aigre du budget est aussi la structure verticale et horizontale, comme si bien dit l'honorable Subron, qui protège notre édifice national en anticipant l'avenir face aux avertissements de Moody's et du FMI. L'acidité du budget doit garantir notre crédibilité économique et sociale. La part douce représente le pacte social dont les mesures touchent l'ensemble de la population, telles que le financement des hôpitaux, la modernisation des écoles, le dossier de la sécurité sociale, l'investissement écologique, la sécurité alimentaire et la protection des plus vulnérables.

L'honorable ministre Sik Yuen a proposé des mesures concrètes pour alléger partiellement le coût de la vie et le doux du budget incarne la justice sociale, oui, et la promesse que personne ne doit être marginalisé afin de donner du sens à l'effort collectif et de garantir la stabilité sociale et l'unité. Je souligne l'effort de l'honorable ministre Subron, souvent pour les plus vulnérables sur la liste du SRM et de la NEF.

Comment trouver l'équilibre entre une discipline fiscale rigoureuse et des objectifs ambitieux en matière de justice sociale ? C'est difficile, vu que le budget tient compte d'une réalité économique mouvante et de l'incertitude de l'économie mondiale. Notre mission demeure de placer le peuple au premier plan. Quelle société, quelle république et quelle Rodrigues voulons-nous nous léguer à nos enfants de demain ?

M. le président, permettez-moi d'évoquer brièvement quelques mesures du budget. J'en appelle aux jeunes pour qu'ils s'impliquent davantage en patriote pour la République. Je propose la création d'un cadre économique fort pour la jeunesse, l'entrepreneuriat, compétences en affaire, informatique, l'art sous le concept l'économie de la jeunesse.

Notre jeunesse doit tracer son avenir, son chemin et nous l'accompagnerons sur cette voie. Soutenir par exemple par l'annonce des bourses additionnelles. Je note la continuité de l'accès gratuit à l'internet mensuel pour les jeunes de 18 à 25 ans jusqu'au 30 juin 2027.

M. le président, je reconnais l'effort de la transformation numérique, IA, service public numérique, cybersécurité, compétence numérique, l'innovation. Le défi n'est pas seulement d'outiller, mais de repenser la conception, la priorisation et la mise en œuvre des politiques publiques. Si les ministères et les commissions restent cloisonnés, les plateformes numériques accéléreront les transactions sans améliorer les résultats. Il faut changer les pratiques internes.

Le succès dépendra du changement des logiques opérationnelles de nos institutions, pas seulement de la numérisation. Je sais aussi que le Parlement, M. le président, ne doit pas être seulement une Chambre législative, mais un acteur proactif d'initiative, de contrôle et d'évaluation avec l'introduction de l'IA et l'impact de la *e-democracy*.

Chaque innovation ouvre des perspectives nouvelles, mais soulève aussi des questions qui nécessitent une réflexion et une régulation adaptées. Il ne faut pas foncer tête baissée. Ce n'est pas le changement qui détermine notre destin, mais notre capacité à y répondre avec résilience et créativité.

Un mot sur Rodrigues, M. le président, je tiens à féliciter les députés de Rodrigues, l'honorable Edouard et l'honorable Henriette-Manan pour leur discours avec mention spéciale pour ma colistière, l'honorable Roxanna Collette. Ce qui nous unit, c'est la cause rodriguaise.

Notre solidarité se manifeste lorsque nous faisons entendre la voix et le choix de Rodrigues et de son peuple. Pour l'OPR, je réitère notre engagement comme principe fondamental, je le répète, indépendamment du parti au pouvoir, l'OPR une fois élu à Rodrigues, collabore avec le gouvernement national dans l'intérêt de Rodrigues sans confrontation tout en respectant notre autonomie. Actuellement Rodrigues passe de l'euphorie électorale à la désillusion et réalité politique parfois décevante. Rodrigues a besoin de bâtisseur. Je lance un appel à la jeunesse ambitieuse pour unir autour de l'OPR afin de construire l'avenir ensemble.

Le progrès de Rodrigues exige de sortir de la dépendance et de viser une autonomie productive notamment à travers les ressources marines et agréables. Rodrigues doit

consolider progressivement son autonomie économique territoriale en renforçant d'abord l'autosuffisance et la production locale. M. le président, quelle est l'appréciation du peuple de Rodrigues sur ce budget ? Je milite depuis 17 ans au sein de cette Auguste Assemblée pour une baisse notable du coût de la vie à Rodrigues. Je salue l'effort de l'honorable ministre Yeung Sik Yuen pour stabiliser les prix et protéger les consommateurs. Plus de progrès est encore possible.

Il faut dépasser le calcul économique et insuffler davantage l'humanité dans l'action publique. Après nos discussions sur l'achat des limons, les planteurs de Rodrigues, j'espère, seront soulagés rapidement face aux pertes de récoltes et financières. Samedi dernier, lors de la marche pacifique de l'OPR à Gravier *pou protez nou later* contre la dilapidation, festival, et l'abus des terres de l'État à Var Brûlé, j'étais écœuré de voir des centaines de milliers de limons qui pourrissent sous les limoniers. C'est un crime contre la fortune de notre l'or vert, le limon.

Dans la même foulée, je sollicite l'honorable ministre de l'agro-industrie l'honorable Boolell pour soulager les éleveurs de porc de Rodrigues. C'est urgent, l'honorable Boolell ; aidez ces éleveurs de porc à Rodrigues. *Nou bann porc, ena p pouss krok*. Face à la kleptocratie politique et les désordres environnementaux, une nouvelle lutte s'annonce. L'OPR ne tolérera pas les spéculations foncières sur le bien du peuple qui d'ailleurs gagne du terrain avec la réforme constitutionnelle pour protéger la terre de l'État dans toute la République.

M. le président, durant ce mandat, j'ai soutenu des budgets de développement pour Rodrigues. R1.4 milliards pour 2024-2025, R785 millions pour 2025-2026. Je constate une faible capacité de dépense qui freine le rythme du développement. Des fonds importants restent dans la caisse centrale de l'État autour d'un milliard. Est-ce que ce recul est-il politique ou administrative ?

Le Directeur de l'audit souligne avec clarté que le projet voté dans les budgets pour Rodrigues doit être mis en œuvre comme des investissements structurants afin de renforcer les infrastructures socio-économiques et de favoriser une croissance durable à l'avenir. Quels mécanismes efficaces devons-nous adapter et instaurer pour garantir l'exécution réussie de ces projets et éviter les retards récurrents ?

Gouverner sans vision, c'est naviguer sans gouvernail ni boussole. C'est de l'anarchie. J'appelle à une structure de gouvernance ordonnée et respectueuse. Pour 2026-2027,

l'honorable ministre des Finances prévoit R 5.5 milliards pour le budget courant et R825 millions pour le budget de développement de l'Assemblée régionale de Rodrigues, totalisant R1.6 milliards pour Rodrigues. Les projets phares sont la construction de l'aéroport de Plaines Corail, R1.6 milliards prévus et d'ailleurs, l'OPR soutient à 200 % le projet de l'aéroport dans l'intérêt de la population de Rodrigues et sur le développement du tourisme.

La construction des drains par la NDU, R 82 millions pour finaliser les travaux à Pistache, Baie Topaze et Dandaris, Quatre Vents. Rehaussement des radiers à Baie du Nord et Rivière Coco, R20.4 millions prévues pour lancer les travaux. D'autres projets de drain et pont approuvés pendant mon mandat comme PPS pour Rodrigues, entrent en phase de finalisation des documents.

Pont à Mourouk 1 et 2, Diamant 1 et 2, drain à Grand Baie, Anse au anglais, Acacia et Port Mathurin, phase 3. Merci à l'honorable ministre Ajay Gunness, mais j'insiste pour l'accélération d'une implémentation de ces projets afin d'améliorer ces infrastructures et de réduire les retards observés depuis 2022. Je souhaite l'achèvement rapide des 250 m de route menant au Technopark de Baladirou en suspens depuis 2022 afin de rendre le projet fonctionnel et de créer des emplois pour nos jeunes.

Il est utile de souligner, l'honorable ministre Assirvaden dans le cadre de...

The Deputy Speaker: You got 2 minutes to go.

Mr François: Yes, thank you very much, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

... l'énergie renouvelable, extension de ferme solaire à Grenade, rénovation du parc éolien, je vois R95 millions de roupies, R50 millions prévues. Le coût du billet Rodrigues-Maurice, M. le président, je plaide dans une logique de solidarité que les tarifs ne doivent pas augmenter. La destination d'Air Mauritius vers Rodrigues doit rester un service public national au bénéfice de la population et non une ligne purement commerciale. Nous sommes dans la même République. Rodrigues et Maurice – nous devons revoir notre stratégie commune de souveraineté alimentaire.

Et ici et en même temps, je souligne l'engagement fort de mon ami l'honorable Dr. Gungapersad, le Dr. Sukon concernant nos enfants, les enfants de la République de Maurice. Je salue votre détermination et je vous remercie pour les efforts visant à éviter que Rodrigues ne soit pas laissé pour compte. J'attends le rapport des assises de l'éducation pour Rodrigues que j'ai moi-même contribuer l'honorable ministre. La police à Rodrigues nécessite un

renforcement, des formations continues, de nouvelles infrastructures, des équipements adaptés et je note l'augmentation du budget national de la police.

M. le président, quand la confiance dans le système de santé s'érode, c'est l'ensemble de la société qui en souffre. Les manques d'équipement et le découragement du personnel coûtent des vies. Sauver des vies est notre responsabilité collective et prioritaire. Je demande l'honorable ministre Bachoo d'envisager sans attendre la réactivation du dossier d'agrandissement et l'amélioration de l'hôpital Queen Elizabeth à Crève-Cœur afin de répondre aux besoins urgents de la population.

Ah ! Nos jeunes, les talents sportifs, artistiques, culturels qui méritent nos félicitations pour les performances locales et internationales. Et je profite M. le président pour rendre un hommage au défunt Joseph Nicolas Émilien dit Ras Natty Baby, chanteur militant légendaire de Rodrigues. Ses paroles continueront à nous inspirer. M. le président, je déplore l'abandon du projet.

The Deputy Speaker: You can please, conclude?

Mr François: Sorry, I will conclude but you know, yes, I will conclude. *But you know.* Bon, donnez-moi quelques minutes, M. le président, je termine sur ce volet.

The Deputy Speaker: No, no. conclude. You have already two minutes over.

Mr François: Yes, thank you Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Le peuple se rappellerait M. le président à choisir la rupture, le redressement et la reconstruction et redonner confiance afin de sauver Rodrigues. Les élections nationales et régionales arrivent et je vois qu'il y a R315 millions prévus et nous l'OPR résolument dans notre objectif de réunification, de réconciliation, de renouveau et de redressement de la reconquête du pouvoir et je termine sur ce point. Rodrigues aujourd'hui et demain, nous avons cette responsabilité de façonner l'avenir, de façonner l'avenir du peuple mais avec les moyens nécessaires. Avec ces paroles, M. le président, je vous remercie.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Hon. F. Quirin!

(2.19 p.m.)

Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière): Merci M. le président. Sans tarder, je vais entrer dans le vif du sujet car le temps qui m'est alloué m'oblige à faire une course contre la montre. Au-delà du contenu de la réforme des pensions, c'est

surtout la manière dont ce dossier a été géré qui soulève de sérieuses inquiétudes. Nous assistons depuis vendredi dernier à une situation pour le moins confuse.

Le gouvernement a présenté une réforme majeure qui touche directement des centaines de milliers de Mauriciens. Cette réforme a provoqué une forte inquiétude dans la population. Les syndicats, les organisations de la société civile, les retraités et une grande partie de la classe moyenne ont exprimé leurs préoccupations et finalement, sous la pression populaire, le gouvernement a annoncé le gel du projet de *means testing* qui devait s'appliquer à la *State Old Age Pension* et ce matin, l'honorable Premier ministre a confirmé le rejet du projet. Donc, ce n'est plus d'actualité, tant mieux.

Mais la question, M. le président, qu'on devrait se poser est : comment une mesure aussi importante a-t-elle pu être intégrée dans le budget sans consultation suffisante, sans que son impact social ait été pleinement évalué ? Un budget national n'est pas un brouillon. Un budget national n'est pas un laboratoire d'essai. Un budget national est l'expression de la politique économique et sociale d'un pays. Chaque mesure qui y figure doit être sérieusement étudiée, correctement chiffrée et largement concertée. Ce qui est encore plus préoccupant, c'est que la population vit désormais dans l'incertitude.

L'année dernière déjà, M. le président, les Mauriciens ont dû s'adapter au relèvement progressif de l'âge de la retraite à 65 ans. Cette année, une nouvelle formule de pension a été proposée. Aujourd'hui, cette formule est suspendue, mais personne ne sait réellement ce qui va suivre. Le gouvernement a-t-il définitivement abandonné cette réforme ? Prépare-t-il une nouvelle formule ? Une autre version sera-t-elle présentée dans quelque temps ? Personne ne peut répondre avec certitude à ce jour.

Or, les citoyens ont besoin de visibilité. Ils ont besoin de stabilité. Ils ont besoin de savoir comment préparer leur retraite, organiser leurs épargnes et planifier leur avenir. On ne peut pas continuellement modifier les règles du jeu, puis revenir en arrière au gré des réactions. On ne peut pas gouverner un pays en créant un climat permanent d'incertitude et d'anxiété pour les familles.

M. le président, un autre élément a profondément troublé l'opinion publique. Le ministre de la Sécurité sociale, l'honorable Subron, a publiquement déclaré que le Premier ministre aurait été mal conseillé dans ce dossier par une clique de trois, des personnes non élues. Je ne vais pas entrer dans les polémiques personnelles, mais si de telles affirmations sont fondées, elles soulèvent une question institutionnelle extrêmement grave. Qui élabore

réellement les politiques publiques de ce pays ? Qui conseille le gouvernement sur des décisions ayant des conséquences majeures pour des centaines de milliers de citoyens ? Quels mécanismes de consultation, de validation et de contrôle existent avant qu'une mesure aussi importante ne soit annoncée dans un budget national ? Nous parlons ici non pas d'une décision administrative secondaire, mais d'une réforme qui touche directement le contrat social entre l'État et ses citoyens.

Dans une démocratie parlementaire moderne, M. le président, les grandes orientations nationales doivent être préparées avec rigueur, transparence et responsabilité. Les Mauriciens méritent mieux que des annonces suivies de recul. Les Mauriciens méritent mieux que l'improvisation. Les Mauriciens méritent de savoir où le gouvernement veut conduire le pays, car gouverner ce n'est pas seulement décider. Gouverner, c'est prévoir. Et lorsqu'il s'agit de pensions, il est de notre devoir collectif d'apporter des réponses claires, stables et crédibles à la population.

M. le président, lorsqu'on demande des sacrifices à la population, ces sacrifices doivent être partagés à tous les niveaux. L'effort ne peut pas reposer uniquement sur les citoyens. Le gouvernement doit également s'attaquer aux gaspillages, aux dépenses non essentielles, aux privilèges excessifs et à certaines rémunérations particulièrement élevées au sein des organismes paraétatiques et des compagnies d'État. Au-delà des salaires des élus, c'est l'ensemble de l'utilisation de l'argent public qui doit être examiné. Les indemnités, frais de représentation, véhicules de fonction, missions à l'étranger, *per diem* et autres avantages doivent faire l'objet d'une évaluation rigoureuse afin d'identifier des économies réelles.

Au lieu de pénaliser nos aînés, il est également temps de mettre au frigo certains projets de rénovation, d'aménagement au coût manifestement exagéré qui ne constituent pas une priorité dans le contexte économique actuel. Les Mauriciens, M. le président, accepteront plus facilement les efforts demandés s'ils constatent que l'État lui-même montre l'exemple. La crédibilité d'une politique de rigueur repose avant tout sur l'équité, l'exemplarité et le partage des sacrifices.

M. le président, j'ai parcouru le budget et les annexes, mais où est l'ambition nationale pour le sport ? Où est la vision qui permettra à Maurice de devenir une véritable nation sportive ? Le sport est un investissement dans la santé publique, dans la cohésion sociale et dans notre jeunesse. Chaque jeune qui pratique régulièrement un sport est un jeune moins

exposé à la drogue, à la délinquance et à l'exclusion sociale. Chaque roupie investie dans le sport peut permettre d'économiser plusieurs roupies dans les dépenses de santé de demain.

Je note également que les R 125 millions additionnels alloués au secteur de la jeunesse et du sport seront principalement consacrés à la construction de deux nouvelles piscines, ainsi qu'à la rénovation et la modernisation des infrastructures sportives existantes, un investissement nécessaire pour offrir de meilleures conditions à nos sportifs et à notre jeunesse.

Mais le problème n'est pas uniquement de construire. Le problème est aussi de gérer, d'entretenir et d'animer. Une infrastructure vide ne produit aucun champion. Une infrastructure vide ne protège aucun jeune contre les fléaux sociaux. Nous applaudissons nos athlètes lorsqu'ils remportent des médailles. Nous les célébrons lorsqu'ils portent haut le drapeau mauricien, à l'image de nos cyclistes et de nos handisportifs récemment. Mais sommes-nous prêts à investir durablement dans leur préparation ? Combien de fédérations peinent à financer leur déplacement ? Combien d'athlètes doivent recourir au soutien de leur famille pour poursuivre leur carrière ? Combien abandonnent faute d'accompagnement ?

M. le président, je suis triste quand je vois des sportifs qui peinent à trouver le financement nécessaire pour des déplacements à l'étranger. Dans l'élaboration du manifeste électoral de l'Alliance du Changement, j'avais personnellement fait inclure la création d'un fonds spécial provenant des recettes du Loto pour le sport d'élite. Cela aurait permis de financer la participation de nos athlètes ou équipes dans les compétitions régionales et continentales. Malheureusement, ni le ministère des Finances, ni celui des Sports ont jugé nécessaire d'appliquer cette mesure à ce jour. Nous ne pouvons pas exiger des résultats internationaux sans fournir les moyens nécessaires.

M. le président, la lutte contre la drogue demeure aujourd'hui l'un des plus grands défis auquel notre pays est confronté. C'est un fléau qui touche toutes les régions, toutes les communautés, toutes les familles et plus particulièrement notre jeunesse. Je salue le fait que le gouvernement reconnaisse la nécessité d'une approche globale reposant sur trois piliers –

- la prévention ;
- la répression, et
- la réhabilitation.

Cette approche traduit une compréhension de la complexité du problème, car il est évident qu'aucune stratégie fondée sur un seul volet ne pourra apporter une solution durable. Cependant, si nous voulons réellement obtenir des résultats, nous devons nous interroger sur l'équilibre entre ces trois piliers. Le budget met fortement l'accent sur les mesures de sécurité, le renforcement des capacités d'intervention et les actions répressives.

Ces mesures sont importantes et nécessaires. Nos forces de l'ordre doivent disposer des moyens nécessaires pour lutter contre les trafiquants et démanteler les réseaux criminels. Mais soyons lucides. La répression, elle seule, ne gagnera jamais la guerre contre la drogue. Elle peut perturber les réseaux. Elle peut permettre des arrestations. Elle peut réduire temporairement l'offre, mais elle ne s'attaque pas aux causes profondes de la consommation et tant que la demande existera, l'offre trouvera toujours le moyen de revenir.

C'est pourquoi la prévention, le traitement et la réhabilitation doivent bénéficier d'une attention et de ressources au moins équivalentes. Le gouvernement a lui-même reconnu que les personnes souffrant d'addiction doivent être considérées comme des victimes ayant besoin d'accompagnement, de soins et d'une véritable opportunité de réinsertion et je partage pleinement cette approche.

Mais un principe n'a de valeur que lorsqu'il se traduit concrètement dans les politiques publiques et dans les choix budgétaires. Cela soulève, donc, une question légitime : pourquoi une part plus importante des ressources n'a-t-elle pas été allouée à la *National Agency for Drug Control*, la NADEC, afin de renforcer les programmes de prévention, les structures de traitement, les centres de réhabilitation et les actions de sensibilisation dans les communautés ?

L'allocation prévue constitue certes un pas dans la bonne direction. Mais compte tenu de l'ampleur du problème, M. le président, pouvons-nous sincèrement affirmer qu'elle est à la hauteur des enjeux ? Chaque roupie investie dans la prévention permet d'éviter des coûts humains, sociaux et économiques beaucoup plus importants à l'avenir. Chaque jeune qui est empêché de tomber dans la dépendance représente une vie préservée, une famille protégée et un avenir sauvegardé. De même, chaque personne réhabilitée avec succès retrouve sa dignité et sa place dans la société.

Nous devons, donc, dépasser une approche principalement réactive pour construire une véritable stratégie préventive. Les écoles, les familles, les collectivités locales, les organisations religieuses, les travailleurs sociaux, les professionnels de la santé et les forces

de l'ordre doivent travailler ensemble dans le cadre d'une réponse nationale cohérente et coordonnée.

M. le président, l'objectif ne doit pas être uniquement d'arrêter davantage de personnes. L'objectif doit être que moins de personnes tombent dans l'addiction. L'objectif ne doit pas être uniquement de saisir davantage de drogues. Mais l'objectif doit être de sauver davantage de vies. Sur cette question, il existe un terrain d'entente qui dépasse les clivages politiques. Nous devons nous assurer que nos politiques, nos priorités et nos ressources reflètent pleinement cette ambition. Car, au final, notre responsabilité collective est claire : protéger nos citoyens, accompagner les personnes affectées par la dépendance et préserver l'avenir de notre pays.

M. le président, la sécurité est l'une des premières responsabilités de l'État. Sans sécurité, il ne peut y avoir ni développement économique durable, ni cohésion sociale, ni confiance dans les institutions. Je prends note des ressources importantes consacrées aux questions de *law and order* dans ce Budget. Je comprends la nécessité de doter nos forces de l'ordre de moyens humains, technologiques et matériels nécessaires pour accomplir leur mission.

Mais, au final, une question demeure. Les Mauriciens se sentent-ils, aujourd'hui, plus en sécurité ? C'est cela le véritable test. Car, les citoyens ne mesurent pas la sécurité à travers les chiffres budgétaires. Ils la mesurent lorsqu'ils rentrent chez eux le soir. Ils la mesurent lorsqu'ils laissent leurs enfants sortir. Ils la mesurent lorsqu'ils ouvrent leur commerce. Ils la mesurent, M. le président, lorsqu'ils circulent dans leur quartier. Les Mauriciens attendent des résultats concrets. Ils veulent moins de trafic de drogue. Ils veulent moins de criminalité. Ils veulent moins de violence. Mais, ils veulent davantage de présence policière sur le terrain. Ils veulent davantage de proximité entre les forces de l'ordre et les citoyens.

La lutte contre la criminalité ne peut pas reposer uniquement sur une approche répressive. La sécurité commence également par la prévention. Elle passe par l'éducation ; elle passe par l'insertion des jeunes ; elle passe par le sport ; elle passe par la lutte contre l'abandon scolaire ; elle passe par la lutte contre la toxicomanie.

Nous devons également, M. le président, veiller à préserver un équilibre fondamental entre sécurité et liberté individuelle. Une démocratie forte est capable de protéger ses citoyens tout en respectant leurs droits fondamentaux. Les deux objectifs ne sont pas

incompatibles. Le pays a besoin d'une stratégie cohérente où la police, les collectivités locales, les écoles, les travailleurs sociaux et les familles travaillent ensemble. Car, la sécurité ne se construit pas uniquement dans les commissariats. Elle se construit aussi dans les quartiers, dans les écoles, au sein des familles. Je soutiendrai, donc, toutes les mesures qui améliorent réellement la sécurité des Mauriciens. Mais, je continuerai également...

The Deputy Speaker: You have one minute to conclude.

Mr Quirin: ...à demander des comptes sur les résultats obtenus. Car, ce qui importe, ce n'est pas seulement ce qui est annoncé dans un budget. Ce qui importe, c'est ce qui change concrètement dans la vie quotidienne de nos concitoyens.

M. le président, dans ma course contre la montre, je m'arrête un moment aux courses hippiques. Je dois saluer la mesure qui consiste à aider les apprentis jockey mauriciens à avoir une assurance et recevoir une formation. J'avais suggéré cela au Premier ministre lors d'une de mes questions dans cette Assemblée. Je demande au gouvernement d'étendre cette mesure aux *track riders*, jockeys locaux et palefreniers. Ce sont les principaux artisans de l'industrie hippique mauricienne. Ils sont à pied d'œuvre, de janvier à décembre, pour garder cette industrie vivante. Ils méritent toute notre attention et notre considération.

Par ailleurs, le gouvernement annonce la création d'un *Horse Racing Fund*. Mais, à bien y voir, il n'y aura pas de grand changement sur cette nouvelle appellation.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Quirin, please, conclude. You have two minutes over. Please conclude now.

Mr Quirin: Please, one more minute.

On change simplement de nom. Les activités de la *Gambling Regulatory Authority* et de sa *Horse Racing Integrity Division* se font à travers la *Responsible Gambling and Capacity Building Fund*. Il passera désormais sur le nouveau *Horse Racing Fund*. Je rappelle à la Chambre que la GRA fait déjà les frais des analyses de contrôle antidopage pendant la saison et hors compétition également. Donc, rien de nouveau en ce qui concerne cette annonce.

Je vais conclure, M. le président, en disant quelques mots rapidement sur le volet culture du Budget 2026-27. Quelques secondes. Je note les intentions positives annoncées en

faveur de la culture et de nos artistes. Toutefois, je regrette l'absence d'un projet concret pour doter le pays d'une véritable infrastructure permettant à nos artistes de se produire dans des conditions professionnelles et devant un large public.

M. le président, la culture n'est pas un luxe. Elle fait partie de notre identité nationale et mérite des investissements à la hauteur du talent de nos artistes. Je prends acte des mesures annoncées dans ce Budget, mais au-delà des déclarations d'intention, je serai particulièrement attentif à leur mise en œuvre. Nos artistes ont entendu beaucoup de promesses au fil des années. Il est temps, M. le président, de passer des annonces aux réalisations concrètes.

Je vous remercie.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. Lukeeram!

(2.38 p.m.)

Mr C. Lukeeram (Third Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am most grateful to be given an opportunity to address this august Assembly on the Budget 2026-2027, which was presented, on 19 June 2026, by Dr. the hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands.

The Budget Speech, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, depicts a cry into the reality. One cannot escape the reality by wearing blinkers, for it would serve no purpose. The aim was certainly not to *jeter de la poudre aux yeux*. The inevitable choice was this: to see our country with the eyes of the one who adopts a laborious foresight rather than act with thoughtfulness.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am moved by the term 'candid', which was used by Dr. the hon. Prime Minister when he referred to the reconstruction of our nation, which is firmly on track. I believe that to reconstruct, it demands bold decisions for we must not forget, a reconstruction necessarily implies that there was a chaos. But when hardship strikes, it begs for this question: Are we of those who would evade our responsibility, or are we of those who would work meticulously towards stability? I shall come back to this question later on.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, our country should preserve as a safe heaven. Its richness lies in the people, in our culture, in our diversity, in our authenticity and also, in our ability to

fight together. We have to recognise that our country was not spared in that our resources have been siphoned off over the years. Let us not come back on the past.

But we have to acknowledge that uncomfortable truths, albeit disappointing, have to be looked at with the eyes of the ones who choose a laborious foresight. We cannot shield the people by coming up with measures which we cannot achieve. This was never our aim. The aim was to rebuild. If we have to rebuild, we have to make the right choice. The right choice, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is to act responsibly today.

May I, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, comment on some laudable measures which were proposed in this budget? Who has not heard someone speaking of the Mauritian kindness, our hospitality, and our simplicity? These values stem from our national heritage and our culture. A good life is not measured by wealth, but it is about happiness and good health. One of the strongest pillars of human being is our family. To protect our family, we have to come up with a solid action plan to maintain law and order within our society.

I commend the decision to earmark Rs14.2 billion to uphold law and order and a sum of Rs80 million for the National Agency for Drug Control. The fight against drug abuse and trafficking is at the core of our mandate. This budget precisely seeks to implement solid measures to address this scourge: prevention, dismantling of systems entrenched by drug lords, and healing. The budget rightly identifies that in order to fight drug abuse; it is crucial to create an awareness as to its dangers.

We must persistently invest in nationwide awareness campaign to educate the public as to the dangers of drug abuse and trafficking. We must believe, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in the kindness of the one who fell in the scourge of drug abuse, and we must provide to that person the means to stand up again and get hold of his or her life. The budget lays emphasis that there is a need for concerted efforts. I agree. The fight against drug abuse is not a matter which should be left at the door of the police force. It is a matter of concern for each and every one of us.

The decision to allocate a sum of Rs50 million to be used by every Ministry to address the fight against drug trafficking is well reasoned. We should not believe that drug abuse is the concern of only one person. For we all bear that responsibility to lend a helping hand to this friend, this family member or this colleague who is trapped in the downward spiral of drugs abuse.

Having said so, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I find it to be a very good decision to work towards a 24/7 national drug hotline to provide assistance, counselling and referral service to those affected by the growing and devastating scourge of our society. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as ably canvassed in the budget, a family represents the foundation of a stable and prosperous society. We could not have devised an action plan to maintain the stability of our society without catering for education.

I find it most important to highlight this conviction of the Government, that is, no child should be left behind. By allocating a reasonable amount for the acquisition of textbooks and learning materials and the setting up of three new MITD multi-sector training centres to deliver the foundation practical programs for children in Grades 7-9, the Government sets out a clear vision: education is at the centre of our society.

However, education starts at a young age. The decision to have a basic Literacy and Numeracy Programme for Grades 1 and 2 will ensure that we are also tackling issues of learning gaps. There are various measures which have been proposed in the budget to ensure that every child is given proper access to education. I wish to also highlight that the issue of bullying in our school has been rightly addressed in the budget.

The decision to provide funds to introduce an anti-bullying campaign in all our school is commendable. This serves as a comfort that this Government is paying an attentive ear to issues which are plaguing our society and our children.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as an elected Member of the constituency No. 12, Mahebourg, Plaine Magnien, may I also convey my gratitude to Dr. the hon. Prime Minister for earmarking the sum of Rs100 million to undertake the complete rehabilitation of the National History Museum at Mahebourg. Our culture, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is a real gem. It defines who we are, forging our values while shaping our individuality. There was a need to preserve this heritage and to ensure that we could pass on the invaluable asset to our children.

It was long awaited. I am eager to see the rehabilitation of this national heritage. I know that the budget addresses the need to strengthen cultural assets. May I also make a humble suggestion –this relates to the local market of Mahebourg – Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as an elected Member of Constituency No. 12, I see that there is a need to provide a new local market in this region.

The present one requires extensive refurbishment, but due to the nature of these renovations and for health and safety considerations, not only me, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir,

but also my two hon. colleagues, hon. Ramful and hon. Apollon, are all unanimously of the view that it would be more appropriate to build a new state of the art market, which will not only encourage the diversification of tourism products, but it will also act as a means for local sellers, producers and farmers to earn their living while allowing the residents to have better access to local food. Local markets in each constituency undeniably represent the culture of our country.

We should aim to safeguard our cultural heritage and preserve their uniqueness. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I did mention in a previous address that I witnessed loads of cases in Constituency No. 12, whereby people were deprived of water, which situation could also be attributed to the lack of proper water pipes.

I welcome the decision to allocate funds to provide households with facilities such as tanks and fitting for continuous water supply, investment in the drilling of 20 more boreholes, pipe replacements and constructions of 15 more containerised pressure filtration units. Basic necessities, such as access to water, are indispensable requirements to build physical well-being within our society. The investment which will be made in our healthcare institutions is also a decision, which is inevitable and logical.

For without access to an efficient healthcare system, one cannot strive to have a good life. This had to be catered for. I find it imperative to comment on the investment which will be made in the judiciary. The appointment of additional court officers, administrative and technical staff is what we have been requesting for long. So is streamlining the justice system.

The measures which have been proposed such as the setting up of a criminal court to expedite hearings when the accused party has pleaded guilty will instil trust that the rights of the people are safeguarded. We have also realised that we now live in a modern society, and there was no doubt that eventually we would enhance the e-judiciary platform.

Whilst the setting up of such a platform will require skills, I am confident that this will reduce backlog and bring about faster access to justice.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the budget is presently under scrutiny. Some measures are acclaimed and some might be perceived as unpopular, but to see the reality requires to have self-reflection.

This aligns with the duty of acting responsibly. It is precisely what we are all doing since few days by providing our views and comments on the budget. It is important whilst

going through this exercise that we take onboard what this Government has been doing since day one. We had a clear mandate to rebuild, to offer solutions, to face hardship together, and to provide to our country solid foundations.

If we have to see the bigger picture, in the words of the hon. Attorney General, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we will see this.

As part of this vision, the Government has come up with major legislations devised as a firm action plan, restored democracy and revived confidence in our institutions. Let us therefore be assessed by the actions taken up to now.

A long-awaited legislation, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, was to review the protection afforded to victims of domestic violence. The budget recognises that there can be no equality without safety. I can only agree. It was indeed necessary to have a new Domestic Abuse Bill to strengthen and convey all its importance to protection orders issued to victims of acts of domestic violence.

To conclude, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I shall do so by saying this. Time will define what has been achieved and such achievements will entirely depend on the actions taken.

Therefore, let us not be of those who escape the responsibility today. Let us keep in mind that our present actions will have consequences tomorrow. So is our inaction. To be responsible, we must be ready for potential challenges and to be accountable, requires that we act when we have to.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. R. Saumtally!

(2.52 p.m.)

Dr. R. Saumtally (Third Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. At the very outset, I wish to express my sincere appreciation to the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, for his unwavering leadership and vision in steering Mauritius towards a more prosperous and inclusive future.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this budget has been formulated in a challenging global economic environment, marked by its lowering growth, geopolitical uncertainties,

inflationary pressures and fiscal constraints. Despite these challenges, Government has presented a balanced budget that seek to restore fiscal discipline, stimulate economic growth, strengthens social protection and prepare Mauritius for the opportunities of the digital and AI era.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my exposure today in this August Assembly is to point out how this budget contributes towards the main pillars of the economy and my Constituency No. 10. First of all, let us start with the actual state of macroeconomic performance challenges we are actually facing. Mauritius's GDP exceeds USD 8 billion with a GDP per capita which is about USD 13,800, making Mauritius one of the top three highest income economies in Africa. Because of geopolitical uncertainty, tighter fiscal conditions and weak global demand, expected growth has been lowered to 3%. Public debt is high at about 88% of GDP. That is why this budget stresses fiscal consideration. Inflation remains unstable around 5% to 7%. This is mainly due to higher imported foods and energy prices. Unemployment is around 6% to 7%.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in this situation, this budget focuses on stabilizing public finances, while also supporting growth and long-term reforms. Macroeconomic stability remains essential for competitiveness and resilience.

The first sector is agricultural and food security. Food security is a strategic priority today. It is especially important because of climatic changes, geopolitical tension and rising global food prices.

Mauritius imports about 60% to 70% of its food needs. The annual food import bill is estimated at more than Rs40 to Rs50 billion. Agriculture contributes around 3% of GDP. It directly or indirectly employs about 30,000 to 35,000 workers, which is important for rural livelihood. This budget supports agricultural diversification, mechanization, irrigation expansion, climate smart agriculture and more support for planters and livestock breeders.

The aim of this budget is to reduce import dependence, increase local production, strengthen food sovereignty and improve farmers' income. As an elected member of Constituency No. 10, I strongly advocate the setting up of an Agri-Auction Centre to cater for the need of a high number of farmers in my constituency.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, for the Blue Economy Sector, Mauritius has an exclusive economic zone of about 2.3 million square meters. This gives the country major ocean-based opportunities. This sector includes fisheries, aquaculture, marine biotechnology, ocean

renewable energy and maritime services. This sector can create jobs, support food security and reduce dependence on land-based activities.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this budget encourages more investment in these areas. It focuses on sustainability, innovation and private sector participation. I strongly propose the setting up of aqua farming fully equipped with cold rooms at Trou d'Eau Douce to meet the need for local fishermen in the region.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, for the manufacturing sector, it contributes about 12% of GDP. It supports many jobs in industrial production, agro-processing, textile and export activities. Policy prioritises including industrial modernization, higher productivity, export diversification, innovation and advanced technology. There is also a strong focus on small and medium-sized enterprises. This budget encourages automation, digitalisation and smart manufacturing. A stronger manufacturing base can reduce import, improve trade performance and support more balanced long-term growth. In this context, I make an appeal for the industrial zone initiative at Caroline to become a reality project for job creation and economic activity in Constituency No. 10.

Tourism sector contributes about 20% of GDP. It supports more than 100,000 direct and indirect jobs and brings in a large share of foreign exchange. Despite global shocks, pandemics and strong regional competition, Mauritius has kept its image as a premium and high value destination. This is helped by political stability and strong service standard. This budget supports high value and sustainable tourism. It promotes economic tourism, better infrastructure and diversification into new market, especially fast growing and emerging economies.

In my Constituency No. 10, at Grand Rivière Sud-Est Waterfront project will be a turning point for the tourism industry and regional economic enhancement. The goal is to make tourism more resilient, more diverse and more sustainable so that it remains a major engine of growth. The financial service sector account for about 13% of GDP. The sector provides more than 20,000 direct and indirect jobs in banking, insurance, global business, asset management and fiduciary services.

Mauritius has over 1,000 global business companies. It has also historically administered more than 25,000 treaty-based structures linking investment flows between Africa, Asia and Europe.

Key priorities include digital financial services and Fintech. It also includes a regulatory framework for stable coins and tokenised real assets. This budget aims to strengthen the sector through better regulation, stronger investor confidence, digital transformation, and financial innovation. It also supports sustainable finance and ESG-based investment. The aim is to position Mauritius as a modern, well-regulated, and innovation-driven financial sector.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, education is treated as a major pillar of sustainable development and national competitiveness. This is even more important in a future shaped by AI and digitalisation. Funding for learners with special educational needs rises from Rs562 million to Rs619 million – this is an increase of more than 10%. I wish to express my sincere appreciation to my colleague, the hon. Minister of Education, Dr. Mahend Gungapersad, for his unwavering commitment to the Foundation Programme, thank you, Sir.

With a budget allocation of Rs133 million, the Foundation Programme will provide a second chance to learners who need academic support and strengthen their skills for a brighter future. This initiative reflects Government's determination and the hon. Prime Minister's vision to ensure that no child is left behind. To promote vocational education, I welcome the conversion of Sebastopol SSS into a probable MITD Centre.

The health sector accounts for about 5 to 6% of total Government's spending. Life expectancy is about 74 to 75 years. One important measure is the extension of the home medical visits to citizens aged 85. This means the health system must pay more attention to preventive care and services for older people. This budget introduces measures to improve access, quality, resilience in healthcare. Around Rs58 million is allocated for elderly healthcare support. This budget also plans to recruit more doctors, nurses, and allied health professionals. In this context, I welcome this initiative for making the Bel Air Mediclinic fully operational for a better health service in my constituency.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, infrastructural investment is described as a major driver of growth, productivity, and structural transformation. The construction and infrastructure sector contributes about 6 to 8% of GDP. It provides about 35,000 to 45,000 jobs. Transport infrastructure can reduce logistic costs by 20 to 30%. This budget continues to prioritise roads, bridges, drainage, flood control, water supply, digital connectivity, and public transport. I heartily welcome the major upcoming road development project M4 designed to connect the northern region to the south east region transit through Bel Air.

In conclusion, Budget 2026-2027 is framed as a coherent and forward-looking roadmap in the four main sectors to a more inclusive, competitive, and resilient Mauritius. It seeks to tackle fiscal constraint while sustaining growth, investment in education, infrastructure, strengthen health, social protection, and family policies.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I, therefore, commend this budget, and I extend my sincere appreciation to the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, for presenting a strategic and future-oriented vision aimed at securing prosperity to the present and future generation.

Thank you for your attention.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. Dr. Saumtally.

Hon. Venkatasami!

(3.05 p.m.)

Mr G. P. Venkatasami (Third Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I rise today to participate in the debates on the Appropriation 2026-27 Bill presented by the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam.

This budget is not merely a financial document. It is a roadmap for a stronger, fairer, and more resilient Mauritius. Any budget exercise is a balancing act. On one hand, Government has to secure sound finances. And on the other hand, to ensure the welfare of its citizens. This budget addresses today's global challenges/difficulties, while preparing our nation for the opportunities of tomorrow.

Let us not forget that the economy was in freefall when we took office. Facing significant pressures, rising public debt, global economic uncertainty, inflationary challenges, and the need to modernise key sectors rather than avoiding difficult decisions, this Government has chosen responsibility, vision, and action. This budget reflects those values.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we need to understand that we are living in a period of uncertainty and very unstable geopolitical environment: wars in the Middle East, war in Ukraine, problems of food chain supply, increased cost of oil and petroleum products. We are not immune to what happens outside our country. This is the environment within which the Government has now to operate to protect the country and the well-being of our citizens.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the central theme of this budget is clear: building a future-ready economy while protecting the most vulnerable members of our society. It is a budget based on three principles –

- 1) economic transformation, social
- 2) justice, and
- 3) fiscal responsibility.

Let me first address the issue of economic transformation.

The world economy is changing rapidly. Mauritius cannot afford to remain on the sidelines. This budget, therefore, places strong emphasis on AI, digitalisation, innovation, and the development of new economic sectors. Investments are being made to encourage technology-driven businesses, start-ups, and modern industries that can create high quality jobs for our youth.

For years now, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have spoken about diversifying our economy. This budget delivers concrete measures to make that happen. It strengthens the support of entrepreneurship, promotes research and innovation, and encourages both local and foreign investment. It creates the necessary condition for Mauritius to become a competitive regional hub for technology, financial services, healthcare, and innovation.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, another key pillar of this budget is strengthening our infrastructure. Modern economies require modern infrastructure. The budget contains measures aimed at improving port facilities, logistic capabilities, strategic public investments. Such investments are not expenses. They are investments in our future competitiveness. Better infrastructure means lower business cost, increased trade opportunities, and more employment opportunities for Mauritius.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, economic growth alone is not enough. Growth must be inclusive. Growth must improve people's life. That is why I commend this Government for ensuring that social protection remains at the heart of the budget. Important measures have been announced to support families, persons with disabilities, caregivers, and vulnerable groups. Additional support for carers, special education needs, and healthcare service demonstrates that this Government believes in leaving no one behind.

Some critics argue that social measures are a burden on public finances. I respectfully disagree. Social investment is not a cost. It is an investment in human dignity and social

stability. A society that protects its vulnerable citizens is a society that builds long-term prosperity. We will always invest in our people and in our future.

The Budget also strengthens the healthcare sector through targeted initiatives designed to improve services and position Mauritius as a regional centre for healthcare and life sciences. This represents both a social and economic opportunity for our nation.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would also like to highlight the Budget's commitment to our people. The future of Mauritius depends on the opportunities available to our youth today. Through investment in technology, skills development, entrepreneurship and innovation, this Budget creates pathways for young Mauritians to succeed in a rapidly changing world. The focus on digital transformation and emerging industries is particularly important because it aligns our economy with global trends. Instead of preparing our youth for yesterday's job, this Government is preparing them for tomorrow's opportunities.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, environmental sustainability and climate resilience is also featured prominently in this Budget. As a Small Island Developing State, Mauritius is particularly vulnerable to climate change, rising sea levels, extreme weather events, and environmental degradation pose serious threats to our economy and our way of life. The Budget recognises these realities and incorporates measures aimed at strengthening climate resilience and supporting sustainable development. Protecting the environment is not a luxury. It is a necessity for future generation.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, a responsible government must also ensure sound public finances. One of the strengths of this Budget is its combined ambition with fiscal discipline, while supporting economic growth and social protection. The Government remains committed to restore fiscal sustainability and improving public financial management. This balanced approach sends a strong message to investors, international partners and the Mauritian people, that our economic future is being managed responsibly, but we also do listen to our people's needs and urgencies.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, leadership is not about making easy decisions, but it is about making the right decision, even when they are difficult, as shown by the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance. The Budget takes courageous steps to address structural challenges while laying the foundation for future prosperity. Some measures may require adjustment, but they are guided by the long-term interests of our nation.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me say a few words on my constituency, Constituency No. 8, Moka-Quartier Militaire. A lot has been done in our constituency, but, still, there is a lot to be done also. I would like to address a few words to the hon. Minister of Public Utilities, who is not here, and make a special request to address the problem of the pipe laying project at St. Julien d'Hotman, B24, by the CWA. The project has stopped for more than one year now and is causing a lot of inconvenience to the road users and the inhabitants over there. Also, I have a second request to make to him for the installation of buffer storage tanks at upper Nouvelle Découverte to address the severe water supply issue over there.

I will also make a special request to the Minister of Health and Wellness, hon. Anil Bachoo. It is imperative that the area of St. Pierre is provided with a mediclinic now, because St. Pierre and its surroundings, 13 villages, namely Circonstance, Petit Verger, Côte d'Or, Helvétia, L'Agrément, L'Avenir, La Laura-Malenga, Beau Bois, Ripailles, Nouvelle Découverte, Verdun and Dagotièrre, deserve it. Actually, they have to go to Dr. Jeetoo Hospital to get treatment. So, if you can improve and consider to construct a Mediclinic in St. Pierre.

The Deputy Speaker: Address the Chair! Address the Chair! Hon. Bachoo, you will have an opportunity to talk later; you can reply. Let us listen to him.

Mr Venkatasami: I conclude, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. The Government has chosen a different path; the path of reform, responsibility, and progress. This Budget demonstrates that Mauritius is not at a standstill. It is moving forward. It is investing in innovation, supporting businesses, protecting families, strengthening healthcare, creating opportunities for youth, and safeguarding our future.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the National Budget 2026-2027 is a budget that builds for the future. It is a budget that balances economic growth with social justice. It is a budget that promotes innovation while protecting the vulnerable. It is a budget that prepares Mauritius for the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century. For this reason, I wholeheartedly support the Bill.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. Member.

Hon. Juman!

(3.17 p.m.)

Mr E. Juman (First Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East): M. le président, chers collègues, merci de m'avoir accordé l'opportunité d'apporter ma contribution à ce débat budgétaire 2026-2027, budget qui a été présenté vendredi dernier par l'honorable Premier ministre et ministre des Finances.

À travers vous, M. le président, je m'adresse à mes mandants et à la République. M. le président, c'est ma septième, comme plusieurs de mes collègues, intervention lors des débats budgétaires. J'ai passé 5 ans dans l'opposition ; cinq interventions en tant que membre de l'opposition. J'ai énuméré en long et en large les frasques du précédent gouvernement, commençant par la gestion du Covid, la MIC, Air Mauritius, Molnupiravir, MMG. Il y en a tant d'autres. Mais, M. le président, à chaque fois, lors de mon intervention, je disais qu'on était en train de se diriger droit vers le précipice. Et l'année dernière, lors de mon intervention, en tant que membre du gouvernement, j'ai fait le constat, et le constat était accablant. On n'était pas au bord du précipice, mais bien au fond du précipice.

Voilà, le contexte de ce budget. On a absolument hérité comme une maison en ruine. Les bases et les colonnes sont secouées. Et qu'est-ce qu'on fait avec cette maison ? Est-ce qu'on colmate ? On se contente de repeindre ou on consolide les bases ? Voilà, ce qu'est ce budget. La philosophie de ce budget est de consolider les bases. Mais, M. le président, il faut aussi comprendre que ce budget, présenté vendredi dernier par le Premier ministre, comprend 69 pages. Mais, aujourd'hui, tout le monde se focalise sur le dossier de la pension. Avec raison !

M. le président, pour réussir les transformations dont le pays a besoin, un gouvernement doit pouvoir compter sur la confiance de la population. Et cette confiance se construit par l'écoute. Elle se construit par le dialogue. Elle se construit aussi par l'humilité. Nous avons exprimé des inquiétudes légitimes dès vendredi soir. J'ai parlé avec l'honorable ministre Patrick Assirvaden, l'honorable *Junior Minister*, l'honorable Shakeel Mohamed, enfin plusieurs de nos collègues honorables ministres et honorables députés.

Moi, j'ai fait part de mes appréhensions au Premier Ministre, mais l'honorable Premier Ministre n'a pas choisi l'arrogance. Il n'a pas répondu par le mépris. Il n'a pas prétendu détenir

seul la vérité. Il a écouté, il a consulté, il a analysé, et dès lundi matin, il a agi ; 11h37, il répond à la population à travers cette Assemblée nationale. Il dit qu'on gèle le ciblage de la pension. Il est allé beaucoup plus loin.

Hier après-midi, j'étais avec l'honorable Premier Ministre. Je vois que dans la presse, c'est mentionné que j'ai été recadré. Mais non ! J'étais là-bas pour parler de ça !

Ms Savabaddy: Nous étions !

Mr Juman: Nous étions là-bas pour parler des affaires du pays avec le président du Parti travailliste. Moi, j'ai dit à l'honorable Premier Ministre que pour dissiper la confusion, il faut tout simplement éliminer le ciblage. Il m'a dit oui, et aujourd'hui, il a adressé la nation à travers la *PNQ*. Il a dit plus de ciblage pendant notre mandat. Pas de ciblage.

C'est ça qu'on appelle un gouvernement à l'écoute. M. le président, il y a aussi le maître mot de ce budget : la solidarité. On a sollicité la solidarité de la population. Mais on est aussi - moi, je suis, et mes collègues aussi - solidaire avec la population.

On a commencé le budget et le discours du budget en fait mention, parce que vous vous souvenez peut-être, il y a quelques semaines de cela, moi-même j'avais, avec d'autres collègues, après l'effet de la crise, pendant l'effet de la crise au Moyen-Orient, l'effet se faisait sentir. Il y avait l'augmentation du prix du carburant, de l'électricité, le prix des produits de base, parce que la plupart de nos produits sont importés. Mais qu'est-ce qu'on a fait ? Moi-même je suis solidaire. S'il faut baisser, pas s'il faut, j'ai demandé à prélever 20% de mon salaire pour être en solidarité avec la population.

Peut-être, oui, les méthodes n'étaient pas correctes. Mais l'honorable Premier Ministre a écouté, et il a agi. Dans le budget, il a proposé, et il dit que nous devons commencer par nous-mêmes ; la solidarité, la rupture. Comment on peut demander à un éboueur, un chauffeur de camion, un laboureur, de repousser son âge de pension à 65 ans, et moi, l'honorable Eshan Juman, en tant que député de 50 ans, demande à passer, et je dis que je dois toucher ma pension jusqu'à la fin de ma vie ?

Ma pension, éliminée. C'est ça la solidarité. C'est ça la rupture. On a demandé, j'ai demandé, l'honorable Patrick Assirvaden l'a fait, l'honorable Osman Mahomed, de privilégier le covoiturage. On a augmenté la taxe sur les véhicules pour diminuer le nombre de véhicules sur nos routes. Mais comment on peut demander à la population de ne pas acheter de voiture, et nous, chaque 3 ans, on change notre voiture ; éliminé maintenant. C'est ça la rupture.

Pourquoi le Président de la République, le Vice-Président de la République doivent être exemptés de la taxe, alors que toute la population, tous les salariés doivent payer ? À partir du budget qui vient d'être présenté, ils auront à payer leurs taxes. Hier, j'étais avec l'honorable Premier Ministre. Je lui ai dit : Monsieur le Premier ministre, on avait promis d'abolir le poste de vice-président. Le vice-président est en train de faire un travail formidable. Il a dit oui, ça va venir, peut-être que c'est le dernier. Je fais un appel à l'honorable Premier Ministre. Peut-être que c'est le dernier vice-président de notre République. Mais c'est ça le changement ; c'est ça gouverner avec la population pour la population.

M. le président, on est en train de poser des bases solides. Pas pour 2029, pas pour les élections, pas pour être populaire. C'est pour ça que je dis - je suis en train de m'adresser directement à la population - qu'on est en train de projeter d'investir R 47 milliards pour rénover notre port, le rendre plus moderne et plus sophistiqué. R 47 milliards, avec la collaboration de l'Inde.

Vous savez ce que ça représente ? Vous savez combien d'emplois ça va créer ? Est-ce que vous savez que géographiquement, on est situé sur la route maritime reliant l'Asie, l'Afrique et le Moyen-Orient ? Vous savez quelle opportunité ça représente pour les jeunes ? Peut-être pas 2029 ! On n'est pas en train de regarder pour 2029 ; peut-être pour les générations à venir ! Mais c'est de cela qu'on est en train de parler. R 2 milliards pour l'autoroute. Est-ce qu'on peut appeler *ça bat bate* ? R 47 milliards pour un port moderne !

An hon. Member: *Lin bat dan latet li.*

Mr Juman: Est-ce que vous réalisez, R 2 milliards pour une autoroute reliant le nord, Forbach à l'aéroport ? R 2.7 milliards pour rénover, moderniser notre aéroport avec l'objectif - le ministre du Tourisme vient de nous en parler deux jours de cela ; 1.4 millions de touristes. Est-ce qu'on va rester avec 1.4 millions de touristes ? Dans 10 ans, 12 ans, 15 ans, on ne peut pas viser 5-6 millions de touristes ? Qu'est-ce qu'on fait ? On n'a pas de connectivité à ce moment-là ?

On est en train de moderniser l'aéroport avec *Smart Gates*. Si un touriste, un passager débarque, le premier pas qu'il met à l'aéroport, dans les 15 minutes qui suivent, avec ses bagages, il doit quitter l'aéroport. C'est ça ce qu'on veut. Est-ce que c'est ça ce qu'on appelle *bat bate* ?

Diminuer l'âge pour visite à domicile pour les personnes âgées, de 90 ans à 85 ans. Convertir l'hôpital de Flacq. On est en train de parler du combat contre la drogue. Il faut commencer par le commencement. Il faut voir combien de toxicomanes sont en train de souffrir aujourd'hui ! Qu'est-ce qu'on fait avec eux ? Il faut vivre la souffrance des parents ; combien ils payent pour faire soigner leur mari, leurs enfants, leurs filles ! On est en train de convertir l'hôpital de Flacq pour cela.

Il y a un mois de cela, mes collègues et moi avons eu une rencontre avec l'ADSU, la police, avec le soutien de l'honorable Premier Ministre. Dans une semaine, on aura un bureau de l'ADSU à Plaine Verte ; la semaine prochaine. C'est ça qu'on appelle combat contre le fléau de la drogue !

Mais, M. le président, je peux continuer comme ça. Il y a beaucoup de mesures que je peux énumérer de ces 96 pages que la population n'a pas eu l'occasion d'y aller en détail.

Ce n'est pas pour demain, ce n'est pas pour après-demain. C'est pour les générations à venir. Rendre l'accessibilité, rendre l'accès aux infrastructures sportives gratuit à tout le monde. Merci à l'honorable *Junior Minister* aux finances.

Mais c'est pour qui ? C'est pour nos sportifs. C'est pour tout le monde pour pratiquer l'exercice physique, il faut demander à l'honorable Anil Bachoo. Je vois, qu'il y a une liste de *delo coco sucré*, bonbon, chocolat. Ce n'est pas de gaité de cœur qu'on est en train d'augmenter la taxe. Il faut aller à l'hôpital pour voir combien de diabétiques qu'on a.

The Deputy Speaker: You have got 2 minutes to conclude.

Mr Juman: 200,000 diabétiques. Il faut aller voir là-bas combien d'amputation il y a tous les jours. Il faut voir le nombre de dialysés. C'est ça le problème. Il faut comprendre, ce n'est pas pour gagner de l'argent. C'est pour décourager à prendre le sucre. C'est ce qu'on veut. Mais il faut comprendre le contexte et ce qu'on vit. On a une population vieillissante.

M. le président, avant de terminer, je fais un appel avec l'honorable ministre Assirvaden. Je lui demande, il y a un problème à Agalega concernant l'électricité, on a un seul générateur. Si on peut avoir un générateur en plus, si c'est possible. Et M. le président, avant de terminer, je veux demander, je sollicite le soutien de tout le monde, tous les membres de la Chambre, que ce soit l'opposition, le gouvernement, la fédération football, la presse. Vous savez aujourd'hui, on est en 2026. Je vais qu'on fixe l'objectif que Maurice soit aux phases finales de la Coupe du monde 2042. Et aujourd'hui, je sollicite le soutien de l'honorable Premier ministre, le ministre des Finances, le ministre du Sport, l'honorable

Junior Minister. C'est possible. On a toutes les qualités. On a les infrastructures. Ensemble, on peut réussir. Merci pour votre attention, M. le président.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Ms K. Foo kune Bacha!

(3.33 p.m.)

Ms K. Foo Kune-Bacha (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) :
 Merci. M. le président, lorsqu'un budget est présenté, il est souvent jugé à travers les mesures qui marquent les esprits. Celles qui suscitent les réactions les plus fortes et les émotions les plus vives. Certes, ce budget n'est pas parfait, aucun budget ne le sera jamais.

Mais cette année, force est de constater qu'une mesure en particulier a dominé le débat public au point parfois d'éclipser les nombreuses autres mesures positives et courageuses contenues dans ce budget. Pourtant, un budget ne se résume jamais à une seule mesure.

Il est le reflet d'une vision globale pour un pays, d'une stratégie pour son développement, d'un engagement envers sa population et d'une responsabilité envers les générations futures. Mais si la State Age Pension a suscité autant d'émotions, c'est parce qu'elle touchait à quelque chose de profondément sensible pour les Mauriciens. Et c'est précisément là que réside toute l'importance de notre démocratie. Un budget n'est pas un document figé.

Il doit pouvoir être débattu, enrichi et lorsque cela est nécessaire, ajusté. Gouverner, M. le président, c'est non seulement prendre des décisions difficiles, car il est toujours plus facile de reporter les problèmes à demain. Mais gouverner, c'est aussi écouter, corriger et progresser continuellement. Je tiens d'ailleurs à saluer l'écoute de l'honorable Premier ministre qui a su entendre les différents points de vue et préoccupations exprimées au sein même du gouvernement, du MMM et de la population. Grâce au dialogue, au respect mutuel et à une volonté commune de trouver la meilleure solution possible pour le pays, des ajustements ont été apportés au grand soulagement de nombreux Mauriciens.

Cette évolution démontre que la force d'un gouvernement ne réside pas dans son refus de changer d'avis, mais dans sa capacité à écouter et à agir dans l'intérêt supérieur de la nation. M. le président, ce budget nous rappelle une vérité essentielle. La prospérité d'une nation ne se mesure pas uniquement à ses chiffres économiques. Elle se mesure surtout à sa capacité à préparer l'avenir de ses enfants et à transmettre aux générations futures. Je me réjouis que ce budget place la jeunesse au cœur de la transformation de notre pays. Ce budget

reconnaît que la plus grande richesse de Maurice est dans son capital humain, dans le talent et le potentiel de sa jeunesse.

Nous vivons à l'époque où le monde évolue à une vitesse sans précédent. L'intelligence artificielle et les nouvelles technologies redéfinissent déjà les métiers de demain. Et face à cette réalité, notre responsabilité est de donner à nos jeunes les outils nécessaires pour réussir dans cette nouvelle économie. C'est pour cela que je salue les investissements prévus pour former des milliers de Mauriciens aux compétences liées à l'IA et qui permettront à nos jeunes non seulement de s'adapter au monde de demain, mais surtout d'en devenir des leaders.

Je salue également les mesures visant à encourager l'innovation, les *start-ups* et l'entrepreneuriat qui donneront aux jeunes Mauriciens les moyens de transformer leurs idées en projets concrets. Mais M. le président, préparer l'avenir ne consiste pas uniquement à investir dans les compétences techniques. Nous devons également investir dans les valeurs. Dans un monde où tout va plus vite, où les réseaux sociaux façonnent parfois les comportements, où les repères peuvent sembler fragiles. Nous devons continuer à promouvoir le respect et la discipline, l'intégrité, la responsabilité, la solidarité et le sens du devoir.

Ces valeurs sont essentielles pour bâtir une nation forte et c'est aussi pourquoi le sport demeure un pilier fondamental de notre politique de jeunesse. Le sport n'est pas simplement une activité physique, il est une école de vie. Il apprend aussi à gagner avec humilité, à perdre avec dignité, à travailler ensemble en équipe et à ne jamais abandonner face à l'adversité. Ce sont précisément ces qualités dont notre jeunesse aura besoin pour relever les défis de demain. Le sport constitue l'un des outils les plus puissants de prévention contre la drogue, la violence et les fléaux sociaux qui menacent notre jeunesse. C'est pour cela que je me réjouis de la mesure qui vise à offrir un accès gratuit aux infrastructures sportives communautaires car cette initiative permettra à davantage de jeunes de pratiquer un sport.

Je salue également la réintroduction du NICE – National Initiative for Civic Education, une initiative essentielle dans le contexte actuel. Au-delà des connaissances académiques, notre pays a besoin de former des citoyens responsables, respectueux et engagés face aux défis que sont la violence, l'intolérance, la désinformation, le *cyberbullying* et l'affaiblissement du sens du devoir civique. Il est primordial de transmettre à nos jeunes les valeurs essentielles et l'éducation civique contribuera aussi à renforcer la cohésion sociale et le vivre-ensemble.

Ce budget est également un budget de responsabilité envers les générations futures. Les investissements dans la sécurité alimentaire, l'accès à l'eau, les énergies renouvelables, l'économie bleue, la transformation numérique et la résilience climatique témoignent d'une vision qui dépasse le court terme. Nous refusons de léguer à nos enfants les problèmes que nous aurions dû résoudre nous-mêmes. Nous choisissons au contraire de leur transmettre un pays plus fort, plus moderne et mieux préparé aux défis du futur. Les jeunes d'aujourd'hui et les enfants qui naîtront demain méritent des dirigeants capables de regarder au-delà du présent pour bâtir un avenir durable.

M. le président, je tiens à saluer les mesures de ce budget en faveur du sport mauricien et surtout de nos sportifs en prévoyant une plus grande enveloppe dans cette année-ci pour le ministère de la Jeunesse et des Sports. Un ministère qui me donne l'opportunité et l'honneur de servir les sportifs et la jeunesse mauricienne. En prévoyant R 110,5 millions pour la préparation et la participation de nos athlètes aux grands rendez-vous internationaux, le gouvernement envoie un message clair : nous croyons en nos athlètes, nous respectons leur sacrifice et nous voulons leur donner les moyens de porter haut le drapeau quadricolore, et nous reconnaissons leur rôle comme ambassadeurs de notre pays. Je sais par expérience que derrière chaque performance se cachent des années de discipline, de douleur, de doute, de sacrifice et d'efforts invisibles.

S'il y a une proposition qui me tient le plus à cœur, M. le président, surtout en tant qu'ancienne athlète de niveau et athlète olympique, la mesure que je souhaite voir devenir une réalité dans notre politique sportive nationale, c'est la mise en place d'un quota d'emploi au sein de la fonction publique réservé aux sportifs de haut niveau ayant représenté Maurice avec distinction. C'est à l'image de la France, l'Italie, l'Espagne, l'Inde et la Chine, entre autres.

Trop souvent, M. le président, nos jeunes talents sont confrontés à un choix douloureux : poursuivre leurs ambitions sportives ou privilégier leurs études et leurs avenir professionnels. Combien d'athlètes prometteurs ont abandonné leurs rêves par crainte de l'incertitude de l'après-carrière ? Combien de familles ont encouragé leurs enfants à quitter le sport de haut niveau parce qu'elles ne voyaient aucun avenir au-delà des compétitions ? Cette réalité constitue aujourd'hui l'un des plus grands freins au développement du sport mauricien.

Je crois profondément qu'un pays qui demande à ses athlètes de porter haut son drapeau, de consentir à d'innombrables sacrifices et de consacrer les meilleures années de leur

vie à représenter la nation a également le devoir de leur offrir des perspectives d'avenir. Les bénéfices pour la nation sont considérables : une meilleure rétention des talents, des performances accrues sur la scène internationale, davantage de médailles, une jeunesse inspirée par des modèles de réussite et une fonction publique enrichie par des femmes et des hommes ayant développé des qualités exceptionnelles de discipline, de résilience, de leadership et de dépassement de soi.

Cette proposition est un investissement dans l'excellence, dans notre jeunesse et dans l'avenir du sport mauricien. C'est une manière de dire à nos champions d'aujourd'hui que leur engagement au service de la nation sera reconnu, valorisé et protégé bien après leur dernière compétition, parce qu'au fond, soutenir nos sportifs, c'est investir dans ce que l'île Maurice a de meilleur : le talent, le mérite, le travail et la persévérance.

M. le président, je me réjouis particulièrement des avancées importantes contenues dans ce budget en faveur des femmes et des familles mauriciennes. L'introduction du *menstrual leave*, qui constitue une reconnaissance concrète d'une réalité que vivent des milliers de Mauriciennes chaque mois, c'est une mesure de dignité, de compréhension et de respect envers les femmes qui contribuent chaque jour au développement de notre pays.

L'allongement du congé de maternité et de paternité, trop souvent, M. le président, nous sous-estimons les défis que vivent les femmes durant la grossesse et après l'accouchement. Oui, je parle certes en connaissance de cause, car je vis moi-même une grossesse en ce moment même. Mais je parle surtout au nom de toutes les mamans mauriciennes. Derrière la joie d'accueillir un enfant se cache parfois des mois de fatigue intense, de douleurs physiques, de bouleversements hormonaux, d'inquiétude, de sacrifices et parfois même des complications médicales. Après l'accouchement, les mères doivent non seulement récupérer d'un véritable bouleversement physique, mais aussi s'adapter à de nouvelles responsabilités, à des nuits sans sommeil, à l'allaitement, aux soins constants du nouveau-né et aux défis émotionnels qui accompagnent cette période de transition. L'allongement du congé de maternité est donc une mesure de justice, de dignité et de reconnaissance envers toutes les mères.

Toutefois, M. le président, nous devons également être conscients qu'une telle réforme, aussi noble soit-elle, peut avoir des effets indésirables. Certains employeurs pourraient être tentés de considérer les jeunes femmes en âge de procréer comme un risque financier, ce qui

pourrait accentuer les discriminations à l'embauche. C'est pourquoi je suis d'avis que cette réforme doit s'accompagner de mesures complémentaires.

Premièrement, nous devons progressivement évoluer vers un système de congé parental partagé entre les deux parents et une partie de ce congé pourrait être transférable ou réservée aux pères afin que la responsabilité familiale ne repose pas uniquement sur les femmes. Lorsque les hommes et les femmes peuvent tous deux s'absenter pour s'occuper d'un enfant, les employeurs auront moins tendance à considérer les femmes comme un risque à l'embauche.

Deuxièmement, envisager un mécanisme de financement partagé à travers un fonds national d'assurance sociale où l'État, les employeurs et les travailleurs contribueront collectivement au financement d'une partie du congé. Et enfin, au-delà des lois et des mécanismes financiers, nous devons encourager un véritable changement de mentalité. Tant que la société considérera que les enfants sont principalement la responsabilité des mères, les femmes continueront à subir des désavantages professionnels. La parentalité est une responsabilité partagée et la maternité ne doit jamais être perçue comme un obstacle à l'emploi ou à l'évolution professionnelle.

Permettez-moi, avant de conclure, M. le président, d'avoir une pensée particulière pour les habitants de ma circonscription, Beau Bassin-Petite Rivière, qui ont accordé à mon collègue l'honorable Rajesh Bhagwan et moi-même leur confiance et dont je porte chaque jour les espoirs et les préoccupations. Mon engagement n'a jamais été motivé par des intérêts personnels, mais par la volonté sincère d'être utile, de faire avancer les projets qui comptent pour ma circonscription et de contribuer à bâtir un avenir meilleur pour les générations futures. Chaque décision prise hier, aujourd'hui et demain, chaque décision a été et sera guidée par cette même conviction : celle de travailler sans relâche pour améliorer le quotidien des habitants de ma circonscription, défendre leurs intérêts et honorer la confiance qu'ils m'ont accordée.

Pour conclure, M. le président, l'histoire ne retient pas ceux qui ont choisi la facilité. Elle retient ceux qui ont eu le courage d'agir pour l'avenir. Ce budget est un acte de responsabilité envers notre nation et de solidarité envers les générations futures. Il porte une vision, une ambition et l'espoir d'un avenir meilleur, car le véritable courage politique, ce n'est pas de penser aux prochaines élections. C'est de penser à la prochaine génération et c'est ce courage qui bâtit les grandes nations.

Je vous remercie.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. Member.

Hon. Damry!

(3.50 p.m.)

The Junior Minister of Finance (Mr D. Damry): M. le président, j'éviterai les répétitions et j'irai tout droit au but. Notre gouvernement a reconstruit la confiance économique qui a été sévèrement ébranlée par le MSM et l'ancien Premier ministre, Pravind Jugnauth, qui sont les véritables fardeaux du peuple. MSM fardeau *lepep* !

M. le président, permettez-moi de démontrer comment le MSM et son leader sont les véritables fardeaux du peuple, chiffres à l'appui. Je vous réfère aux indicateurs macroéconomiques, le *budget balance*. Dans le *budget balance*, il y a un autre indicateur qui s'appelle le *primary balance*. Si vous regardez l'année financière 2026-2027, le *primary balance* est négatif 0.1. Dans le *budget balance*, c'est ce qu'on appelle le déficit budgétaire. Dans le déficit budgétaire, il y a deux éléments dedans. Il y a le *primary balance*, c'est-à-dire les revenus moins que les dépenses, plus les intérêts. Or, nous avons un déficit budgétaire de 3,7%. Ce qui veut dire que le déficit budgétaire est constitué presque des intérêts.

Maintenant, d'où proviennent ces intérêts ? C'est ça la grande question que le peuple doit se demander. Ces intérêts proviennent des dettes qui ont été accumulées pendant les années précédentes, principalement par le MSM. Je vous donne deux exemples. Que deux exemples, sinon je prendrai toute une journée. Premier exemple, Maradiva. Maradiva a des dettes impayées de plus de R 3 milliards.

Ms Anquetil: Shocking! Shocking!

Mr Damry: Et qui payent les intérêts sur ces dettes aujourd'hui ? C'est vous, le peuple admirable. Donc, le MSM met le fardeau des intérêts de sa famille sur vous, le peuple admirable.

Deuxième exemple, les R 181.5 milliards que le MSM a injectées – oui, a imprimé, a injecté dans différentes institutions financières du pays. Ces grosses sommes d'argent ont été partagées parmi les petits copains et copines qui n'ont pas remboursé ces dettes et qui ne payent pas les intérêts. Cher peuple admirable, qui rembourse ces intérêts aujourd'hui ?

An hon. Member: Nous !

Mr Damry: Vous, le peuple admirable ! Nous, le peuple admirable ! Encore une fois, c'est le MSM et Pravind Jugnauth qui sont les véritables fardeaux *lepep*. Et ils ont l'audace de venir dire le contraire.

M. le président, ils ont même parlé d'escroquerie budgétaire. Quel terme ! Mais, vous savez, la plus grande escroquerie budgétaire dans l'histoire de l'île Maurice indépendante est le fruit du MSM et de Pravind Kumar Jugnauth. Lorsque tout le monde connaissait une décroissance incroyable pendant la période Covid, le MSM a présenté un *balanced budget* – zéro déficit budgétaire. Quel miracle ! Aucun pays au monde n'a réussi à le faire sauf Pravind Kumar Jugnauth et le MSM. Et ils osent parler d'escroquerie budgétaire. Ça c'est un budget *bat bate, anba lao*. Notre budget est un budget responsable et durable.

Quatrième exemple, et j'arrêterai ici. Malheureusement, le leader de l'opposition est absent de la Chambre.

Ms Anquetil: Comme d'habitude, pour ne rien changer !

Mr Damry: Mais, il avait posé une question au Premier ministre : « *Kitne aadmi the Navin ?* » Je lui pose la même question : *Kitne aadmi the Joe ?* Et là, j'ai besoin de l'aide de mon collègue, l'honorable Patrick Assirvaden. Il y a deux *schemes* au CEB qui vous permettent d'installer vos panneaux photovoltaïques sur vos toits. Il y a un qui s'appelle SSDG et l'autre qui s'appelle MSDG. MSDG, c'est pour les entreprises, pour les industries, pour les commerciaux. Donc, la question à l'ancien ministre : Est-ce que la famille d'un ancien ministre du MSM a installé dans sa résidence des panneaux solaires sous le *scheme* MSDG qui n'est pas disponible pour les individus ?

Hon. Members: Donn nom !

Mr Damry: J'espère que l'honorable Patrick Assirvaden va faire son effort. Laissez le ministre faire son effort.

(Interruptions)

Et je vais vous dire, parce que l'ancien ministre est fan bollywoodien : *Yeh beejli chor kaun hai ?* Qui est ce voleur d'électricité ? Je laisserai à la population d'en juger.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the former Prime Minister also, on social media today, said that the Prime Minister announced seven measures in our Budget, but he listed only six. But the most important measure of any budget is the macroeconomic stability. So, he announced the macroeconomic stability plus six measures. That is seven measures in all.

I will bore the House with a little bit of technicity now. The Prime Minister will respond tomorrow, will give the overall macroeconomic principle, but I will just elaborate on the framework. What is important in economy is the direction. The direction of debt is going down, 87.8% to 85.8%, with the Chagos as upside, and the budget balance is going down from 6% to 3%.

Now, what is important for economists, especially for local investors and those outside who are listening to us, is the mix of the budget balance. A budget balance is made up of recurrent balance and capital balance. Now, if you look at our macroeconomic framework, the recurrent balance is going down. It means recurrent deficit is becoming recurrent surplus. This means that we are not borrowing to consume. On the other hand, the capital balance – this is where the deficit is going. What this means is that we are borrowing to invest. That is what we meant when we are moving from a consumption-led economy to an investment-led economy. So, this is the most important measure of our Budget.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in the absence of arguments, the MSM has a habit of slandering the reputation of people. Unfortunately, aujourd'hui, j'ai plus de memes que le grand acteur du cinéma politique mauricien, mon cher ami, Shakeel Mohamed. J'ai plus de diffamations. J'ai plus de fake news. J'ai plus de hate news que même le Premier ministre d'aujourd'hui. Mais, notre priorité, c'est le peuple. C'est le bien-être du peuple. C'est, là, où va mon énergie. Je vais leur répondre dans le langage du Premier ministre qui dit tout le temps : « Read my lips ! », et je vais leur dire : Read my smile ! Tous ces allégations, tous ces diffamations sont fausses, dénuées de tout fondement, M. le président.

Je vais aussi essayer d'apporter un peu de clarté sur comment nous allons financer nos projets. C'est très important parce qu'en dehors du Parlement, vous avez toutes sortes de grands discours ; nous allons faire ceci – il y a des génies en mathématiques qui présentent des chiffres et qui vous disent nous allons faire ceci – nous allons faire cela.

M. le président, these people have no track record in delivery. These people were part of a system that first created the problems. How on earth will you resolve problems created by a system with the same system? You need track record. If time permits, I will give you two track records of the hon. Prime Minister and one-track record of me. Well, no one says about me, so I will say about me too.

The hon. Prime Minister, I will speak about future economies. I do not know how many of you know about the TDB group. The TDB group is a large African group. In 2012, they met with the hon. Prime Minister. They were a small group at the time. They wanted to set up a trade finance bank for the continent and the hon. Prime Minister listened to them. You know what the hon. Prime Minister did? Out of the 11-million-dollar seed capital that they required, the hon. Prime Minister convinced the Government to invest 2 million dollars in that seed capital, and the hon. Prime Minister gave them incentives to be in Mauritius.

Fast forward today, the TDB group has a capital of 11 billion dollars. It finances 51 billion dollars of trade finance in the continent of Africa. It employs over 50 Mauritians directly, and it has an indirect impact over 200 Mauritians. This is called track record.

Now, speaking of Africa, I personally believe that Mauritius will not succeed in our economic growth forecast of 3.5 and 4%, if we are not integrated with Africa.

Unfortunately, the previous government at best had a long-distance relationship with Africa. In the language of Gen Z, maybe they had a situationship. But they never had a proper relationship with Africa. I am making an appeal to this whole House today, because this year marks a very important year.

Let us go back to 1976. The then president of *l'Organisation de l'unité africaine* (OUA) was the Father of the Nation, Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam. He was the one who transitioned OUA into the African Union, 1976 to 1977. I will make a request to this House. The hon. Prime Minister said 2026 is the year of the economy. I will make a request that to celebrate this achievement, this anniversary, this great moment, 2026-2027 should also be the year of integration with Africa.

Mauritius has only 1.2-1.3 million people. Our median age is 40. Africa has 1.4 billion people. The median age is 19. In the words of the hon. Prime Minister, when it comes to the

economy, I will say we should no longer see Mauritius only as one people, as one nation, but we should see Mauritius as one people, one nation, one continent when it comes to our economy.

The Deputy Speaker: You have two minutes to go. Please, start concluding!

Mr Damry: There is so much I can say, but I do not the time, unfortunately.

The Deputy Speaker: You can start concluding.

Mr Damry: So, I will conclude. There is so much I can say.

So, to conclude, I would like to say that everyone in this House, every hon. Minister, every hon. Junior Minister, every MP, *nous avons la responsabilité collective de toutes les décisions du gouvernement.*

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I was born in Goodlands. I went to Goodlands Government School. I went to College Royal de Port Louis. When I fell ill, I went to the *dispensaire* as we say it. I travelled by bus. My grandfather had his pension. My father had his pension. We all went to the hospital when we fell ill.

These are the ideals of the Father of the Nation. I think all of us here, we want our children, their children and their children to benefit from the same social protection and inclusive economic growth that the Father of the Nation left for us.

With this, I commend the budget to the House.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Mr Damry: Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Assirvaden!

(4.06 p.m.)

The Minister of Energy and Public Utilities (Mr P. Assirvaden): M. le président, je salue l'absence de l'honorable leader de l'opposition pour ne pas changer. Puisque l'honorable

leader de l'opposition m'a demandé des éclaircissements concernant le LNG, je répondrai à ce siège vide. Mais je suis sûr qu'il entendra.

An hon. Member: *Pravind pou dir li !*

Mr Assirvaden: L'honorable leader de l'opposition, dans ses commentaires sur le budget, M. le président, avait estimé que l'allocation de R 65 millions pour une étude détaillée sur le LNG, qui est quand même la base même de notre stratégie énergétique, risque d'accroître la dépendance du pays aux importations énergétiques.

D'abord, permettez-moi, M. le président, de préciser que cette réflexion sur le LNG, on l'a faite dans le passé. Des études de faisabilité et de préfaisabilité ont été réalisées par des firmes, des consultants internationaux de renom, WorleyParsons, Poten & Partners, PWC India. Donc, nous avons eu des études générales concernant les masses critiques concernant si le pays peut accueillir.

Ce que nous faisons actuellement, c'est bien de le préciser, c'est que le CEB envisage de mettre en œuvre progressivement trois centrales à cycle combiné au gaz LNG d'une capacité de 150 à 180 MW chacune. Donc, pour arriver à 500 MW. Nous discutons actuellement avec le Japon – l'honorable ministre des Affaires étrangères est là – avec le Qatar et avec l'Inde.

La question de masse critique n'est plus un obstacle. Ceci dit, je remercie l'honorable Premier ministre d'avoir introduit, dans le budget, une étude pour financer dans ce présent budget un objectif clair : développer un projet à Fort William en phase, qui a été identifié déjà, avec un plan directeur pour les futures infrastructures de production afin de déterminer l'investissement, le coût d'exploitation ainsi que de préparer l'ensemble des démarches réglementaires nécessaires à la réalisation de ce projet.

Ce que nous faisons n'est pas la même chose que ce que le leader de l'opposition disait l'autre jour. Donc, nous faisons une étude à Fort William précisément pour voir si nous pouvons implanter une centrale de 150 MW à 500 MW.

M. le président, je devais, au départ, me concentrer que sur mon ministère. Les circonstances du budget, les circonstances du débat m'ont forcé à amender le temps que j'ai, 30 minutes, pour dire quelques mots sur le contexte dans lequel ce budget est préparé. Il faut bien que la population qui nous écoute comprenne quelque chose de très important. Le

contexte dans lequel nous faisons ce budget : d'abord, le report de la compensation de R 10 milliards des Chagos qu'on aurait dû avoir et que, malheureusement, cela n'est pas arrivé.

R 10 milliards attendus dans le cadre de la ratification de l'accord sur l'île Chagos interviennent à un moment particulièrement délicat pour les finances publiques. C'est un fait, M. le président, que nous sommes sur le radar de Moody's. Je suis sûr que ma collègue, un peu plus tard dans la soirée, expliquera à la population que nous sommes surveillés, que nous sommes sur le radar.

L'agence Moody's souligne que Maurice poursuit un redressement graduel de ses finances publiques malgré un environnement difficile marqué par des incertitudes, notamment et surtout l'accord sur le Chagos ainsi que les tensions inflationnistes provoquées par les conflits internationaux. Donc pour vous dire, Moody's, Chagos, la guerre, au Moyen-Orient, c'est un fait.

Donc, la population qui suit sur les réseaux sociaux, la presse réalise que nous faisons face à des déficits budgétaires, à des défis budgétaires, surtout dans les situations de ce qui s'est passé au Moyen-Orient où Maurice, faut bien le dire, en étant un importateur d'énergie comme Maurice, nous subissons tout de suite les conséquences de ce qui se passe ailleurs. Et c'est un gouvernement responsable.

Il aurait été plus facile pour l'honorable Premier ministre, il aurait été si simple pour le Premier ministre et ministre des Finances de jouer le même rôle que l'ancien Premier ministre, Pravind Jugnauth a joué pendant 10 ans avec le MSM. Non, ce que l'honorable Premier ministre fait actuellement, c'est quelque chose de responsable. C'est pour cette raison que personnellement, je suis sévère avec ceux qui m'entourent, mais aussi sévère avec mes honorables collègues de la Chambre.

Ne faisons pas comme l'Opposition d'aujourd'hui qui essaie de manger la banane pas dans deux bouts, mais de bout en bout. Donc, ceci dit, je reviendrai sur le CEB un peu plus tard pour dire qu'une cargaison de l'huile lourde nous coûte R 500 millions supplémentaire. Supplémentaire ! Donc, une cargaison nous coûte R 1.2 milliards par cargaison qui aurait dû être R 700 millions. Vous réalisez ? Nous avons 12 cargaisons par an. Faites le calcul. 12 cargaisons, R 4.8 milliards si mon mathématique est encore bon – R4.8 milliards. Vous

réalisez quelle est la pression sur les finances du pays, quelle est la pression sur le gouvernement ?

Mais nous devons, mes amis, mes honorables collègues, M. le président, je suis sûr que la population comprendra, je suis sûr, convaincu. Nous devons avoir également le courage de reconnaître une réalité qui s'impose à nous. Le système de pension non-contributif est aujourd'hui arrivé à un point où sa durabilité, sa pérennité est mise sérieusement en question. Si nous continuons à appliquer le même modèle sans adaptation ni réforme, que laisserons-nous aux générations futures ? Ce que le docteur Ramgoolam fait aujourd'hui, ce n'est pas pour nous, ce n'est pas pour nos enfants, c'est pour les enfants de nos enfants. C'est pour la génération à venir. Ce n'est pas pour nous. C'est pour cette raison que je dis que gouverner, ce n'est pas facile. Certains d'entre nous peut-être trouvent la gestion du pays difficile. Certains trouvent la gestion du pays difficile. Ils essaient tant bien que mal de bien se présenter dans l'opinion publique à travers les TikTok et tout. Mais quand vous avez la responsabilité d'un pays, vous devez être responsable. C'est important que la population comprenne une chose, M. le président ?

Qu'est-ce que le MSM nous a légué ? Il n'y a pas que la pension dont parle ici dans ce budget. Je suis l'honorable ministre responsable du CEB. Laissez-moi vous dire, au sein du CEB, il y a deux fonds de pension. Le *CEB Staff Pension Fund* avec un déficit de R131 millions à ce jour, tandis que le *CEB Manual Workers Pension Fund*, même chose, avec un déficit de R 64 millions pour payer les travailleurs du CEB dans quelque temps. Les 2000 travailleurs du CEB dans quelque temps, il n'y aura pas un sou. Ça c'est le MSM. Ça c'est l'ancien ministre – Joe Lesjongard. Ça c'est le MSM de Pravind Jugnauth. Aujourd'hui, la population doit savoir.

74 organismes publics enregistrent des déficits de leur fonds de pension. Je parle ici, je parle ici des collectivités locales qui ont des déficits de R9.4 milliards les fonds de pension. Je parle ici d'Air Mauritius qui, à un moment donné, avait des déficits de R 5 milliards de roupies dans le fonds de pension, les travailleurs d'Air Mauritius ne pouvaient plus. Donc, c'est quelque chose de profond et de sérieux. Mais hier qu'est-ce que j'ai vu ? Pravind Jugnauth en conférence de presse. Le fossoyeur devient le sauveur. Celui qui a mis ce pays dans la situation qu'on est aujourd'hui, pendant que le pays s'enfonçait avec Silver Bank, R 3 milliards – la population doit encore se rappeler de ça. CEB, R 7 milliards. À un moment donné, dans les dans les réserves du CEB, il y avait R 7 milliards. Aujourd'hui, on est en

déficit. On a dû augmenter le tarif d'électricité pour soutenir le CEB. Qui est responsable ? Pravind Jugnauth, le MSM.

Il n'y a pas que ça. Alors que le pays passait dans des moments difficiles, il fallait économiser. Il fallait économiser pour les plans de pension. Quelle était la priorité de Pravind Jugnauth ? Il a été investir dans une machine de surveillance d'écoute *pour écoute tou nu conversations*.

Plusieurs millions, enfin, je n'ai pas le chiffre, j'ai entendu l'honorable Premier ministre répondre que c'était plusieurs milliards de roupies et il ne savait pas qu'on l'écoutait lui-même.

(Interruptions)

Le *MIC*. C'est Pravind Jugnauth. Le *MIC*, c'est Pravind Jugnauth, d'abord le MSM. Ils ont commencé à *print* des billets, c'était facile pour l'honorable Premier ministre. La population doit savoir cela. Ça aurait été facile pour le docteur Ramgoolam de dire allez OK, on va *print* les billets. Tout le monde va sourire. Mais qu'est-ce qui va se passer dans 10 ans, dans 15 ans, dans 20 ans ?

Qu'est-ce qui se passera ? Même pas. Vous réalisez. Donc, il faut se dire que ces gens hier, quand je les ai vu hier, entouré des *chor – chor, mem dir sa non ? Mahachor*. Padayachy, et l'autre là, cerf, comment il s'appelle ? Gobin !

(Interruptions)

Ces gens-là essaient, quand je vais retourner, je vais donner la pension. Qu'est-ce qu'il avait dit ? Je vais donner la pension à tout le monde.

Voyons ce que le M. Pravind Jugnauth a dit quelque temps de cela. Il va rétablir la pension. L'honorable Premier ministre a cité cela ce matin. Vous savez, j'ai pris la peine d'aller revoir ce que l'honorable Premier ministre a dit et je me suis dit pourquoi ne pas *translate* cela en français pour la population. Voyez ce que Pravind Jugnauth disait en tant que ministre des Finances, celui qui dit qu'il va rétablir la pension.

En 2024/25 – la pension. Pravind Jugnauth qui parle. Ceux qui m'écoutent à la radio, ceux qui m'écoutent dans la circonscription de ce pays. Écoute ce que Pravind Jugnauth dit en 2004. La pension de retraite, ce dont on parle aujourd'hui, BRP, constitue l'un des principaux postes de transfert d'État et mobilise une part importante de nos ressources. À l'heure actuelle,

quelques 116000 personnes bénéficient de cette pension. Une augmentation de 1 % de la BRP coûte à l'État R28 millions.

Pravind Jugnauth qui parle. Plusieurs rapports ont mis en doute la viabilité à long terme de cette pension, notamment en raison du vieillissement rapide de notre population. Qu'est-ce qu'il dit ? Une deuxième réforme fondamentale. Pravind Jugnauth qui parle. Par le budget qu'il présente et le ciblage des transferts primordiaux, fondamentaux. Pravind Jugnauth en 2003. Il dit quoi en 2003-2004 ? Il disait ceci.

Donc, vous réalisez, M. le président, avec quel genre de personne, on appelle ça dans le jargon mauricien, *ene kamaleon*. Il change de couleur de peau. Donc, pour vous dire, M. le président, il n'y avait pas que ça. Vous réalisez l'ancien DPM, l'honorable Paul Bérenger. Je cite en 2003 ce qu'il parle de la pension. Demain on écouterait son discours, un élément essentiel de notre système de protection sociale. L'honorable Bérenger dit ceci en 2003 –

« Le vieillissement rapide de la population rendra cette pension insoutenable à long terme. [Nous réalisons cela. On est d'accord.] Selon les projections, la proportion des personnes âgées de plus de 60 ans doublera dans les 20 prochaines années et triplera au cours des 50 prochaines années. »

Paul Bérenger qui parle. La réforme de la *BRP* est donc devenue urgente. Vous réalisez qu'aujourd'hui, nous faisons ce que quelques temps de cela ces messieurs avaient vu. Même l'année dernière, lors du budget de 2025-2026, l'ancien Vice-Premier ministre disait ceci –

« Relever l'âge de la retraite, *the non-contributory pension* à 65 ans est inévitable. Nous sommes condamnés à le faire. C'est inévitable. »

C'est l'honorable Paul Bérenger qui le dit avec raison.

M. le président, l'exécuteur de l'économie du pays, l'exécuteur de ce que nous subissons aujourd'hui, il l'a dit le 24 octobre 2023. Hier, il était assis à côté de Pravind Jugnauth dans la conférence de presse. L'ancien honorable Padayachy disait ceci le 24 octobre 2023 à l'Assemblée nationale – j'étais assis juste à côté, juste là où se trouve l'honorable Eshan Juman, juste en face du bureau de l'ancien *loudspeaker*, le bourreau ! En passant, j'ai été étonné ce matin de voir l'attitude du leader de l'opposition de poser des *PNQs* de 48 minutes. Je me rappelle quand on était assis juste là à poser des questions, la population doit se rappeler de cela. On n'avait pas l'occasion. 30 minutes, 29 minutes 30 secondes, il vous arrête.

Ms Anquetil: Le PM répondait à une seule question !

Mr Assirvaden: Exactement !

Et, M. le président, il n'était pas assis là où vous êtes. Il se mettait ici sur l'escalier. Vous réalisez ?

Donc, M. le président, écoutez ce que l'ancien ministre Padayachy disait. M. le président, il parle –

« La Contribution Sociale Généralisée (CSG) est un système progressif et équitable qui a pour but de financer le paiement des prestations sociales [conformément à la promesse faite par ce gouvernement, le gouvernement MSM]. Notre objectif est d'assurer à tous les retraités une pension décente. [C'est à juste titre qu'a été mise en place la CSG de Pravind Jugnauth et de Padayachy]. La NPF n'est absolument pas viable à long terme, notamment parce qu'il ne générerait pas un retour sur l'investissement. »

Ce jour-là, le 23 octobre 2023, Padayachy, assis ici, disait cela –

« M. le président, le montant déboursé pour le paiement de ces prestations est d'environ 25 milliards. Il ne reste donc rien, rien aux contributions de la CSG. Rien. Tout l'argent récolté a été utilisé pour augmenter le pouvoir d'achat de nos aînés. »

Il ne reste pas un sou dans le CSG, et ils ont aboli le *National Pensions Fund*. Aujourd'hui, on se retrouve dans cette situation pour les pensionnés de ce pays. Heureusement que nous avons un Premier ministre qui a quand même du cœur. Un Premier ministre quand même à l'écoute. Imaginons une minute, une seconde que c'était Pravind Jugnauth qui était à la place du Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam. Vous savez ce qui se serait passé ? Pour ceux qui critiquent ici ou ailleurs, sur les radios, sur Facebook, sur TikTok, il allait pratiquer le *planting* contre ceux qui critiquaient le pouvoir ou il aurait coupé l'accès à l'internet carrément lorsque celui-ci devenait une plateforme d'expression dérangeante pour lui ou pour son gouvernement.

Il aurait pu utiliser facilement, comme il a fait dans le passé, l'*IBA* contre les médias – les médias oublient. Les journalistes oublient – qui critiquaient son gouvernement ou servaient avec la *MRA*. À un moment donné dans ce pays, la *MRA* était un outil politique pour traquer les adversaires du régime.

(Interruptions)

Voilà !

Nous, au sein de ce gouvernement, croyons dans les institutions de la République. Nous pensons que le pays, les institutions doivent demeurer au service de tous les citoyens. Nous croyons qu'un gouvernement démocratique doit accepter la critique comme le Dr. Ramgoolam l'accepte, même lorsqu'elle est sévère. Nous croyons qu'il faut répondre aux arguments par des arguments et aux critiques par le travail et par les résultats. Donc aujourd'hui, le responsable de ce que nous vivons dans ce pays, c'est le MSM, c'est Pravind Jugnauth, M. le président.

M. le président, avec les quelques minutes qu'il me reste, je dirais que nous continuons dans cette ligne d'énergie en ce qui concerne le secteur énergétique. M. le président, quand j'ai assumé les fonctions de ministre, j'ai découvert une institution confrontée à des défis considérables –

- j'ai hérité d'un parc de production vieillissant ;
- j'ai hérité des moteurs souffrant de pannes répétitives ;
- j'ai hérité d'une dépendance excessive aux combustibles fossiles ;
- surtout, j'ai découvert une situation financière préoccupante ; R 7 milliards évanouies.

M. le président, je remercie le Premier ministre qui a bien voulu remettre en selle le *MID*. Je me rappelle encore du professeur Joël de Rosnay, avec mon ami Osman Mahomed. Je remercie le Premier ministre de continuer d'amener le pays dans cette direction.

La transition énergétique, M. le président, n'est plus une option. Elle constitue aujourd'hui une nécessité économique, stratégique et environnementale. 60% en 2035. L'ambition est là. Nous voulons bouger. Et ce qui est encore plus intéressant, c'est que dans cette transition, nous allons embarquer la population dans son ensemble. Avec le *Household PV Solar Scheme* qui sera en place dans quelques jours avec 25% de *grant* du gouvernement, chaque famille de ce pays, chaque foyer de ce pays aura l'occasion de mettre des panneaux sur son toit à la hauteur de R 75,000 de *grant* et la différence en *loan* avec la DBM ou d'autres banques.

Le CEB – et c'est très intéressant – a décidé d'acheter l'électricité avec vous, avec ceux qui m'écoutent, plus cher, passant de R 4,20 à R 4,83 l'unité. Donc, celui qui produit, le Mauricien qui produit aura l'occasion de vendre plus cher.

M. le président, nous avons régressé depuis 10 ans. Nous essayons de progresser depuis. Nous avons deux *tenders* en cours de 10 fois 10 mégawatts : 100 mégawatts. Nous avons trois projets de 40 mégawatts chacun : 120 mégawatts. On aura les résultats au début du mois d'août, pour vous dire que nous bougeons. Je remercie le Premier ministre. Après avoir discuté avec le Premier ministre Modi, nous avons eu à Tamarind Falls un *floating PV* de 20 mégawatts. Cela avec la coopération avec le gouvernement indien du Premier ministre Modi.

M. le président, nous avons l'agri-solaire avec le ministre de l'Agro. Ce sont des projets en cours. Nous avons les batteries que nous avons acheté de 20 mégawatts et que nous allons acheter encore de 20 mégawatts pour 40 mégawatts, pour pouvoir tenir à la pointe entre 6 heures et 9 heures. Nous avons le projet de *National Biomass Framework*. Nous voulons *phase out* le charbon dans le temps et pour pouvoir *phase out* le charbon dans le temps, il nous faut avoir quelque chose pour brûler.

M. le président, j'irai un petit peu plus vite. Je dirais que nous aurons au mois de septembre, un salon des énergies renouvelables. Ce sera une grande première pour le pays. Un salon d'énergie renouvelable à l'île Maurice, où vont se retrouver tous les *stakeholders* et nos partenaires qui seront présents sous un même toit.

Nous aurons, en septembre de cette année-ci, une loi sur l'énergie renouvelable pour structurer ce marché, pour légaliser ce qui n'a pas été légalisé jusqu'ici, pour donner de la forme à ce que nous voulons faire et pour avancer.

Quelques mots, M. le président, avant de terminer, il me reste une dizaine de minutes.

The Deputy Speaker: 5 minutes ! 5 minutes !

Mr Assirvaden: Ça ne me coûte rien de tenter.

The Deputy Speaker: Il vous en reste trois. Je vous donne cinq.

Mr Assirvaden: Pour les 5 minutes qui me restent, M. le président, je vais parler du secteur de l'eau en quelques mots. J'ai entendu, ici, pas mal de mes collègues parler du secteur de l'eau. M. le président, je serai assez franc. Vous savez, M. le président, on se retrouve avec un réseau de 62 % de perte. Vous mettez 100 mètres cubes d'eau sur le réseau, il y a que 40

mètres cubes qui arrivent chez la personne. Les 60-62 % se perdent. Il ne suffit pas que de réformer la CWA ou réformer le secteur de l'eau. Nous avons un problème.

Là, actuellement, avec le changement climatique, la pluie ne tombe pas. Le réservoir de Mare aux Vacoas est à moins de 43 %. Certaines régions sont affectées. Si rien n'est fait, nous serons obligés d'arrêter la distribution dans les hautes Plaines Wilhems. Si Mare aux Vacoas continue de baisser à hauteur de 20 % ou de 17 %, il y aura que la boue. C'est un fait. Donc, nous avons hérité de cela et cela ne prendra pas une année ou deux années pour être changé. Non, cela prendra du temps.

Vous réalisez – je vous donne un chiffre. Nous avons 5300 km de tuyaux de la CWA. 1500 km – ce sont de vieux tuyaux, plus de 50 ans. Vous savez combien cela va coûter pour changer les 1500 km ? R 37.5 milliards ! Et là, heureusement, que nous avons l'aide de l'Inde, avec R 2.9 milliards pour le *Pipe Replacement Programme*, en deux phases, qui comprend différentes régions que je peux donner après. Pour vous dire qu'on a eu le *Pipe Replacement Programme* dans le temps. Vous vous rappelez de Prakash Maunthrooa – R 700 millions ! Comment ?

(Interruptions)

Exactement. Le Premier ministre a raison. Les tuyaux un peu partout. À Rivière Noire, à Mont Choisy, un peu partout. Où les...

The Prime Minister: *Poze kumsa !*

Mr Assirvaden: Exactement. Où les R 700 millions ont disparu ? Disparu ! Vous réalisez donc, aujourd'hui, le leader de l'opposition, il parle très peu de l'eau. Il parle très peu de l'électricité. Il a passé son temps, dans son discours sur le budget, à parler de AI – pas de l'eau. Je me suis posé la question, et je me suis dit : mais, tous ces *PNQs*, il n'y a pas une *PNQ* sur l'eau et l'électricité ? Vous réalisez, donc, tout cela a été dilapidé, a été bangolé.

Donc, nous avons ce *Pipe Replacement Programme*. Je vous ai parlé de ce que nous faisons en ce qui concerne le captage de l'eau. Nous allons *drill 20 boreholes*, si je ne me trompe pas. Le ministère des Finances nous a donné de l'argent pour le CPF. La Rivière des Anguilles *Dam* sera allouée en août et la construction va commencer en décembre de cette année-ci.

M. le président, pour terminer sur quelque chose d'aigre-doux, il y a une réflexion à mon ministère. À ce stade, chaque mètre cube d'eau produit par la CWA revient à environ R 24 – chaque mètre cube d'eau –, alors qu'il est, actuellement, vendu à R 14 le mètre cube. Sur chaque mètre cube d'eau vendu, la CWA perd R 10. Cet écart structurel soulève une question de soutenabilité à moyen terme, comme la pension, et à long terme pour le service public d'eau. Je suis un ministre responsable. Je ne regarde pas 2029 ou après. Je regarde la responsabilité que j'ai aujourd'hui. Dans ce contexte, il devient nécessaire de revoir cette équation tarifaire afin d'assurer un meilleur équilibre entre le coût réel de production et la tarification appliquée. Des travaux en matière de tarifs est en cours à ce sujet.

Il est important de souligner, ici, et de préciser, M. le président, que dans cette réflexion qu'on aura, à partir de septembre, en ce qui concerne les tarifs, les tarifs non-domestiques de la population ne seront pas impliqués et ne seront pas affectés. Les tarifs domestiques ne seront pas affectés dans ce que nous allons faire. Il y aura, bien sûr, les tarifs commerciaux, résidentiels et industriels. Comme je l'ai toujours dit, ceux qui peuvent payer doivent pouvoir payer.

M. le président, je n'ai pas grand-chose à ajouter, sinon que dire que je fais totalement confiance au Premier ministre, pas parce que je suis le Président du Parti travailliste ou parce que je suis ministre, aujourd'hui. Je peux le dire, aujourd'hui, que le Premier ministre connaît ma sincérité envers le Parti travailliste et envers le leader du Parti travailliste. Mais, quand j'ai des choses à dire au leader du Parti travailliste, je le dis dans l'intérêt de notre parti et dans l'intérêt du pays.

Je suis totalement confiant que la population mauricienne trouvera, dans quelques années, le fruit de ce travail que nous entamons, aujourd'hui.

Merci, M. le président.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

I suspend the Sitting for half an hour.

At 4.37 p.m., the Sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 5.18 p.m. with Madam Speaker in the Chair.

Madam Speaker: Please be seated. Yes, hon. Minister of Youth and Sports!

(5.18 p.m.)

The Minister of Youth and Sports (Mr D. Nagalingum): Thank you, Madam Speaker. I have listened with much attention to the Budget Speech and also to the intervention of previous speakers.

In light of what I could gather and retain, I would like to start my speech with a quote from a former US First Lady, Mrs Rosalynn Carter, who rightly stated, I quote –

“A leader takes people where they want to go. A great leader takes people where they don't necessarily want to go, but where they ought to be.”

I drew an inspiration from the quote after the repeated statement of the hon. Prime Minister to the press where he insisted that he is not binding for popularity, but rather for getting the country back on track.

Madam Speaker, a budget presented in prosperous time tests a government management. A budget presented in difficult time tests its courage. This budget is being presented in circumstances that are challenging both locally and internationally. If this is the second budget presented by this Government, yet the green economic backdrop remained unchanged.

The same chaotic economic situation, rising social expectations, demographic challenges, a rapid changing global environment marked by geopolitical tensions, remain major concerns among others. To sum up, Mauritius, as a Small Island Development State, and heavily dependent on international contest cannot lack behind.

Yet, Madam Speaker, history reminds us that difficulties often make way for opportunities. They force nations to rethink priorities, to strengthen institution and to invest strategically in their people. After having carefully listened to the Budget Speech and going through the various accompanying documentations, I am convinced that this budget perfectly reflects the values upon which this Government was elected, namely responsibility, economic efficiency, social justice and solidarity.

Madam Speaker, a nation cannot be reformed unless its youth is reformed. It is in this spirit that the Ministry of Youth and Sports has pursued an ambitious youth policies and programmes of action since July 2025.

The programmes basically include the following –

- The National Youth Civic Service Programme where more than 900 young people have been trained in civic values.
- The Leadership to Gen Programme, which empowered more than 200 young leaders as agent of positive change in their communities.
- The Life Skills Education Programme, which initiated 600 young adolescents in making safe and informed choices.
- Other programmes relating to climate awareness, environment, stewardship, human right education and sustainable agriculture have also been dispensed to around 1,000 young people.

Madam Speaker, a healthy, young policy must also provide opportunities for recreation, creativity and social integration. In a period of economic distress, rising social ills and drug addiction, my Ministry has deemed it fit to devise programmes and projects allowing the population from the youngest to the eldest to enjoy stress-free moment through target innovative recreational activities. All of which were resounding success.

My Ministry believes that policies affecting young people should be developed not merely for the youth, but with the youth. It was in this context that I took the initiative to organise a national consultative meeting focusing on drug addiction, mental health, brain drain, social media and its impact on the society. The recommendation of the said meeting expected shortly will be taken onboard for future formulation.

Madam Speaker, I am pleased to note that an additional effort has been made in this budget. The youth program has had a significant increase from Rs60 million to Rs25 million. Our efforts are being recognised. Madam Speaker, despite all efforts to support our young people with various projects and programmes, yet, we must concede that the same young

people in Mauritius and around the world alike are exposed to an evil that is corroding our society, that is, drugs.

No nation, however developed, is immune from this threat. Drug destroys life. It tears families apart. It undermines communities, and it compromises the future of our youth.

In Mauritius, the issue of drug proliferation is not new. The fight against it requires collective effort, irrespective of political affiliation. Without turning this debate into a political issue, Madam Speaker, history will, nevertheless, recall that whenever the MSM has been in power, drug trafficking has been a thriving business. Need I point out the *tractopelle* saga where Rs1.6 billion worth of drugs was discovered in a *tractopelle* in 2022.

Should I also remind the house of the episode *bonbonne gaz* in 2017 where roughly Rs2 billion worth of drugs were discovered in gas cylinders. How can I leave out the well documented case of that famous drug lord currently serving his sentence in island, but who, in Mauritius, enjoyed almost absolute immunity.

Madam Speaker, the list is quite long, but it is an undeniable fact that the upsurge in drug proliferation become very palpable in Mauritius since the last 10 years. While on the one hand, we had an exponential proliferation of drugs. On the other hand, the same MSM government was dismantling the NATReSA. Through its action, the MSM government demonstrated to us where its interest lay.

On our side, as soon as we assume office, we made the fight against drugs as one of our most foremost priorities. To make up for the dismantling of NATReSA, this Government established the National Agency for Drug Control, which recently released a drug control master plan. Actions speak louder than words, Madam Speaker. In parallel, the National Drug Control Commission has been set up under the chairmanship of none other than the hon. Prime Minister himself. This is not merely symbolic. It is a formal pledge.

The NADC brings together 11 Ministers whose portfolio are directly concerned with the multifaceted challenges posed by drug abuse and illicit trafficking. This top-level commitment demonstrates that the fight against drugs transcend individual ministries and require concerted action in prevention, treatment, rehabilitation, law enforcement, education, youth development and social integration.

As a contribution toward this collective effort, my Ministry integrated substance abuse awareness into the National Youth Civic Service Programme and other numerous youth development initiative. Furthermore, the organisation of *la course de l'unité*, an island wide marathon involving all local authorities under '*Mauriciens mobilisés contre la drogue*' sends a powerful message that the fight against drugs is a master of national concern.

I am pleased to announce that a Second Edition of that *course de l'unité* even more spectacular than the first one is underway. Madam Speaker, I also note that provision of Rs2 million has been made under my Ministry's budget allocation to support our effort in the fight against drugs. At this stage, I cannot fail to mention the hon. Prime Minister's interest in this pressing issue, namely drugs. The allocation of Rs2 million to all ministries as part of a national initiative to combat drugs is well inspired.

This important measure is a strong testimony to the Government's unwavering commitment to combating the scourge of drugs and protecting our communities, particularly our youth from its devastating consequences. Madam Speaker, sports is an essential component of the fight against drugs. It is precisely in this context that I so warmly welcome and commend the bold measure aimed at waving payment for the use of public sports infrastructure. Our promise to the population is becoming a reality.

This measure will certainly help us in our fight against drugs. I sincerely hope that our citizens, especially our youth, will seize this opportunity with a strong sense of responsibility and make full and meaningful use of these facilities.

Madam Speaker, on a separate note, allow me at this point to go back to November 2024.

We secured a historic electoral mandate with an overwhelming victory of 60-0. In the aftermath of such a resounding success, it would have been easy for this Government, headed by the hon. Prime Minister, to pursue the path of widespread popularity, as many leaders elsewhere might have been tempted to do. Yet, what stands out above all the courage and sense of responsibility demonstrated by the hon. Prime Minister.

I was interacting with my officers only a few days ago and the determination he has shown in the face of difficult circumstances, despite the odds, he has proved himself brave

enough to take bold and necessary decision. The population may find some of them difficult to accept, but these decisions have been conceived with a larger purpose in mind, safeguarding the interest of future generation. In so doing, he has displayed true statesmanship.

The hon. Prime Minister understands that the responsibility of leadership extends beyond immediate political gain. It is about laying strong foundation, undertaking reforms where they are needed most, and leaving behind a legacy that fosters sustainable prosperity.

Madam Speaker, coming back to the budget, I must stress that since our coming in office, the sport sector has witnessed remarkable progress. In fact, we have ushered Mauritius in an era of historical success. The result we achieved is either at continental or international level speak for themselves. At the CJSOI Games in Seychelles, Mauritius won an impressive 150 medals, of which 35 gold medals. At the African Youth Games in Angola, we secured 18 medals. The exceptional performance of Kimberly Le Court de Billot elevated Mauritius onto the global cycling map. Similarly, the performance of our para-athletes internationally deserves our commendation.

As a just recognition, Kimberly and Yovanni Philippe were given national awards. The high-level sport assistance scheme has enabled my Ministry to extend financial support of around Rs15 million to 100 elite athletes and para-athletes. Moreover, an amount of Rs 9.4 million has been paid from the cash prize scheme to reward outstanding international performances.

Madam Speaker, the 2026-27 budget provides Rs65 million as allocation to national sport federation and Rs110 million for various item including preparation for the Indian Ocean Island Games 2027 and other major regional, continental and international sport event. Rs90 million for the development of sport all around the island and Rs127 million for the Mauritius Sport Council.

These allocations are as much more than financial commitment. They are investment in our athletes, in national pride and in the aspiration of a generation of young Mauritian who dream of representing their country with honour, distinction on the international stage.

Apprehension has been raised earlier today in this House as regards funding of our athlete participation in international event. I must reassure the House that adequate provision has been made in my Ministry's budget to cover such expenses. I also note with regret that this Government's commitment and ambition regarding the development of sport have been

called into question in this House. A more objective analysis would have led to a different conclusion. The result, both at local and international level, are unequivocal. But, Madam Speaker, what can we do ? *Il n'est de pire aveugle que celui qui ne veut pas voir.*

Madam Speaker, the sporting landscape is set to undergo major changes in the near future. With the introduction of a transformative Bill, namely the Sport Governance Bill, I take this opportunity to state, in no uncertain terms, that it will constitute a landmark piece of legislation for the modernisation, regulation and strengthening of sport ecosystem in the Republic of Mauritius.

It will ensure that sport organisations operate within a clear professional and merit-based framework that protect athletes and restore public confidence. Like it or not, the direction is irreversible. Sport in Mauritius must be governed with integrity, professionalism and accountability.

Madam Speaker, as the Minister of Youth and Sports, I am resolutely determined to commit to clean up the sport sector. Come what may, malpractices and mafia will not find their way in the field of sport. The various stakeholders concerned and the general public can rely on me to wage a relentless fight against anything likely to undermine the image of sport in Mauritius, whatever some may say.

I am and I will always be on the battlefield to fight the mafia and other reprehensible acts and practices. My record as Minister speaks volume about my commitment to reform and to defend the highest ethical standard in sport administration. Over the past 18 months, decisive actions have been taken to restore order, improve governance and place athlete and youth at the centre of the system. I will continue on the path with firmness, clarity and responsibility in the best interest of the country and the youth in particular.

Madam Speaker, football remains the most popular sports among our youth and this government is investing heavily in the development. At the level of my Ministry, a sum of Rs14 million has been allocated with a view to supporting football club. On the other hand, 12 regional football training centres, 47 écoles de foot and 41 grassroots football centres are fully operational around the country. More significant, the National Football Centre of Excellence was launched in July 2025 at Côte d'Or, bringing together the country's most promising young footballers. Meaningful progress has been achieved and soon we will be showcasing our achievement. We have the target and that is obtaining a qualification for the

under-17 World Cup. I firmly believe that this is within our reach and we are working towards it.

Similarly, many Mauritian football fans and rightly so, asked a justified question – will Mauritius qualify for a continental championship or even the FIFA World Cup like Curaçao or Cape Verde one day? We share this aspiration and ambition. We believe that Mauritius possesses the talent, the determination and the potential to compete at the highest level. In line with international best practices, my Ministry is presently working on a policy framework that would enable us to tap into the immense reservoir of talent within our diaspora. Once this policy is finalized and implemented, Mauritian born and living abroad will meet the eligible criteria will have the opportunity to represent their country of origin and strengthen our national team. However, this will not be done at the expense of our local sportsmen and sportswomen.

Madam Speaker, no sport policy can secure without quality infrastructure. This government is investing significantly in upgrading and modernizing sport facilities across the country. Despite our difficult economic condition, funds have still been allocated to the renovation and maintenance of those facilities. In this budget as well, an amount of Rs100 million has been provided for the renovation and upgrading of five major sport infrastructures.

Similarly, an initial provision of Rs80 million has been made in this year's budget for the construction of two additional swimming pool, one at Triolet and one at Flacq. Over the last year, a major achievement was the inauguration of the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam Complex at Triolet, representing an investment of approximately Rs200,000 million and creating a new sport hub in the north of the country.

I am also delighted to note that a provision of Rs20 million has been made for the setting up of an additional centre of excellence at Cote d'Or. Two are already operational. One more for swimming is in the pipeline. Let me highlight that at the Cote d'Or National Sport Complex, 20,000 users are benefiting from one and the most modern sport complexes in the African region under the guidance of my good friend, Michael Glover.

Madam Speaker, the future belongs to nations that invest in their people. Our upcoming priorities include –

- the introduction of a new Sports Bill as I mentioned earlier;

- enhanced preparation for the 2027 Indian Ocean Island Games;
- expansion of the Kids in Africa programme in primary school;
- continued support to elite athletes;
- strengthened action against drugs;
- further decentralisation of youth and sports devices.

Madam Speaker, I would like to emphasise my commitment to Rodrigues since taking office. We recognise that Rodrigues is an integral part of the Republic of Mauritius and we recognise too, that it is brimming with talents, whether in sports or among its young people. I have made it my duty to give a special consideration to our sisters and brothers in Rodrigues. During the upcoming financial year, we will continue to work with the Rodrigues Regional Administration to serve sporting and youth communities in Rodrigues.

This budget gives us the means to continue the journey at the time of critical economic condition. The budgetary provision of my Ministry has received a sizable increase of 12% compared to last year. This demonstrates that even in difficult economic circumstances, a responsible Government can continue investing in the future because youth are not an expenditure, they are an investment. Sports are not a cost; they are a nation building tool, and hope is not a luxury; it is the foundation of progress.

Madam Speaker, on a personal note, I would like to state that throughout my political career, I have always placed the country's interest at the centre of my decisions while remaining steadfastly loyal to the principles and values that my Party has always embodied but March 2026 was the darkest period I have ever experienced. At that time, I had two choices: to walk away or to defend the interests of the people who have massively voted for us.

Madam Speaker, behind our every vote casted in favour lies a profound trust, a hope, a better life and an expectation of greater integrity in the management of State affairs. Would it have been wise of me to evade from my responsibilities and break this bond of trust between myself and the people? After careful consideration, I choose the path of responsibility. I choose to stay to support the hon. Prime Minister. I choose to serve my country. At this stage, I must express my deep gratitude and appreciation to the electorate of my Constituency Stanley-Rose Hill, without whom I would not have been here addressing this august Assembly. This electorate, Madam Speaker, elected me on three occasions and I would like to

tell them today, in the most solemn manner that I will never let them down. I will always be there for them, come what may, and the development of my constituency is very close to my heart.

Madam Speaker, I now wish to address myself directly to the population. We have been brought to power through an overwhelming victory. Expectations are logically high but the population must not lose sight of the fact that we inherited a country in distress. Economic indicators were flashing red, public finances were under severe strain with an unsustainable level of public debt. Confidence in our institutions was seriously eroded with a system increasingly perceived as being driven by political favouritism and nepotism, allegations of unlawful surveillance of citizens, arbitrary arrest, growing concern regarding the state of our democratic institutions and the last but not least, the attempted restriction of access to social media in November 2024. Steering the country back on the right course requires both courage and vision. The right decisions are not always the easiest or the most popular in the short term, but they may prove to be the most beneficial for our children and future generations.

Madam Speaker, very often people tend to forget easily but how can we, in the case of the MSM regime, forget about the multiple scandals which has plagued their term of office over last 10 years. Today, some of the very same individuals who presided over that same period, seek to lecture this Government and present themselves once again as an alternative for the future.

Madame la présidente, hier, je me suis fait un devoir de suivre la conférence de presse de l'ex-Premier ministre, le leader du MSM, Monsieur Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, celui-là même qui a dirigé le pays pendant près de 7 ans, soit de janvier 2017 à novembre 2024. Le gouffre financier et économique dans lequel le pays se trouve aujourd'hui porte ses empreintes. Sa gestion calamiteuse des affaires de l'État lui a valu d'ailleurs l'une des plus lourdes défaites qu'un leader politique n'est jamais subi dans notre histoire récente. Ce que je retiens vivement de mon intervention, c'est cette insinuation selon laquelle nos aînés constituent un fardeau pour ce gouvernement.

Rien de plus faux, Madame la présidente. Les intérêts et le bien-être de nos aînés figurent parmi les principales préoccupations de ce gouvernement. Nous leur devons notre profond respect et gratitude pour leur contribution inestimable et l'édification d'une île Maurice moderne. Fardeau, dit-il ? Ai-je bien entendu, Madame la présidente ? Voici les vrais fardeau, Madame la présidente. Fardeau, c'est un pays quasi banqueroute affichant une dette

publique insoutenable qui nous a été légué. Fardeau, c'est l'argent des contribuables généreusement accordée à des proches du MSM comme des millions du *MIC* à Maradiva. Fardeau, c'est la violation sans scrupule de la démocratie, particulièrement la démocratie parlementaire avec des expulsions arbitraires à la pelle. Aujourd'hui, ces mêmes personnes se mettent dans la peau d'un sauveur et souhaitent diriger le pays à nouveau.

Madam Speaker, my appeal to the population is simple and straightforward. Never, never allow the same snake to bite you twice. No matter how many times a snake sheds its skin, it will always be a snake.

I am done, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Thank you. Very well, yes, hon. Minister, Dr. Ms Jeetun!

(5.49 p.m.)

The Minister of Financial Services and Economic Planning (Dr. Ms J. Jeetun): Madam Speaker, I would like to commend the hon. Prime Minister for presenting another responsible budget. Instead of being guided by short-term political calculations, he has chosen bold and visionary leadership, taking the difficult but necessary decisions that safeguard the present while securing Mauritius' long-term prosperity.

Madam Speaker, we often hear a recurrent narrative. People tell you that you should not talk about legacy 18 months into the mandate. They say people have voted you to restore and you should not be blaming others anymore but at the same time, it is important to remember the context and the magnitude of the mess that we are in. Imagine this country when we came to office, the legacy that was left to us. Hon. Jhummun said it in his speech the other day; a mess of 10 years cannot be repaired in 18 months, Madam Speaker. I think it is important for us to remember why we are where we are and what are the choices to get us to where we want to be. I will later talk about what we are doing to repair the damage done to our society, to our economy, to our people.

The previous regime left us with a legacy of economic mismanagement, institutional rot, deteriorating economic indicators – a path of unsustainability. We were on the cliff edge, Madam Speaker. Yes, *au bord du précipice*. Hon. Assirvaden, just now, mentioned so many big mismanagements: Silver Bank, MIC. Let me add a few more. Betamax – Rs 6 billion of mess that they left. BAI – who will forget BAI? The billions mismanaged, the thousands of

people whose life were wrecked through their mismanagement. Let us not forget that ever. The people chose us to restore order, to restore economic discipline, to restore hope.

The previous regime's choice was clear: live for today; spend more than you earn; consume instead of investing; live like there is no tomorrow; ensure that you and your cronies get rich, obscenely rich. The legacy of the previous regime was there for all of us to see. A budget deficit of 9.3% and a debt close to 90% of GDP. What do we have to show for that debt? Economic imbalances, a wider current account deficit, forex constraints, and higher interest bills.

Today, debt servicing – the hon. Prime Minister mentioned that earlier this morning – is the second biggest item in the Budget – 27 billion that could have gone towards education, towards health care, towards better local services, towards social housing. So, when people say stop criticising the previous regime, they need to understand the legacy. The legacy is not an excuse. It is the invisible noose around the neck of every citizen. *La corde autour du cou de chaque citoyen*, Madam Speaker. The pressure of that legacy is felt every day by our families, our businesses and our public finances. You know, Madam Speaker, every week, in Cabinet, Ministers say, ‘Oh, Prime Minister, we have sent this to the Ministry of Finance, we need funds.’, and every week he says, ‘There is no money.’ It is the same like a household; there is no money. We all need to understand that.

This is, precisely, why this Government has chosen a different path. Not the path of populism, as many are undertaking on radio and social media with cheap rhetoric; not the path of short-term political convenience, but the path of responsibility, the path of reform, and the path of restoring economic stability so that future generations inherit opportunity, not debt; prosperity, not fragility; and hope, not burdens.

Madam Speaker, last year's Budget was about ensuring that we did not go over the cliff. It was about restoring economic sustainability. It was about building institutional credibility. It was what the country needed. In the future, when we will look back, this will be the moment seen as a turning point in the history of our country. The Budget where we chose to stop the rot, to build resilience. Its philosophy is clear: address immediate priorities while preparing for a more secure and resilient future. There are still many difficult choices ahead. Let us make no mistake about that.

The backdrop to the Budget was a complex one. On top of the inherited legacy that I just mentioned, and most of my colleagues mentioned, the Iran war caused disruptions across multiple dimensions: higher oil prices; higher freight and insurance prices; higher global inflation; and higher domestic inflation. We could have let these shocks derail our economic agenda. We chose to stay the course while supporting the population. Hon. Minister Yeung Sik Yuen has been working relentlessly to help with the cost-of-living crisis. Notwithstanding the added spending pressure, budget deficit has been reduced from 9.3%, which we inherited, to 6% of GDP. The proposed budget aims to bring it to 3.7% of GDP, but now, that was before the freezing of the pension reform.

If we want to reduce the debt and interest bill, we need restraint. We need to make difficult choices. The restraint is also calling for collective responsibility. The Budget has a dose of progressivity, and the review of the tax system will be an opportunity to address any perceived undue burden. At the end of the day, we want to ensure we do not tax effort and our jurisdiction remains competitive.

Madam Speaker, allow me to say a few words on the pension reform which has been like the elephant in the room since last week. No one in this Assembly or in this country will question, will put in doubt, that our pension system is unsustainable and needs to be reformed. Pension reform is vital. We should not deny that some form of targeting is the way forward. We have been talking about that for years now, and the Prime Minister said that earlier today. The debate is on just how to reform it. It is a very sensitive subject. We are sitting on a ticking demographic time bomb. Our population is aging. Our population is also shrinking. We are spending close to 8% of GDP on Basic Retirement Pension.

Needless to say, that Friday's Budget contains largely positive measures, but it has upset people on the issue of pension reform. We all know a family member, a friend, a neighbour who is retired or a primary school teacher, a policeman, a private sector employee, and they say they have worked for 30, 40, 45 years. They are getting a work pension of Rs25,000 or Rs30,000. So, they needed that BRP to live a decent and modest life. We could not put the burden on our elderlies and take away money from their pocket to balance our budget deficit.

Yesterday, hon. Ameer Meea made a very compelling and passionate speech on how we dealt with this issue in MMM, as a responsible partner in this Government. We do not

dissent in public, Madam Speaker. We do not go on radio or on social media to criticise and distance ourselves from this situation. We are one team. We respect discipline that we have. We are in a government. *Il faut assumer* when you are in Government.

We must put on record the openness with which the Prime Minister acknowledged this and met us. Also, the team spirit and the collaboration of all our colleagues and partners to put our heads together and find a solution. So, I am deeply grateful to the Prime Minister for his bold decision to freeze the measure. You heard the voice of the people. You chose the path of righteousness, Prime Minister. So, on behalf of the people of this country, we say a million thanks to you.

But we must also warn the population, there are fiscal arithmetics. Just like families have a budget to balance, the Minister of Finance also has a country's budget to balance. There are tough choices to be made to balance the budget. We must remember that there is no such thing as a free lunch.

Madam Speaker, I will now turn to measures directly relevant to my Ministry of Financial Services and Economic Planning. Financial services, Madam Speaker, is one of the largest pillars of our economy. It contributes to 12.4% of GDP, employs over 20,000 highly skilled professionals, and it is by far the largest tax contributor, be it in terms of corporate tax or PAYE. On the other hand, the Ministry has one of the lowest budgets of any Ministry, Rs352 million.

That includes the budget of Office for Public Sector Governance, the budget for AML/CFT, the budget for Financial Services Unit, the budget for FIU, the budget for Financial Services Institute, and the budget for Economic Planning, which is Rs30 million. Every year, we review my Ministry's budget line by line to ensure no hidden facts or inefficiencies.

Maybe this is a *défaut* from the private sector. We analyse our budgets line by line. I have told my team: we need to do more with less. We should not ask for more money. We must try to do with what we have, and a smaller budget does not mean lower results. Last year, 19 budget measures were announced relating to my Ministry.

All but one have been completed or will be completed by the end of this month. So, when people say we are doing nothing, let me remind them that there are real achievements,

not just in my, but in every Ministry, Madam Speaker. We must acknowledge that. We do not stick to budget measures alone. We are delivering on the financial services strategy.

Let me give you a few deliverables for the outgoing fiscal year. The AML/CFT Act 2026 that we brought to Parliament, amending not less than 24 pieces of legislation for preparedness and readiness of the forthcoming ESAAMLG mutual evaluation.

Africa Credit Rating Agency (AFCRA) – we won the bid to host AFCRA in Mauritius. Right now, there is a team working currently in Mauritius from AFCRA to work on the operationalisation of the of the project.

National Fintech strategy – a major milestone was launched this very morning. This will be a game changer for our economy, opening an ocean of opportunities for our youth and our entrepreneurs.

Geopolitical response, rapid execution in times of crisis – in response to the flight of global capital flows arising from tensions in the Middle East, the Ministry developed a package of measures validated in April. It is already showing signs of positive outcomes.

GFCI Index – we improved our global ranking by eight places in one year.

International outreach – despite having no dedicated agency for promotion of the sector, we raise the profile of the MIFC through dozens of top media outlets in India, in the UK, in UAE and in Africa.

Madam Speaker, the hon. Prime Minister launched the national consultations for Vision 2050 in December 2025. We undertook, by far, the largest public consultation undertaken in this country for a project of this nature. We engaged with more than 2,000 people up and down this country through 12 regional consultations covering all districts and municipalities. We conducted 21 sectoral consultations, a dedicated consultation with trade unions, and we received 72 online submissions. These are some of the realisations of last year.

So, for those who say who keep on saying we are doing nothing, these are some very concrete achievements and deliverables. We are executing the financial services strategy with determination and conviction. I am pleased that this budget supports our strategy.

It will strengthen Mauritius as a competitive, innovative and trusted IFC while positioning the jurisdiction for the next generation of digital finance and Fintech.

The push for AI will support our advances in Fintech and broader economic diversification. The National AI platform will help us develop local AI capabilities, foster innovation, and equip the workforce with skills required for emerging sectors.

The push for startups will stimulate entrepreneurship, attract innovative businesses, and support the emergence of technology-driven Fintech enterprises. Introducing clear rules for the issuance of an investment in stable coins and the tokenisation of real-world assets will position Mauritius at the forefront of digital finance. Madam Speaker, we are already fully engaged to ensure our readiness for the mutual evaluation in 2027.

The proposed Bank of Mauritius Bill, the new banking bill, and the resolution regime will further strengthen our regulatory framework. The amendment will strengthen oversight across a range of sectors, including banking, cooperative credit unions, virtual asset service providers, and dealers in precious metals and stones as well as WAQF and other legal arrangements.

In the banking sector, amendments to the Banking Act will strengthen information sharing arrangements between financial institution and the Financial Crimes Commission. But as always, we need to balance compliance with ease of doing business. The Financial Services Institute, under the aegis of a newly appointed board and a newly appointed CEO, will soon be launching a national training program in the run up of the mutual evaluation to ensure our institutions and stakeholders are fully cognizant of how to translate regulations to into effectiveness.

Madam Speaker, let me now turn to governance. Governance remains a cornerstone of an effective, transparent and accountable public sector. The OPSG will undertake governance surveys and assessment for four Ministries and departments in the coming financial year.

In parallel, it will continue to provide guidance, awareness program and capacity building initiatives to support ministries and departments in strengthening governance arrangements and fostering a culture of accountability, integrity and continuous improvement.

The OPSG will also monitor the effectiveness of audit committees and the implementation of governance recommendation across ministries and departments. This will help strengthen accountability, improve organisational performance, and ensure that public resources are managed efficiently, effectively and in the best interest of citizens.

Madam Speaker, let me now turn to economic planning. We have, at various points, noted the challenges we face as a country. An economic model that is running out of steam

and the urgency of reinventing our traditional pillars, agriculture and manufacturing exports as well as developing new growth pillars.

A new world order characterised by greater uncertainty and shock, an ageing and declining population, and rising climate vulnerabilities. Vision 2050 and the National Development Plan 2035 will articulate our strategies on how we navigate these challenges. Vision 2050 will be ready in August 2026. So, in in two months time.

We had to we had the opportunity to hear the aspirations of our citizens, village councillors, municipal councillors, the youth, the students, CEOs, planters, fishermen, economic operators, senior citizen, women association. We listened to their hopes, their concerns, their priorities.

Madam Speaker, I also hear more often than once, people saying: ‘why are you focusing on long-term planning when we have when we face immediate priorities?’ They often say: ‘resolve our problems of today. You know, in 2050, you will not be here.’ Let me say this to them, and it reminds me a recent event.

I had the privilege to participate in a global summit in India earlier in the year, where the hon. Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi made a very compelling speech on Viksit Bharat Abhiyan 2047.

In fact, he had launched that initiative 10 years ago when he came to power in 2015. He was telling the audience the same narrative where people then were telling him: ‘why do you worry about 2047? You will not be here in 2047’. But see where India is today, compared to 2015, 10 years down the road. And this is where I feel that this Government, under the leadership of this hon. Prime Minister, is looking at the long term. However difficult the current path may be, if we do not plan for the long term, we will still be firefighting 25 years down the road. What this budget shows is you can address immediate priorities and long-term planning simultaneously. They are not mutually exclusive. In fact, they are reinforcing. Let me take four broad themes from the budget and its alignment with Vision 2050.

On growth and economic diversification. The broad-based approach spanning traditional and emerging sectors, sugar, fishing, manufacturing and exports, the blue economy, tourism, fintech, and startups through SMEs and fintech. Various infrastructure needed to unlock growth and well-being: water, electricity, renewables, port development. In this regard, we also welcome the Business Facilitation Bill to address bottlenecks and facilitate the ease of doing business, as well as the principle of silent agreement. In the

context of the fiscal constraint, we need private investment. We need to make it easier for people to invest in the country to create jobs and opportunities.

Secondly, on resilience to shock, we welcome the efforts to boost domestic food production through agriculture and fishing that will strengthen our value chain. We are helping small farmers. We are helping fishermen, people who are critical in providing our food, we owe it to them.

On aging and migration, I congratulate the hon. Prime Minister for restoring the age of retirement at 60 and giving people incentive for remaining in the job market for longer. This is a humane decision. It allows people who want to retire early to do so. It also allows people who want to work longer to do so. Given our demographic crisis, we can call it a crisis, we no longer have the luxury of allowing our talent to remain idle because of their age. If they are fit and willing, let us make it easier for them.

I also welcome the comprehensive migration policy. Migration is an economic necessity. However, we must not forget the social imperative. How to balance migration with the integration of migrants in our community? We need to plan ahead on this very important social issue. I also applaud the initiative to tap into the diaspora. I have interacted with many of them during the Vision 2050 consultation. They clearly want to help the country. On climate, we need to strengthen our resilience. I also welcome the urgent efforts aimed at preserving our beaches, our lagoons, and the biodiversity.

Madam Speaker, before concluding, let me go back to Vision 2050 consultations. We heard the national cry for tackling the drugs issue across the island. We heard the calls for more safety in our towns and villages. We heard the calls for the youth for better infrastructure and more leisure across the country. We heard the fishermen from Grand Gaube to Black River. We heard the we heard the planters from Flacq to Triolet to Camp Diable. We heard the call for more economic opportunities. We heard the calls from town centres from Curepipe to Vacoas-Phoenix to Quatre Bornes and Beau Bassin Rose-Hill. We heard the calls for preserving Port Louis. We heard the calls for protecting our lagoons and biodiversity at sea from our citizens and NGOs. And I cannot forget this lady who pleaded for the construction of Rivière des Anguilles Dam to be accelerated. The budget, Madam Speaker, already answers some of these calls, and we have more work to do, and we will deliver, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, let me in conclusion say this. Good plans and budgets are only as good as their execution. Implementation is what matters. And this is where our responsibility lies. Unless we are relentless about execution and delivery, we will not live up to the expectation of the people and I must be honest, public administration is a very heavy and bureaucratic machinery. The system is mostly process driven and not result driven. In many ways, we are still operating the public administration system that we inherited back in 1968 from the British. This is a major constraint and we will need to tackle that. It is the big elephant in the room and we need to tackle that to be able to deliver more effectively and more efficiently. The public and the people expect us to deliver, and we will deliver come what may. We contained the rot. We will now rebuild. Rebuild for a more prosperous and secure future. Let us get to work.

Before I end, Madam Speaker, allow me to express my deepest sense of gratitude to all my staff at the Ministry, to all my hon. colleagues and fellow MPs, to my regional and hon. colleagues in MMM, and to all my constituents. Thank you all for your support day in and day out in what has been a tough year on many counts. With this, Madam Speaker, I once again commend the hon. Prime Minister for this Bill and for his courage and the responsibility with which he has done this exercise, and I commend the Bill to the House. Thank you.

(6.18 p.m.)

Madam Speaker: Yes. Hon. Attorney-General!

The Attorney General (Mr G. P. C. Glover, SC): Madam Speaker, allow me at the very outset to clarify that I do not address this Assembly as an elected member. I hold my seat in this House by virtue of the Constitution alone, as Attorney-General. Mine is therefore a constitutional office before it is anything else, and it is in that capacity that I propose to speak today. It is for that reason, Madam Speaker, that the House should not expect from me a political speech.

The Office I hold is that of legal advisor, not only to government, but in real sense, to this Assembly and to the State. And I conceive it to be my duty to address the budget not as an instrument of politics, but as an instrument of law, to speak to its legal architecture, to the legislative programme it sets in motion, and to the work of the Office over which I have the honour to preside. I will accordingly confine my remarks to these matters.

First, I propose to give the House an account of the work of the Attorney General's Office during the financial year now drawing to a close, and what that work has meant for the administration of justice, for the quality of our legislation, and for the legal protection of the State and of the citizens of Mauritius.

Secondly, Madam Speaker, I will set out, in so far as my Office is concerned, what lies ahead in the fiscal year which we are about to enter, the legislative priorities, the reforms in contemplation and the obligations both domestic and international that will fall to be discharged.

A budget, Madam Speaker, is too often read as a ledger of money alone. But behind every measure announced stands a legal instrument that must be drafted, scrutinised, and made to withstand challenge. Behind every commitment of the State stands an obligation that must be lawful in its making and sound in its execution. It is less visible, but nonetheless an essential dimension of the nation's finances that I now turn to.

Madam Speaker, I come first to the year now drawing to its close, and to one of the most productive legislative sessions the House has known. More than 20 Bills have come before this Assembly in the space of a single fiscal year. A programme conceived with purpose and pursued with resolve.

Let me begin with justice. For too long, the ordinary litigant has had to navigate appeal procedures that were dispersed and frankly difficult to access. With the Criminal Appeal, Criminal Review Act and the Civil Appeal Act, we have undertaken the most significant modernisation of our appellate system in a generation. These are not technical pieces of legislation for lawyers alone. They give every person, whether contesting a conviction or a civil judgment, a clearer, fairer, and more certain route to have their appeal considered and in providing a proper mechanism for the review of convictions. We have built a safeguard against the greatest of failures: the conviction of the innocent.

A justice system, Madam Speaker, that can correct its own errors is a system worthy of public trust. But we have gone further. Through the Courts (Amendment) Act, which brought about a new expedited procedure for judicial review proceedings, and the Court of Rodrigues Jurisdiction (Amendment) Act, bringing the Children's Courts to Rodrigues, we have strengthened the machinery of our courts and brought justice physically closer to our brothers and sisters in Rodrigues. With the Law Reform Commission Act, we have created a

permanent engine of renewal so that the reform of our laws is no longer sporadic, but continuous.

A justice system, Madam Speaker, is only as strong as the profession that serves it. The Senior Counsel and Senior Attorney Act provides for the establishment of a recommendation panel presided over by the Chief Justice, which makes recommendations to the President of the Republic on the conferment of honorary distinctions to Senior Counsels and Senior Attorneys.

The Law Practitioners Disciplinary Proceedings Act now establishes clear and credible standards of accountability for public confidence in the law, Madam Speaker, depends upon confidence in those who practice it. The members of the Law Practitioners Disciplinary Proceedings Commission have been designated and appointed since 01 June 2026. And for the citizen who simply seeks a fresh start in life, the Certificate of Character Act is the most consequential of all. By overhauling the framework for the issuing of criminal record certificates, we have removed unjust and lasting barriers to employment, and we have given real meaning to the principle of rehabilitation. This is what access to justice looks like in the daily life of an ordinary citizen.

This Act, Madam Speaker, will come into force on 01 July 2026 together with the relevant regulations. The Financial Crimes Commission (Amendment) Act and the comprehensive Anti-Money Laundering, Combating the Financing of Terrorism and Countering Proliferation Financing Act have reinforced our defences against financial crime and brought our framework into full alignment with the most exacting international standards. The reputation of Mauritius as a clean, credible jurisdiction is not an abstraction. It is the foundation upon which our financial services sector and tens of thousands of livelihoods depend.

Madam Speaker, this Government legislates not only for today, but for generations to come. The Atal Bihari Vajpayee Institute of Public Service and Innovation Act and the National Research and Innovation Institute Act represent a deliberate investment in human capital, in a modern public service, and in the innovation that will drive our economy forward. Nor have we neglected the everyday: The Police (Amendment) Act, the Road Traffic (Amendment) Act, and the Optical Council (Amendment) Act, each bear directly upon the safety and well-being of our people, while the Rodrigues Regional Assembly (Amendment) Act deepens the autonomy of Rodrigues within our Republic.

Madam Speaker, this Government has taken the bold challenge of modernising our Constitution. Through the Constitutional Review Commission Act, we are setting up a commission that will hold, *inter alia*, public consultations on the issues that need to be reviewed and examined in our supreme law. Mind you, we have had hurdles to clear, last-minute hiccups to deal with, but we have ironed out the last creases. The appointment of the commissioners is, I am told, imminent.

Our Constitution has served us well since 1968. It remains the bedrock of our democracy. But a constitution is not a monument to be admired from a distance. It is a living instrument. After more than five decades, it must be reviewed to reflect how far our society has travelled and the realities of the Mauritius of today. The Constitutional Review Commission will give the people a voice in that process. It is, indeed, an act of confidence in our democracy.

Madam Speaker, these Bills taken together, these Acts taken together, tell a single story. Justice and prosperity are not rivals. They reinforce one another. A nation cannot prosper without the rule of law, and the rule of law has absolutely no meaning if it does not reach the ordinary citizen in the conduct of his ordinary life.

Madam Speaker, I now turn to the year ahead and to the legislative work presently being attended to by my office and across government. Now, taken together, these instruments represent one of the most substantial programmes of legal reform undertaken in recent memory. They reach to the very architecture of our criminal justice system, to the integrity of our public institutions, to the protection of the vulnerable, and to the modernisation of the law across a wide range of sectors.

I propose to set them out by theme so that the House may appreciate not merely the volume of work, but the coherence of the design that underlies it.

At the centre of this programme, Madam Speaker, stands the establishment of the National Crime Agency. This is not a single enactment, but an integrated suite of legislations deliberately conceived as a coherent whole for the task of confronting serious organised and financial crimes, because they cannot be met by piecemeal measures.

The reform, Madam Speaker, will start with the Constitution (Amendment) Bill to secure the constitutional foundation upon which the new architecture is to rest. The National Crime Agency Bill itself will create the agency, define its mandate and confer upon it the powers and the operational independence necessary to discharge it.

Alongside it, the Independent Advisory Panel Bill will provide the institutional support for independent oversight of the agency so that the exercise of these considerable powers remains at all times subject to scrutiny and accountability. Three further Bills give the agency its substantive reach. The Financial Crime Bill will modernise and consolidate the law governing economic and financial offenses. The Asset Recovery and Unexplained Wealth Bill will strengthen the capacity of the relevant investigative authorities to trace, freeze and recover the proceeds of crime, and will introduce a framework addressed to unexplained wealth, ensuring that those who cannot account for assets disproportionate to their lawful means may be required to do so.

Now, the Criminal Justice Offenders Assisting Investigations and Prosecutions Bill will establish a clear statutory basis upon which offenders who provide genuine assistance to investigations and prosecutors may have that cooperation recognised. An instrument of proven value in dismantling criminal networks from within. To these are added the National Crime Agency Miscellaneous Provisions Bill, carrying the consequential and transitional amendments that sow substantial reform, necessarily entails across the existing body of law.

And because the establishment of a permanent architecture of this kind cannot be accomplished overnight, two interim instruments: the NCA Interim Agency Bill and the Secretariat of the Independent Advisory Interim Panel Bill will ensure operational continuity and uninterrupted oversight whilst the permanent framework is brought fully into being.

The National Prosecution Service Bill is next on our agenda after the NCA legislation and will provide a strengthened and clearly structured basis for the prosecution of offences with the DPP as the head of that National Prosecution Service. Together with the National Crime Agency package, these measures are intended to deliver a criminal justice system that is at once more capable and more accountable.

Madam Speaker, the old Police and Criminal Justice Bill, which we have heard of for so long, has been reviewed, and it is now clear that the application of this Bill, in its present form, will create more problems than it will solve. The idea now is to bring a new Criminal Justice Bill, which will cater, *inter alia*, for –

- (i) the abolition of provisional charges, as we know it today, and replacing it by another system, but without doing away with the oversight of the courts;

- (ii) the bringing about of a new process in the criminal justice system by introducing staged proceedings in court for serious and complex criminal trials, and
- (iii) the bringing about of a new legal framework to cater for expedited hearings for minor criminal offences where the suspect has, during the course of the inquiry, admitted his guilt to the offence charged.

All these, Madam Speaker, will by necessity require consultations with all the relevant stakeholders, including the Judiciary, the Office of the DPP, the Police, and the Independent Bar.

In a related vein of professional renewal, the Law Practitioners (Amendment) Bill will now aim at reforming the rules governing pupillage to the benefit of those entering the legal profession and of the standards of that profession as a whole. And again, this will entail consultations with the professions and the Judiciary.

Madam Speaker, I now turn from the architecture of enforcement to the substance of the criminal law itself. In the coming weeks, amendments to the Criminal Code will be presented to the House to address two matters of the greatest social importance: marital rape and femicide. By these reforms, the law will affirm without equivocation that a marital relationship confers no licence for sexual violence, and that the killing of women on account of their gender is to be named, recognised, and punished for what it is. These are not technical amendments, Madam Speaker. They speak to the dignity and to the safety of women in our society, and they are long overdue.

Madam Speaker, one of this Government's defining commitments has been the restoration of Mauritius' democratic institutions. When we came into office, it was a moment when the independence of key bodies had been questioned and public confidence shaken. Rebuilding that confidence remains a priority, and today, I turn to one of its clearest expressions: the reform of the National Human Rights Commission.

The Protection of Human Rights Act is, today, 28 years old. Enacted in a different era, it no longer reflects the international standards by which such institutions are now measured. The Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions has set out clear expectations of us, and the Commission's full accreditation review falls due in 2027. It is very serious. Should we fail to act, our National Human Rights Commission risks being downgraded to 'B'

Status, stripped of its voice and its vote at the international level. For a country, so recently elected to the Human Rights Council, that would be a very serious blow.

My Office is, therefore, in the process of preparing the National Human Rights Commission Bill, which the Government intends to enact before the end of the year. This Bill will establish a transparent, merit-based process for the appointment of commissioners, with safeguards against arbitrary dismissal. It will remove the secondment of police officers as investigators so that the Commission may inquire into misconduct without fear or favour. It will broaden the Commission's mandate, create a dedicated national preventive mechanism to inspect our places of detention, and guarantee financial autonomy with direct reporting to this House.

Madam Speaker, this reform is not simply a response to international pressure. It is a statement of values. Mauritius has shown, in a single year, that democratic regression can be reversed. The passage of this Bill will show that such reversal can be deepened, consolidated and made permanent.

Madam Speaker, a number of other Bills will modernise the law in particular sectors, such as health, consumer protection, hydrographic services, electronic communications, and child adoption. In the field of sport, the Governance of Sports Bill, together with the Mauritius Sports Council Bill and the Registrar of Sports Organisations Bill, will overhaul the governance of sporting bodies, providing for proper registration, oversight and standards of administration across that sector.

Public safety on our roads will also be addressed by further amendments to the Road Traffic Act, which will provide, amongst other measures, for the impounding of vehicles, which is a firm response to conduct that places the lives of road users at risk, but it will have always due regard to fundamental constitutional safeguards.

Now, Madam Speaker, let me come to the measures announced in this Budget. I would like to begin with two measures in the Budget that fall squarely within my responsibility as guardian of this country's legal commitments. The extension of Maternity Leave to a full year, and the introduction, for the first time in our law, of paid Menstrual Leave.

Let me begin where an Attorney General usually begins, with the law. These measures, Madam Speaker, are not acts of generosity. They are the honouring of obligations that

Mauritius freely assumed. We ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 1984. We ratified the International Labour Organisation's Maternity Protection Convention in 2019. Both require the State to protect maternity, and both make plain that to protect maternity is not to discriminate, but to prevent discrimination. By extending fully paid leave to 24 weeks from only 16 weeks, Mauritius does not strain against the international standard. It rises to the front rank of those who meet it.

Madam Speaker, I have heard the objection that these protections will make employers reluctant to hire women. I answer this without hesitation. To refuse a woman work because she might one day become a mother is already unlawful in Mauritius. It offends the Equal Opportunities Act. It offends the Workers' Rights Act, and it offends the very conventions I have just named.

Yesterday, the Equal Opportunities Commission reminded everyone, in a communiqué, of the provisions of the law. I can only agree with that statement because the law is clear, unambiguous, and direct. No one! No one can discriminate against a woman who is pregnant or could potentially be pregnant.

On Menstrual Leave, Madam Speaker, let no one mistake what we are doing. To recognise that a woman in genuine incapacitating pain should not have to choose between her health and her wages is not to call her a lesser worker. It is precisely what keeps her in work and on fair terms. It will, of course, rest on proper medical certification, and it will carry every safeguard against misuse.

Madam Speaker, this House has already accepted, in its very budget, that we are an ageing nation. We cannot ask the women of Mauritius, who are more than 50% of our population, both to sustain our economy as workers and to renew our population, and offer them nothing in return but the choice between the two. The experience of other nations tells us plainly what we should all know. Where the State stands behind its families, families grow.

Madam Speaker, the former Secretary General of the UN, Kofi Annan, once observed, and I quote –

“When women thrive, all of society benefits, and succeeding generations are given a better start in life.”

These measures are not only lawful, they are necessary. They are just, and they are a testament of this Government's firm purpose to put the people first.

Madam Speaker, the second point relates to item 30 in the Annex of the Budget, which provides for amendments to the Banking Act, and these have raised some alarm in certain quarters. The aim of these amendments to section 64 of the Banking Act is to correct anomalies which perdure since the repeal of the Asset Recovery Act and the promulgation of the Financial Crimes Commission Act in 2023.

Section 64(3)(k) of the Banking Act – and I will try not to bore you to death here –, under the confidentiality provisions, currently provides that a financial institution is required to provide information in compliance with Section 48 or pursuant to an order made under the Asset Recovery Act. Now, not only is it the case that the Asset Recovery Act has been repealed since 2023, but the provisions are now entrenched in the FCC Act.

Nothing is said about the reporting requirements under Section 25 of the UN Financial Prohibitions, Arms Embargo and Travel Ban Sanctions Act. The proposed amendments, Madam Speaker, seek simply to correct omissions – the omissions I have just mentioned – and to align the Banking Act with the provisions of Section 68A of the Financial Crimes Commission Act.

Other amendments are also being brought. First, to clarify the linkage between Sections 64(9) and 64(10) of the Banking Act, following the ruling of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in the Stanford Asset Holding and the Fraser Bart case in 2023. Second, to replace the words money laundering with financial crimes in Section 64 (10)(b) of the Banking Act. And third to provide a correction in Section 64(16), where the words Section 7(1)(c) should, in fact, read Section 17(1)(c).

Taken together, these amendments remove legal uncertainty and harmonise the provisions of the Banking Act with those of the Financial Crimes Commission Act, reinforcing our anti-money laundering and asset recovery framework while preserving confidentiality in all cases not covered by this statutory exception.

Madam Speaker, one of the most moving and inspiring speech this House heard this week is that of the hon. Minister of Education and Human Resource. His speech, especially regarding bullying in all its form, must have resonated loud and clear in all the homes of this

country. His cry from the heart has not gone unnoticed. I give this House the firm assurance that we shall work diligently to ensure that the proper legislation on anti-bullying is drafted and soon brought before the Assembly.

Madam Speaker, I have also listened very carefully to the criticism from the other side of the House regarding Artificial Intelligence. I say to the hon. Members opposite, with respect, the whole world is moving towards AI. We may be a small nation of 1.2 million, but that does not mean we are timid. We cannot and we will not miss the train.

Madam Speaker, to be as honest as the hon. First Member of Vacoas & Floréal, AI is but a tool and like every tool ever placed in human hands. From the printing press to the motor car, it carries the capacity to do great good, but if misused, to do real harm. The answer to that risk is not fear. The answer is law. The answer is a framework. That is precisely why this Government will bring forward an AI guidelines legislation to ensure that AI is integrated in our society fully, but responsibly, within the right legal framework.

Now, on a more on a lighter note, the hon. Leader of the Opposition told this House that one John Clark had call for AI to be suspended, you heard that? I must gently correct the hon. Member. The gentleman's name is Jack Clark, not John Clark, co-founder of Anthropic, and he did not call for AI to be suspended. His point that the field today is all accelerator and no break was a caution about the pace of development.

It was an argument for guard rails, not for handbrake. In other words, Madam Speaker, the very man the Opposition correlate is making this Government's case for us that progress and prudence must travel together.

Madam Speaker, in my own office, we are not content to debate AI in the abstract. We are looking closely at how AI can help us deliver justice faster, to ease the burden of delay, to assist in the work of the law, and to give our citizen the timely justice to which they are entitled. Used wisely with the proper safeguards, technology can be the ally of the rule of law, not its enemy.

My office is busy setting up an interactive website to which every citizen will have easy access to all laws, all regulations, and all decisions of the Supreme Court for the last 150 years and decisions of the Privy Council relevant to Mauritius. We approach it as a serious

nation, Madam Speaker, ambitious enough to seize the opportunity and wise enough to build the brakes before we need them.

Madam Speaker, concerns have been expressed regarding the heavier penalties proposed under the Public Gathering Act. I understand why they are raised. The right to assemble lawfully, peacefully, and to make one's voice heard is a freedom guaranteed by our Constitution. The operative word being lawfully, one this House holds in common. The proposition is only to increase the sentence for an offence which already exists. Nothing more.

However, I give the assurance that these objections will be carried forward faithfully and placed before those responsible for settling the final form of this measure. Madam Speaker, the hon. Junior Minister for Health has made an appeal to make drug testing compulsory for frontliners. I hear her, and on a personal level, I can only agree with the urgency of this matter.

Let me go further, Madam Speaker. This cannot be about frontliners alone. Every one of us who shares the public space, the driver behind the wheel, you, me, us, the pedestrian crossing the road, the nurse, the doctor, the police officer, everyone is concerned. Let me be clear, Madam Speaker, this needs not and must not trample on human rights. A test that is random, conducted with dignity, justified by public safety, and applied fairly to all within a proper legal framework is not an intrusion on liberty. It is the very condition of liberty.

My freedom, your freedom to walk the street safely, a child's freedom to be treated by a doctor in full command of his senses and of his faculties, these are rights too. A right exercised under the influence is not freedom. It is a danger to everyone around us.

Madam Speaker, last but not least, the Chagos. Regarding the Chagos deal, let me briefly remind the House of the chronology – and I am looking at the time. I am very sorry. I am probably out of time.

Madam Speaker: You are just on time.

Mr Glover: Thank you.

Madam Speaker: I will give you a couple of minutes.

Mr Glover: The ICJ delivered its Advisory Opinion on 25 February 2019, and the United Nations General Assembly voted on 22 May 2019. The UN General Assembly called upon the United Kingdom to complete the decolonisation process within six months.

Six months, Madam Speaker, 22 May 2019. And you remember, the treaty was signed on 22 May 2025. From 22 May, six months to restore our sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago. That meant not later than 22 November 2019.

However, the previous government could not even secure the opening of negotiations until November 2022. Negotiations that yielded no more than a political agreement in October 2024, and certainly not a final deal that could be signed off. We had to review this upon taking office. The deal was signed in May 2025. Only six months later.

Whether signed in January 2025 or later, it would still have had to go through the same legislative process in the UK Parliament, which, of course, remains beyond our control. The elected members of the House of Commons voted massively in favour, but the hurdles arose at a later stage in the House of Lords.

The complicated relationship between the US President and Sir Keir Starmer delayed the exchange of notes in relation to the agreement of 1966. This, likewise, was beyond our control. Madam Speaker, this is not a matter to be settled by Lucky Luke quick draw strikes, but by patience and diplomacy. The Bill did not feature in the King's speech a few weeks ago for the next parliamentary session, but it remained listed on the UK Parliament website with a date for a debate to be confirmed.

The proof, Madam Speaker, lies in the chronology itself. The negotiations between Mauritius and the UK began in 2022 under a conservative Government, led first by Liz Truss and then by Rishi Sunak, before culminating in the agreement of 22 May, concluded under the present Labour Government.

This is a commitment sustained across changes of leadership and across both of Britain's principal parties. I say principal parties perhaps at the relevant time. It is the commitment of a state, not of an individual, nor of a Government of the moment. The proof of the pudding is in the eating they say. Only yesterday, the hon. Attorney General, Lord Hermer, addressing the House of Commons Justice Select Committee, came out strongly in favour of the ratification of this treaty, and later his office issued a statement, and I quote –

“The Attorney General was reflecting on the Government's long-standing position, which is that the government remains committed to the agreement with Mauritius as the best way to safeguard the long-term future of the base, and continues to work closely with the US and Mauritius on the next steps. The Government will bring the Bill back to Parliament to be ratified as soon as practicable, and for now, we continue to operate as normal.”

The question therefore, Madam Speaker – as you usually put to us – is no longer whether, but it is when. Madam Speaker, as I draw to a close in my intervention, let me highlight a couple of facts warranting comment. It must be said that the judiciary, the office of the DPP and my office have clearly been heard and measures are afoot in the budget to provide us with more staff and upgraded infrastructure, showing a commitment to better access to justice.

Madam Speaker, a budget is announced in this House in the space of an afternoon, but it is given effect in the months that follow through the patient and glamorous work of implementation. A measure announced is not a measure delivered. Between the announcement and the achievement, stands a body of legal and institutional labour that must be carried out with care if the promise made to the people is to become the protection they enjoy. For in the end, Madam Speaker, this is the quiet truth of every budget. Its figures are given life only by the law that stands behind them.

The maternity protections we have announced, the safeguards against financial crime we have strengthened, the institutions we have undertaken to renew, each of these will succeed or fail upon the quality of the legal work that follows. That work, my office will discharge, as it has always sought to, without *fanfare*, but without fault in the service of this Assembly and of the State and of the citizens of Mauritius.

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

Madam Speaker: Thank you so much. Hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

(6.54 p.m.)

The Minister of Health and Wellness (Mr A. Bachoo): Madam Speaker, I rise to support this budget at a defining moment, shaped not by economic comfort, but by the realities we inherited and our determination to confront them with responsibility, solidarity, efficiency and social justice. When MSM came to power in December 2014, public sector growth debt stood at Rs238 billion or 59.5% of GDP. By June 2024, it has soared to Rs559.1

billion representing 83.4% of GDP. In 10 years, they added more than Rs321 billion to the national debt.

More than doubling the burden passed on to the people and future generation, they plundered and looted the country. They bled the country white. They kept on plucking the fruit without watering the plant. They kept on milking the cow without feeding the cow and the end result, the economy collapsed.

We now know that SBM, MauBank, Silver Bank and the DBM wrote off Rs25 billion during MSM's tenure. This is appalling. Where did that money go and who benefited? We know about the MIC saga where Rs billions were given to political *protégés*, secret circles of families and cronies. Maradiva benefited from billions of rupees. In Betamax, they lost more than Rs6 billion. And at the same time, there was one Patel group of companies. They lost over Rs2 billion for having cancelled the contract.

After repeated downgrades under MSM, Mauritius was brought dangerously to close junk status by Moody's. Yet they claim to have worked wonders. Madam Speaker, this was a disastrous economic inheritance our Government received in December 2024.

Madam Speaker, on Monday, the hon. Leader of Opposition borrowed a famous dialogue from Bollywood to mock the hon. Prime Minister. But today another Hindi saying is more appropriate: "*Ulta chor kotwal ko date*" meaning, the thief turned around and scolded the policeman.

Madam Speaker: Say that again.

Mr Bachoo: The thief, the robber turns around and scolds the policeman. This is what happened exactly. Those who created the problem now accuse those who are trying to correct those problems. He delivered Gabbar Singh's words with the same swagger and confidence. As the saying goes, birds of the same feather flock together but he forgot that Gabbar Singh's arrogance could not save him when the moment of reckoning came. Neither could political swagger save MSM in November 2024. His party failed to win a single directly elected seat and he returned to this House only through the Best Loser System.

Madam Speaker, since he has chosen the language of Gabbar Singh against the hon. Prime Minister, let me ask him, *Kitne aadmi the?* The answer is *zero lor 60*. That is the reason. After that verdict, perhaps he should now ask his own leader. He should ask his leader – *ab tumhara kya hoga Pravinwa?* What will happen to you, Pravin? You have to answer.

Madam Speaker, it is very easy to print money. Very easy to print Rs181 billion and distribute it. It is easy to increase pensions, double and triple pensions and to grant all kinds of allowances. It is very easy to take decisions that are popular today and receive applause. It is so easy to be generous with taxpayers' money. It is equally easy to criticize. It is easy to stand in the House and criticize the hon. Prime Minister. It is easy to go on radio programs, to write on social media, to post on Facebook and to attack decisions that demand sacrifice. Criticism is always easier than responsibility. As Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam used to say – *lalang pena lezo*, it can go anyway. But leadership is not about choosing the easy path. Leadership is about choosing the right path.

Madam Speaker, one religious book, 'Katha Upanishad', which is very popular, teaches us that every leader is confronted with two choices. One is called *praya*, that is a pleasant and the attractive part and *Shreya* means the good and the righteous path. The pleasant path offers immediate gratification and applause. The good path often demands sacrifice, courage and perseverance. The wise Upanishad tells – choose the good over the pleasant. The right path is narrow, narrow to tread at the edge of a razor.

The easy and popular option was available. The politically convenient option was there but the hon. Prime Minister choose not what was pleasant, but what he believed was good and necessary for the country. That, Madam Speaker, is the difference between seeking popularity and exercising leadership. The hon. Prime Minister chose not to think about next election. He chose to think about the next generation. He chose not to protect his popularity, but to protect the future of the country.

Madam Speaker, I ask a simple question. Throughout the political history of Mauritius, which leader would have dared to take such a difficult but important decision? Which politician would have accepted the political cost of such an unpopular but necessary reform in the national interest? What is popular is not necessarily right. And if what is right is not necessarily always popular. Very few would have dared where angels fear to tread.

Very few if any, would have accepted the consequences. And for that, we must give credit where credit is due. Great politicians, statesmen look for breakthrough, while petty politicians thrive on breakdowns. Good politicians strategize; dirty politicians dramatize. Good politicians dream, petty politicians scheme. Politically speaking, some of these decisions may be unpopular, but the Prime Minister does not govern according to opinion polls only. He does not calculate electoral advantages. He does not ask himself what would

be popular. He asked himself what was necessary. He could have chosen the easy path, the road of applause, comfort and political convenience. Instead, he chose the difficult road, the road of responsibility, courage and honesty. This is what we call true statesmanship.

Madam Speaker, the people of Mauritius will, in the years ahead, reap the fruit of his vision, courage and the difficult decisions taken today. Those results may come much sooner than the soothsayers and prophets of doom would have us believe.

Madam Speaker, Abraham Lincoln used to describe democracy as Government of the people, by the people, for the people. A Government that is truly for the people must also have the humility to listen. As the former President of the United States rightly stated –

“The ear of the leader must ring with the voice of the people.”

The hon. Prime Minister has demonstrated precisely that quality. When genuine concerns were expressed, he listened, reflected upon and responded. That is not weakness. It is responsible, compassionate and people-centred leadership. A strong leader is one who guides, not misguides. A strong leader is one who leads, not misleads. He does not place personal pride above the people. He has the courage to tackle difficult decisions, but also the wisdom to reconsider when the voice of the population is heard. The hon. Prime Minister has shown that leadership is not about defending a position at all costs. It is about placing the welfare, concerns and peace of mind of Mauritian families above ego and political pride.

Madam Speaker, we must salute the hon. Prime Minister for having the courage to begin reform at the very top. For too long, politicians asked the population to make sacrifices while preserving their own privileges. This hon. Prime Minister has placed principle before privilege and demanded from the political class the same discipline that he expects of the nation. Members of the National Assembly will no longer automatically qualify for a parliamentary pension at the end of their term. Instead, the standard pension age will be aligned to that of citizens at 65. A bold and principal demonstration of political self-restraint.

Multiple non-contributory pensions will be abolished, while Members of Parliament will be limited to one duty-free car per mandate instead of one every three years. This, Madam Speaker, is responsible governance. The hon. Prime Minister is not merely asking the population to contribute. He is ensuring that reform and sacrifice begin with the political class at the top. This is leadership by example. This is justice in action.

Madam Speaker, at a time of slower global economic growth, rising costs, geopolitical instability and climate-related threats and growing pressure on public finances, this

Government has made a clear political choice to invest in healthcare. We have chosen to rebuild. We have chosen to modernise. We have chosen to place people at the centre of health policy. We have chosen to make healthcare a fundamental pillar of social justice because no Mauritian should ever be denied treatment because of poverty or of their social status.

Government's health expenditure per capita has increased from 274 US dollars in the 2023-24 Budget to 342 US dollars in this Budget. An increase of nearly 30%. This significant increase reflects the priority that the hon. Prime Minister accords to healthcare and recognises the important work carried out by the Ministry since November 2024.

I wish to thank the doctors, nurses, medical, paramedical professionals and all members of the staff for their dedication and commitment. As the hon. Prime Minister highlighted in his speech, life expectancy in Mauritius stagnated between 2019 and 2024, while healthy life expectancy also, according to WHO, data declined. Since November 2024, my Ministry has begun reversing years of deterioration through sustained investment, stronger services and considerable efforts to improve the quality of care across the public health system. The progress achieved is encouraging, but we recognise that much remains to be done. This budget provides us with the means to accelerate that transformation.

Madam Speaker, Mahatma Gandhi reminded us that the future depends on what we do in the present. Tomorrow's harvest depends upon today's ploughing and sowing, but if for fear of bad weather, the farmer does not plough at the right moment, he may not have a good harvest. It is, therefore, through decisions that we take today, the services we strengthen, and the investments we make that we built a healthier Mauritius for generations to come.

Madam Speaker, for too long, public health infrastructures were neglected completely. Essential equipment remained unrepaired and the public system was deliberately weakened while private health care flourished. One example I give you: if you go to the hospitals, you will find most of the equipment are 14, 15, 16 years old. That is the reason of all the breakdown because those fools who were in power were only playing the dance of *koukouroukou!* They did not do anything. Not a single instrument, not a single equipment was replaced. Now, we have started the replacement. That will take some time.

The public system was deliberately weakened while private healthcare flourished throughout the country. The private sector became so lucrative that former politicians and advisers jumped into the fray in that business because they had to make money. When patients go to a doctor, the patient will never discuss about the fees because he wants his life

to be saved. And those crooks knew very well. That is the reason why you have mushrooming of private hospitals in the country, because they know that is a money minting machine. Not only that, even a former Minister of Health was also seeking to establish a private clinic. It is so easy to make money on dead corpses. Those shaping public health policy have become proprietors of private health facilities today!

Madam Speaker, when we took office, it was not only patients who needed care. The ministry itself was in ICU. We inherited over Rs2 billion in unpaid liabilities, including foreign hospital bills and overtime payments. Not only that, we even had garages where we owed money, they refused to repair our machines. They refused to provide us wheels. I was even told that even ambulances would not be given diesel and fuel. That was the case at that time when we took over.

Madam Speaker, they enjoyed the banquet and left the bill for the incoming government to settle. Their philosophy was simple: '*Jab tak loot sako, looto!*' Till the time you can go on looting! Because this is public property. So, where will you loot? Not the private! Public is yours, loot! This is what they were doing. That was their philosophy. We rejected that philosophy.

Healthcare is not a commodity. Illness is not a business opportunity and patients are not clients to be exploited. Quality healthcare is a fundamental right. And public hospitals must remain the backbone of a fair and human society.

Madam Speaker, the MSM continues to portray its management of COVID-19 as a success. The fact tells a very different story. I have seen on the TV – I will not name the lady. I respect her age – she was making publicity for MSM and telling look at the way my son has looked after COVID, it was a miracle. I will tell you the miracle. Based on average mortality in 2019 and 2020, Mauritius recorded nearly 4,000 additional deaths in 2021 and 2022, while only around 1,000 COVID-19 related deaths were officially reported. 4,000 additional deaths and public was made unaware, was kept in the dark. Where did the remaining excess deaths come from?

We cannot forget the 12 dialysis patients who were left to die following the outbreak at New Souillac Hospital. A fact-finding committee identified serious shortcomings that the former government refused to release the report, denying grieving families the truth, respect and accountability they deserve. I have read the report. It is really strange. You never

expected that to happen in a country, where they were left to die and no treatment was given to them. Food was thrown from outside to those patients. This is what happened.

Let me also remind the House that the closure of our borders was also delayed to allow persons close to the former regime to conveniently enter the country. I still remember that! At a time when every hour mattered, every minute mattered, political privilege was placed above public safety.

As the saying goes, there is –

“*Desh jaye bhaad mein. Mera parivar rahe aar mein.*” Let the country go to the dogs, but let my family remain in security.

That was the policy which that government adopted. While ordinary citizens were confined to their homes, the former Minister became embroiled in the notorious *Koukouroukou* controversy. We also remember the infamous saga: the infamous stag party during the COVID-19. That was the stag party during the COVID-19 pandemic where strict sanitary protocols were still in force and senior MSM Ministers were desecrating the sanctity of Ganga Talao! Wine, wealth, women, that was their motto at that time! The pandemic further left behind serious procurement controversies. When people were dying on one side, these people were fattening themselves with the money of the Government. The Molnupiravir affair, undelivered...

(Interruptions)

This is very serious, Madam Speaker. The Molnupiravir affair, undelivered vaccine doses, and 77.9 million paid in advance for ventilators that failed to meet requirements and were never used. Those ventilators are lying outside in Europe, and our Government, is paying rental for them. The matter is now in the court. The financial consequences of these shortcomings have been substantial. More than 15 million worth of Molnupiravir expired before it could be utilised, while expired COVID-19 vaccines resulted in an additional loss of approximately Rs 214 million.

Furthermore, records from Electronic Inventory Management System indicate that expired pharmaceutical and medical supplies amounted to approximately *213 millions* during the period from January 2020 to August 2023. Even today, this Budget, which we are going to vote, has to provide *277 millions* for outstanding vaccine claims despite the former government had imposed Rs2 levy on every litre of petrol and diesel, specifically, to finance

vaccine. Where has that money gone? We do not know. People paid at the pump. They left the bill for this Government to settle. Madam Speaker, this is not a success story. This is a shameful legacy.

Madam Speaker, allow me to highlight some of the achievements of my Ministry during the year 2025-2026. In just one year, our health services recorded –

- 9,426,638 contacts between public and health services;
- 4,708,284 outpatient attendances;
- 177,665 hospital admissions;
- 53,333 surgical procedures;
- 15,850,533 pathological tests;
- 924,372 radiological examinations;
- 233,858 dialysis sessions.

Firstly, for years, the Souillac Centre, initiated by the present Prime Minister, remains the country's only comprehensive diabetes facility. He had invited a renowned professor from England to come to train our nurses on how to deal with diabetic patients. Unfortunately, those fools and ruffians, once they took power, stopped everything, and the professor had to go. The whole group was disbanded, and all those highly trained professionals were spread throughout the country. Nothing was done. We have now corrected this long-standing imbalance with dedicated diabetes and vascular health centres operating at Flacq, Triolet Mediclinic, Jeetoo Hospital, and Floréal Mediclinic.

Secondly, the Trauma and Emergency Departments are the front doors of our hospitals and must be led by trained specialists, empowered to act swiftly. While specialists in emergency medicine were available since 2021, the former government failed to make our emergency services at par with international standard. We are correcting that failure by setting up specialised Trauma and Emergency Units in all major regional hospitals, improving triage, emergency response and patient care.

Thirdly, Mauritius records around 4,000 strokes each year. Yet, for years, Victoria Hospital remained the country's only dedicated stroke unit. A mission report on the establishment of a National Stroke Care Service, by Professor Sibon and COMS, in 2024, remained in the drawer. Madam Speaker, how many patients died or became disabled because no action were taken? This was real crime. We have acted, where the former government failed, with a Stroke Unit now operational in SSRN Hospital, and specialised stroke services being extended to all regional hospitals because in stroke care, every minute, every second can mean a difference between recovery, disability and death.

Fourthly, as Mauritius becomes an aging society, we have moved from years of neglect to modern and dignified care, thanks to the Prime Minister who had been behind this. We dedicated male and female acute care for elderly wards, open in 2025 at SSRN Hospital and New Flacq Hospital, providing coordinated multi-disciplinary support for frailty, reduced mobility, chronic diseases, cognitive impairment and other complex needs. These services will now be progressively extended to other regional hospitals because those who help build our country deserve care adapted to their needs, delivered with dignity and respect.

Fifth, we have corrected a serious regional inequality in cardiac care. For years, patients from the south, requiring urgent angiography, had to be transferred elsewhere, with 1,026 patients referred from Jawaharlal Nehru Hospital between 2020 and October 2025. How many patients died or suffered complications because they could not be transferred for urgent angiography? That was also criminal. This neglect is even more indefensible because the hospital which serves the region was represented by the former Minister of Health. If he could not provide this life-saving service to his own region, how can he claim to have left behind a satisfactory health system?

A Cardiac Catheterization Laboratory is now operational at Jawaharlal Nehru, while another is being developed at the New Flacq Hospital, delivering life-saving cardiac services region by region, where the former government failed to act.

Madam Speaker, beyond these major reforms, the Ministry has recorded a series of important achievements during the year, including –

- (i) Establishment of a breast clinic at SSRN Hospital and New Flacq Hospital, providing a dedicated one-stop service for detection, diagnosis and management of breast disease.

- (ii) Operationalisation of the Renal Transplant Unit at Jawaharlal Nehru Hospital – Thanks to the support of the Government of India – and 12 kidney transplants were successfully carried out locally this year. The highest number in a decade, with 100% success rate.
- (iii) Creation of first clinical trial unit in public sector, advancing research-driven and patient-centred, and that too, thanks to the support of the Prime Minister.
- (iv) Launch of the free 24/7 Hotline 146, giving the public direct access to information, guidance, assistance and a channel for feedback and complaints.
- (v) The new Subramania Bharati Eye Hospital has been completed and made operational.
- (vi) More than 900 patients have benefited from Overseas Treatment Scheme.
- (vii) Internationally renowned specialists have performed more than 350 complex and high precision surgical procedures in Mauritius, free of charge, while transferring valuable expertise to our local teams.
- (viii) Opening of an Advanced Clinical Imaging Unit and introduction of advanced cancer diagnosis, including PET-CT and SPECT scans at NCC.

Madam Speaker, these are not promises. These are concrete results.

When we assumed office in November 2024, the e-Health Project was severely stalled, confronted by major implementation difficulties and lacking direction. It was so difficult. It was almost a dead horse that we were flogging. But together with the support of the Minister of IT, we took decisive actions to salvage the project and gradually bring it back on track. To prepare our force for this transformation, a dedicated Healthcare Innovation and Artificial Intelligence Unit will be established, under the Digital Health Agency, to provide healthcare professionals and future clinical leaders with training in artificial intelligence.

The DHA will progressively explore the use of artificial intelligence, computer vision and big data within the public healthcare. We will examine opportunities in telemedicine, remote specialist support, robotic assisted surgery and other advanced clinical technologies. Technology will not replace doctors, nurses or clinical judgment. It will equip our

professionals with better tools, improve efficiency and support safer, faster and more personalised care.

Madam Speaker, I now turn to the measures announced for our health services. In a nutshell, this Budget rebuilds the healthcare workforce, strengthens specialised training, brings international expertise to public hospitals, invests in prevention and health literacy, re-engineers diabetes care, modernises infrastructure, strengthens laboratory capacity, expands dialysis and stroke services, promotes environmentally sustainable vector control, strengthens waste regulation and infectious disease surveillance, establishes centres of excellence, develops clinical research, prepares professionals for artificial intelligence, places patients and accountability at the centre of healthcare governance. This Budget is the programme of rescue, of reconstruction and renewal. It will strengthen our workforce, modernise care and shift our health system from reaction to prevention.

Madam Speaker, we will recruit 2,220 medical and paramedical personnel to ease pressure on staff, improve patients' safety and reduce waiting times. We will invest in specialised training in anaesthesia, critical care, radiology, emergency medicine and other priority fields. One wing of Old Flacq Hospital will be converted into a rehabilitation centre for victims of drug addiction. They are not lost causes. They are our sons, daughters, brothers and sisters who deserve care, dignity and a second chance to rebuild their life.

I am sure the hon. Prime Minister will receive the blessing of those parents. This budget will not only repair the damage of the past. It will build a stronger and more resilient public health service for the future. Madam Speaker, a transformative measure in this budget is a R 40 million visiting doctors' scheme, bringing internationally recognised specialists into our hospitals to deliver advanced treatment, reduce overseas referrals and transfer expertise to our health professional.

As I am speaking today, two eye surgeons from India are helping to clear our waiting list of cataract operations. They are operating on patients neglected for many years. As part of this scheme, my Ministry is working on the visit of Professor Nizam Mamode, a British professor of transplant surgery and his team to Mauritius from September of this year to May 2027.

The primary aim would be for training our surgeons and other healthcare personnel and for setting up of a national renal transplant program. Cancer cases are increasing by leaps and bounds. We are facilitating the visit of foreign specialists to perform very complex surgeries in Mauritius. Up till now, more than 25 such surgeries have been carried out. We are reforming hospital governance through the regional health advisory board with patient representatives and professional hospital managers to strengthen efficiency, accountability and customer care while allowing doctors to focus on clinical leadership and patient care. The credit for this measure goes to the hon. Prime Minister.

Madam Speaker, this budget turns prevention into action through a national health literacy programme in schools and Rs40 million investment to re-engineer diabetes prevention and treatment. Maintaining the status quo is not an option. We will strengthen early detection, improve the management of pre-diabetes, prevent complications, and modernise treatment pathways.

Madam Speaker, Government is investing *R 1.5 milliard* to modernise healthcare infrastructure, including a new Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam Hospital with research facilities at Pamplemousses. After a decade of neglect, we will give this growing region the modern hospital it deserves. They neglected that hospital deliberately because apparently that hospital happens to fall in Constituency No. 5 – the constituency of our hon. Prime Minister.

A new national health laboratory will improve the accuracy and timelessness of nearly 15 million tests annually. A dedicated dialysis unit at ENT Hospital will expand access for patients with kidney failure, while a new interventional neuro radiology service will provide advanced local treatment for acute stroke and aneurysm. In stroke care, every minute matters.

These investments will save lives, reduce disability and lessen dependence on overseas treatment. Madam Speaker, Mauritius faces an exceptionally high burden. You know, the hon. Prime Minister has given so much to my Ministry. I am bound to inform the whole country what we have received. I need only a few minutes more, Madam Speaker.

Mauritius faces an exceptionally high burden of obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease and kidney complications. These interconnected conditions require an integrated response. Government will, therefore, establish a centre of excellence in cardio metabolic care and research, bringing together prevention, early diagnosis, advanced treatment and

research. It will also provide dedicated women health services for hormonal and metabolic conditions. The centre will serve as exclusive public platform for clinical trials involving the public and patients, supported by a national network across our health institution.

Through the hon. Prime Minister's personal initiative, the Hatter Institute of London has provided Rs29 million, while the Government will match this confidence with a further Rs30 million for research into non-communicable diseases. We are bringing research, innovation, advanced care within the reach of public patients while positioning Mauritius as a regional centre of medical excellence.

Madam Speaker, Mauritius will establish Africa's first AYUSH Centre of Excellence and the first outside India. Another pioneering development under this Government. I am happy to announce that construction will start this year. This is not about replacing modern medicine. It is about integrating Ayurveda, yoga and complementary care within a scientific, ethical and properly regulated framework, particularly for prevention and lifestyle related diseases.

The centre will bring clinical care, training, research under one roof, including 100 beds hospital, panchakarma and diagnostic services, out-patient care, physiotherapy, dedicated facilities for yoga and meditation. It will also provide education, quality testing, reference services for complex Ayurvedic treatment developed as a modern, accessible and environmentally sustainable institution. The centre will expand preventive and holistic care for Mauritians while positioning our country as a regional health for AYUSH training, research and wellness.

Madam Speaker, we have also recorded important progress in child and maternal health. Infant mortality fell down from 14.5 per thousand births during 2019 to 2024 to 11.6 in 2025. Under five mortalities declined from 15.5 to 12.5 per thousand. The maternal mortality ratio decreased from 0.5 during 2019 to 2024 to 0.23 in 2025.

New HIV cases among Mauritians fell from 549 in 2025 to 491 in 2025. Madam Speaker, the previous government failed to meet the target set in its own health sector strategy for 2019 to 2024. The improvement achieved in 2025 did not happen by chance. They reflect sustained action, professional discipline and commitment of our health care workforce. I thank our doctors, nurses, midwives, pharmacists, laboratory and allied health

professionals, attendants, administrative staff and every worker who contributes to patient care.

Madam Speaker, climate change and urbanisation are increasing the threat of vector borne and emerging infectious diseases, dengue, Ebola and M-pox. Yet, despite growing insecticide resistance from 2023, the former government continued to rely excessively on fumigation without an effective strategy. The sterile mosquito facility at Curepipe was left at a dilapidated state.

We have changed the course. The sterile mosquito facility at Curepipe has been rehabilitated and additional capacity established at SSRN Hospital and nearly 2 million sterile mosquitoes released between January and May 2026.

Madam Speaker, the 2022 nutritional survey has already exposed alarming levels of obesity and pre-diabetes among adolescents. Yet, the previous government failed to act. We have responded with a national obesity action plan and the acceleration road map to stop obesity 2025 to 2030, mobilising schools, families, communities, health professionals as well.

Madam Speaker,

Madam Speaker: Hon. Minister, I really....

Mr Bachoo: Yes. I am now concluding, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Yes.

Mr Bachoo: Except I have just to say that as far as the storage of essential medicines is concerned, the former government did not do anything. Now, we are looking at it. I hope that we will do the needful.

At the same time, this Government, in conclusion, I will say, has inherited a health system under immense pressure, shortages, deteriorating infrastructure, delayed projects and services approaching breaking point.

But we refuse to be paralysed by that inheritance. Even in difficult economic circumstances, we are investing because the cost of continued neglect would be far greater.

Failure to invest means more disease, exhausted staff, delayed diagnosis, unsafe care and continued dependence. This budget is, therefore, not expenditure for its own sake. It is an investment in human life, national resilience and the future of every Mauritian. We do not pretend that years of deterioration can be reversed.

Rebuilding will require discipline, persistence, accountability and cooperation of health care professionals and the population. But the direction is clear. We are moving from neglect to investment, from fragmented services to coordinated care, from treatment to prevention, from outdated infrastructure to modern facilities and from technological delay to responsible innovation.

The population has spoken. Healthcare workers have spoken. This Government has listened. We will rebuild confidence, support our workforce, protect the vulnerable, invest in science, research and innovation. We will prepare our public health service not only for today's challenges, but for the needs of the future generation. That is a responsive, responsible Government. That is social justice.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Yes. Hon. Minister, please debate with regard to the Appropriation Bill.

(7.30 p.m.)

The Minister of National Infrastructure (Mr A. Gunness): Do not worry, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, let me start by first wholeheartedly congratulating the hon. Prime Minister for presenting a budget which demonstrates courage, vision and responsibility.

At a time when many countries continue to face economic uncertainty, geopolitical tensions and increasing fiscal pressures, this Government has chosen the path of responsibility, reform and resilience. This budget is not merely an exercise in balancing revenues and expenditures. It is a roadmap for the future. It is a budget that seeks to strengthen economic recovery, promote social justice and at the same time, restore fiscal sustainability. It is a budget that balances economic ambition with financial discipline and lays the foundation for a stronger, more inclusive and more sustainable Mauritius for our present and future generation.

Madam Speaker, when this Government assumed office, it inherited an economy burdened by deep structural weaknesses and a public finance situation that had been severely weakened by years of irresponsible management and a lack of seriousness in addressing the growing fiscal imbalance.

The previous government adopted a *laissez-aller* attitude towards the deterioration of public finances. Instead of taking difficult but necessary decisions to restore fiscal balance, it chose the easy path of excessive spending and postponement of reforms. The former government failed to appreciate that economic growth cannot be sustained indefinitely without sound fiscal management. They attempted to build economic prosperity on borrowed money and excessive printing and distribution of banknotes. This is neither sustainable nor responsible.

Madam Speaker, when listening to the hon. Leader of the Opposition a few days ago, one would tend to forget that his party governed and mismanaged this country for 10 long years. 10 years during which they allowed public debt to deteriorate and rose to approximately Rs642 billion, reaching close to 90% of GDP. 10 years during which the country accumulated a trade deficit of more than Rs203 billion, a budget deficit approaching 10% of GDP and witnessed a depreciation of the Mauritian rupee of nearly 46% since 2014.

The truth is clear. The previous government built an economy increasingly sustained by borrowing, spending and political expediency rather than genuine wealth creation and alongside this fiscal deterioration, came a series of costly scandals and governance failures which tarnished the reputation of the nation. The Betamax case cost taxpayers approximately Rs5.6 billion. The unilateral termination of the Neo Town project resulted in an international arbitration award of approximately Rs1.9 billion against the State. The Heritage City project consumed millions of rupees in consultancy fees before being quietly abandoned without delivering any tangible benefit to the nation.

The BAI collapse remains one of the most damaging episodes in our economic history, requiring billions of rupees of public funds to deal with its consequences, including substantial injections into MauBank, the National Insurance Company and the Natural Property Fund.

The State Bank of Mauritius, once regarded as a regional success story, became associated with a series of highly controversial transactions, including toxic loans worth billions of rupees, raising serious questions about governance, oversight and political

interference. Then came the Mauritius Investment Corporation where billions of rupees of public resources were allocated under circumstances that continue to raise legitimate concerns regarding transparency, accountability and conflict of interest.

But, Madam Speaker, the damage was not only financial. Our democratic institutions were also weakened. We witnessed repeated attacks on the independence and credibility of key institutions. The misuse of institution for partisan purposes, allegations of political interference, concerns regarding surveillance, restrictions of freedom of expression and attempts to intimidate critics created a climate that deeply troubled most Mauritians.

In November 2024, the people of Mauritius went to vote. They did not vote for a simple change only because they wanted a new Government. They voted for a restoration of trust, trust in public institutions, trust in democratic governance, trust in transparency, accountability and the rule of law. That is the mission of this Government. Our responsibility today is not only to repair the public finances which were in shambles, which we inherited from the previous government, but also to rebuild the institutions that protect our democracy and safeguard the future of our Republic.

Madam Speaker, against this background of mismanagement, no government in the world, even with the best intention, could fully redress the situation in just one and a half year. However, the first budget sowed the seed for a gradual economic recovery. Public debt has started to decline, falling from around 90% of GDP in 2024-2025 to an estimated 87.8% in 2025-2026. At the same time, the unemployment rate fell to 5.7% in 2025, reflecting an improvement in labour market conditions.

Madam Speaker, history has shown us that in such difficult moments, solidarity among members of the Government is a *sine qua non* condition in order to succeed. I am sure that, on this side of the House, we all have only one objective and mission to put the country back on track by the end of our mandate.

Madam Speaker, we, the MMM have a double mission. First, to prove to the country that we can work in a government collegially, in a cordial environment to achieve something noble for the country and secondly, that we do not run away where the tide is high. It is in difficult moment that we need to put our resources together to succeed. We want to make the country forget that in four different occasions, the MMM left, but this time, we said no. In 1982, after nine months in 1993, after a 60-0, the MMM left the government. 1991, again in 1993, the MMM left the government after one and a half year. 1995, again in 1997, left the

government. But this time, 2024, when MMM, we were asked to leave the Government, MMM stayed in the Government because we have a mission for the people, we have an ambition for our country, we know the moment is difficult and this is not the time to run away.

This is the time to stay in Government and to help to redress the situation together with our colleagues in the alliance. This is what we are doing, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, we can see these days the *loup-garou*, *petit à la terre*, coming to promise that they will revert back to the BRP as before. Once again, they are proving how they are greedy for power, prepared to jeopardise the economy of the country. All reasonable persons know that the BRP in its actual form is unsustainable. Except the MSM and their acolytes!

Madame la présidente, pense-t-on réellement que nous sommes des personnes insensibles, sans cœur qui souhaitent faire souffrir nos aînés ? Non, Madame la présidente. Ce que nous faisons, aujourd'hui, c'est de protéger les générations futures afin qu'elles n'aient pas à supporter un fardeau financier supplémentaire devenu insoutenable.

L'honorable Premier ministre, le Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, ainsi que le gouvernement, ont démontré qu'ils sont à l'écoute de la population. À la suite de la présentation du budget, le MMM a rencontré le Premier ministre afin de lui faire part des préoccupations exprimées par de nombreux citoyens. Celui-ci n'est pas resté insensible à ces représentations et a décidé de suspendre l'application du mécanisme de *means testing*. Et, aujourd'hui, à la suite de la *PNQ*, il a confirmé que le *means testing* a été définitivement abandonné. C'est cela gouverner dans le dialogue : écouter, consulter et ajuster lorsque cela s'avère nécessaire. C'est l'exact opposé de l'arrogance et de la fermeture qui ont trop souvent caractérisé la gouvernance précédente.

L'honorable Premier ministre, le Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, a démontré une fois de plus ce que signifie un véritable leadership d'État. Lorsque des inquiétudes se sont manifestées concernant certains aspects de la réforme des pensions, notamment le mécanisme de ciblage basé sur les revenus, il n'a pas fait la sourde oreille. Il a écouté. Il a compris les préoccupations exprimées par les pensionnés, les travailleurs, les familles et les organisations de la société civile et il a agi. La décision de suspendre la mise en œuvre du *means testing* n'est pas un signe de faiblesse.

C'est au contraire un signe de force et de confiance. Les dirigeants faibles refusent d'écouter, parce qu'ils craignent de reconnaître que certains ajustements peuvent être nécessaires. Les dirigeants forts écoutent parce qu'ils comprennent que le gouvernement est au service du peuple. Le leadership ne consiste pas à s'entêter. Il consiste à assumer ses responsabilités. Le Premier ministre a démontré qu'il est déterminé à réformer un système devenu financièrement insoutenable tout en demeurant profondément attentif aux préoccupations légitimes de nos concitoyens. Toute réforme majeure nécessite les ajustements en cours de route. C'est cela la sagesse. C'est cela la maturité politique.

A country cannot spend money it does not have indefinitely. We cannot continue increasing expenditure while pretending demographic realities do not exist. Mauritius is ageing. People live longer. The number of pensioners continue to increase while the number of active workers financing the system grows much more slowly. This is proven from actual reports. These are facts, Madam Speaker. Not political opinions. The previous government knew these realities. They had access to the same demographics, data and financial projections. Yet, they refused to act. Why? Because they preferred postponing difficult decisions and leaving the bill to future generations. This Government, however, chose responsibility over populism.

Madam Speaker, the pension system has become unsustainable. Doing nothing was simply not an option. Without reform, future governments would have been forced to choose between massive tax increases, excessive borrowing or crippling cuts in essential public services. That would have been irresponsible. That would have been unfair to our children and grandchildren. But unlike what the Opposition wants the population to believe, this Government did not simply implement reform and walk away. We listened. We consulted. We adjusted, just as we did last year.

We introduced robust support mechanisms to protect those directly affected. The Income Support Scheme was established to assist those reaching the age 60 during the transition period, initially set at Rs10,000 per month, and subsequently increased to Rs10,370. This measure represents billions of rupees of direct support. More than that, pensions and social benefits were increased by 3.7% to hundreds of beneficiaries as from 01 January when wage compensations were being granted to workers of the country, unlike the previous government, who, for a period of seven years, did not compensate the rise in the cost of living for our elders. We compensated in January. All pensioners received Rs370 for

their compensation. That is not abandonment. That is responsible reform combined with genuine social protection.

Le leader du MSM a fait une conférence de presse hier, Madame la présidente. Entendre le leader du MSM affirmer qu'il n'a jamais touché à la pension relève d'un véritable chef-d'œuvre d'amnésie politique. La mémoire semble lui faire cruellement défaut. Heureusement, les archives du ministère des Finances ne pratiquent pas l'amnésie sélective. Permettez-moi, donc, de lui rafraîchir la mémoire en citant ses propres écrits officiels dans le budget 2004-2005, noir sur blanc. *I quote –*

“A second fundamental reform that this Budget introduces is the targeting of Government transfers. Government transfers are simply not sustainable if they are universal and open-ended. This puts a limit on our capacity to do more for the poorer segment of the population. I believe that this is an issue that calls for a bold decision. I am, therefore, implementing this year, a targeted approach to Basic Pensions. As from October 2004, payment of Basic Retirement Pension (BRP) will be limited to persons with monthly income not exceeding Rs 20,000. However, there will be a tapering of benefits for those with monthly income in the range of Rs 16,000 to Rs 20,000. Targeting for other basic pensions will be introduced as from January next. The National Pensions Act will be amended accordingly.”

Voilà ce que disait alors le ministre des Finances de l'époque. Il ne s'agit ni d'une rumeur, ni d'une interprétation. Ce sont ses propres paroles consignées dans un document budgétaire officiel. M. l'ancien Premier ministre, vous pouvez tenter de réécrire l'histoire devant les caméras, vous pouvez essayer d'effacer les faits de la mémoire collective, mais les faits sont têtus. Les documents officiels le sont encore davantage. La vérité est simple. Le principe du ciblage des pensions aujourd'hui dénoncé avec tant d'indignation a été envisagé et défendu par ceux-là même qui prétendent aujourd'hui n'avoir jamais voulu y toucher.

Madam Speaker, before I proceed further, I would like to share with this House the progress already made by this Government. In a short period of time, we have delivered tangible results for our people despite the catastrophic legacy of previous government. We have completed numerous road projects across every constituency: resurfacing roads, constructing new lanes and improving the riding quality of our national network.

Madam Speaker, when roads are improved, we reduce frustration; we improve safety; we help commerce move faster; we help workers reach their workplace more efficiently; we

give parents more time with their children, and we make communities feel connected rather than neglected. These works may appear local in nature, but their impact is national in purpose. A country is strengthened when every locality feels that it is part of the national development effort. No village should feel forgotten. No community should feel invisible. No citizen should feel that progress belongs only to others.

Madam Speaker, let me now come to the drainage infrastructure. The increasing impacts of climate change, particularly more intense rainfall events and associated flood risks, require us to rethink the way we plan and deliver our infrastructure.

The Land Drainage Authority of my Ministry is being revamped into a strategic institution, playing a central role, not only in drainage development but also, in national flood risk management and climate adaptation.

The Budget 2026-2027 reaffirms Government's commitment towards resilient and sustainable infrastructure. Continued investment in drainage infrastructure remains a priority, with the objective of reducing flood vulnerability and ensuring safer communities. At the same time, this Government recognises that future challenges require a more integrated approach. Flood management cannot rely solely on conventional engineering solutions. We must combine robust infrastructure with nature-based solution, allowing us to work with natural system to manage water more effectively and sustainably. Mauritius is already progressing in this direction through projects incorporating nature-based solution such as retention ponds. These include initiatives at Cottage, Pointe aux Sables, Beaux Songes, Bambous, Mare Tabac, Nouvelle France, among others.

In parallel, Government is taking important steps to enhance efficiency and accelerate drainage infrastructure delivery. The National Development Unit will strengthen coordination by prioritising drainage projects recommended by the LDA, and ensuring their assignment to the appropriate implementing agencies for timely execution. Furthermore, to ensure proper integration of infrastructure works, clearance from the LDA will be required before road works that may affect drainage corridors and reserve alignments are undertaken. This will strengthen coordination, protect drainage assets, and improve the effectiveness of our investments.

The Land Drainage Authority Act will also be amended to further empower the LDA in delivering its services and supporting its enhanced responsibilities. These measures will

reflect Government's commitment to strengthening the Authority's role as the national reference institution for land drainage and flood risk management. Together, through engineering excellence, innovation, improved coordination, and nature-based solutions, we will continue to build a safer and more resilient nation towards the impact of flooding.

Through the Land Drainage Authority, we have taken the bull by the horns. Out of 801 total applications, including complex historical backlogs left by past administration, our dedicated committees have already successfully resolved and replied to 549 files. That is an impressive 68.5% clearance rate. While 252 applications remain under process, they are being tackled with absolute priority. This Government does not hide challenges, it fixes them. We are actively modernising the LDA to deliver a safer, climate-resilient Mauritius for everyone.

Madam Speaker, the challenge of flooding has affected too many communities for too long. We have responded decisively. The National Development Unit and the Drainage Infrastructure Construction Ltd have completed major drainage projects to strengthen resilience and protect lives, homes, businesses, and livelihoods. I must say, under the previous administration, serious questions were repeatedly raised regarding the governance, transparency, and allocation of contracts at DICL. Too often, there was a public perception that connections mattered more than competence, and that taxpayers were not receiving the accountability they deserve.

Today, the DICL is committed to a new culture of transparency, fairness, and good governance. Contracts must be awarded on merit. Public funds must be used responsibly, and every decision must withstand public scrutiny. The era of favouritism and the perception of job for friends is over. Our commitment is simple: transparency, accountability, and results for the people of Mauritius.

Madam Speaker, we have also not forgotten our brothers and sisters of Rodrigues, who also suffered from the effects of flooding in March this year. I led a team to take stock of damages incurred. To this end, Madam Speaker, a team from the Geotechnical Unit and the National Development Unit attended the island to submit requirements to mitigate flooding effects, particularly at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Crève Cœur.

Alongside three major projects, totalling around 175 million at Quatre Vents, Dans Darisse, Baie Topaze and Baie Pistache are nearing completion by end of October this year.

These drain projects are protecting homes, businesses, and livelihoods. They are protecting dignity. They are protecting peace of mind. Climate resilience is no longer an optional chapter in national development. It is central to the security of our people. The intensity of rainfall, the vulnerability of certain areas and human cost of repeated flooding require a government that anticipates, plans, and acts. When a drain is built, it may not always attract attention, but for the family that can sleep more peacefully during heavy rain, for the shopkeeper who no longer fears damage to his stock, for the community that no longer feels abandoned, at the first sign of bad weather, that infrastructure has real meaning.

Madam Speaker, while we are proud of the progress already achieved, we remain fully conscious of the scale of the task ahead. The Budget 2026-2027 gives us the means to accelerate transformation with discipline, sequencing and purpose. Our priorities are clear. Our targets are ambitious and our commitment is firm. Madam Speaker, we are also strengthening the regulatory framework for minimum building standards and energy efficient requirements. We are establishing a maintenance programme for government buildings and other assets.

Madam Speaker, unlike the previous administration, this Government has chosen responsibility over complacency, discipline over populism, and long-term sustainability over short-term political expediency. The Budget 2026-2027 clearly demonstrates the determination of this Government to restore confidence in the economy, while protecting the most vulnerable segments of our society. The Government understands that economic growth and fiscal discipline are not mutually exclusive. On the contrary, sustainable growth requires sound public finances. Economic ambition must go hand in hand with financial responsibility. This is precisely the philosophy which underpins this Budget.

Madam Speaker, one of the pillars of this Budget seeks to expand and modernise our economic space. Mauritius has always demonstrated remarkable adaptability. Throughout our history, we have successfully transformed ourselves from a monocrop economy to a diversified and upper middle-income economy. However, global competition is intensifying, and we must continue to modernise our economic structure.

This Budget lays the foundation for a new phase of economic transformation by promoting investment, improving infrastructure, and facilitating the emergence of new sectors. Modern infrastructure constitutes a key driver of competitiveness. Roads, ports,

airports and digital connectivity are essential ingredients for economic development. By investing strategically in infrastructure, the Government is creating the conditions necessary for sustained growth.

Madam Speaker, I will now elaborate on the Motorway M4 Project. Allow me, first and foremost, to express my sincere appreciation and gratitude to the hon. Prime Minister for having demonstrated remarkable foresight and unwavering commitment by making provision of Rs2 billion, in this Budget, to kickstart this major project that will link Forbach to the airport.

In times when governments across the world are confronted with difficult choices and competing priorities, this Government has, once again, shown that it possesses the vision, courage, and determination to invest in infrastructure that will generate benefits for generations to come. This is much more than the construction of a new road. This is an investment in the future of our country. It is a strategic infrastructure project that will transform mobility, enhance connectivity, stimulate economic growth and improve the quality of life of thousands of Mauritians.

Madam Speaker, the hon. Leader of the Opposition commented on the M4 project. I must say that on this particular issue, he demonstrated far greater lucidity than some hon. Members of the Opposition sitting over there. At least he understood the strategic importance of the project. At least he recognised the immense socio-economic benefits that it will bring to the country. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said of the hon. A. Duval and other hon. Members of the Opposition who continue to question the relevance and even *la nécessité de ce projet structurant* as they have their own agenda.

J'en profite également pour remercier sincèrement le Premier ministre de l'Inde, Shri Narendra Modi, ainsi que le gouvernement indien pour leur soutien constant à ce projet d'envergure nationale. Maurice et l'Inde entretiennent une relation privilégiée, fondée sur l'histoire, l'amitié et un partenariat de développement mutuellement bénéfique. J'espère simplement que certains honorables membres de l'opposition ne s'opposent pas à ce projet uniquement parce que son financement provient de l'Inde. Ce serait particulièrement regrettable.

Nous avons parfois l'impression que certains pratiquent un *India-bashing* à géométrie variable. Lorsqu'un financement vient d'ailleurs, il est accueilli avec enthousiasme mais

lorsqu'il vient de l'Inde, certains deviennent soudainement beaucoup plus exigeant, voir méfiant. *Madam Speaker*, franchement, comment peut-on....

Madam Speaker: Hon. Minister, I am sorry. Your time is already up and I see you have a lot to say.

Mr Guinness: No. I know how to skip.

Madam Speaker: Naviguez !

Mr Guinness: No. I will just finish on M4 and then I will conclude.

Madam Speaker: Okay. You will get another chance to tell us all this.

Mr Guinness: Yes. No, I am just finishing because M4 is very important for your connectivity also. *Madam Speaker, franchement, comment peut-on sérieusement qualifier ce budget de 'bat bate' tout en remettant en question l'un des projets d'infrastructure le plus important pour l'avenir de notre pays ?*

Il faut croire que certains ne comprennent toujours pas que le développement économique passe nécessairement par le développement des infrastructures. Ce gouvernement refuse une vision à deux vitesses du développement national. Nous accordons la même importance au développement urbain, qu'au développement des régions rurales. Les habitants de l'Est, du Sud, du Nord ou des villages de l'intérieur ont autant droit à des infrastructures modernes et à des opportunités économiques que ceux vivant dans les grands centres urbains.

D'ailleurs, l'histoire nous enseigne que les grands projets d'infrastructure ont presque toujours été accueillis par les mêmes critiques. Il fut un temps où certains remettaient en question la construction de l'autoroute M1. Il fut un temps où l'on critiquait également les investissements consentis pour le développement de l'aéroport. Aujourd'hui, personne ne conteste leurs contributions essentielles au développement économique du pays.

Madam Speaker, je tiens également à rappeler que le projet de la M4 ne date pas d'hier.

Cela fait plus de 20 ans que cette infrastructure figure dans les réflexions stratégiques du pays. Une étude de faisabilité avait déjà été réalisée en 2012. À l'époque, Maurice comptait environ 125,000 véhicules en circulation.

Selon les statistiques officielles de décembre 2025, le nombre de véhicules enregistrés sur nos routes dépassait désormais 746,000. Ces chiffres parlent d'eux-mêmes. Ils démontrent

que les besoins en matière de mobilité, de connectivité et de désengorgement du réseau routier ont considérablement évolué.

La congestion routière n'est plus un problème futur, elle constitue déjà une réalité quotidienne pour les milliers de Mauriciens. La M4 n'est donc pas un luxe, c'est une nécessité. Ce projet aura également un impact économique majeur sur le secteur de la construction qui demeure l'un des principaux moteurs de croissance de notre économie. Chaque grand chantier génère des emplois directs pour les ingénieurs, les techniciens, les géomètres, les architectes, les ouvriers.

Il crée également des milliers d'emplois indirects dans le secteur du transport, de la logistique, des matériaux de construction, des services professionnels, de la sous-traitance et des PME mauriciennes. Chaque roupie investie dans une infrastructure de cette ampleur circule ensuite dans l'économie réelle et soutient l'activité de nombreuses entreprises.

Madam Speaker: Il faut vraiment conclure, honorable ministre.

Mr Guinness: Maintenant, je vais conclure, *Madam Speaker*. Je *skip* tout ça. *Harbour bridge* tout ça, je *skip*. Ne vous en faites pas.

Madam Speaker: Je suis sûr que c'est important.

Mr Guinness: *Oui. Laissez-moi conclure*, Madam Speaker, with the time which is left for me, I will try.

Madam Speaker, there are moments when a government must speak plainly to the country. There are moments when leadership cannot hide behind comfort, postpone difficult decisions or leave tomorrow's generation to pay for yesterday's hesitation.

This is such a moment and this budget rises to that moment, not with hesitation, but with direction. Not with slogans, but with substance. Not with denial, but with responsibility.

It is a budget that says clearly to the country, we will not drift, we will not delay and we will not mortgage the future of our children for the comfort of the present. We will act, we will deliver and we will build a stronger Mauritius. That is the spirit in which I support the budget 2026-2027. A budget of courage, discipline, delivery and national renewal.

Madam Speaker, because a budget must never be judged only by the figures it contains, it must be judged by the direction it sets, the confidence it restores, the discipline it imposes and the hope it gives to the people who look to Government not for slogans, but for solutions.

For the family managing its monthly expenses, this budget matters. For the entrepreneur seeking space to grow, this budget matters. For the young graduate preparing for a changing economy, this budget matters. For the resident whose home has too often been threatened by flooding, this budget matters. For every citizen who expects Government to be serious, disciplined and present on the ground, this budget matters. That is why this budget is not only a financial document; it is a national commitment.

Madam Speaker, when this Government assumed office, we inherited more than figures on a balance sheet. We inherited uncertainty, we inherited fragility, we inherited a growing burden on future generation and we had a choice. Delay reform or confront reality, we choose to act. We choose the harder road, we choose responsibility over convenience, but let us be clear. This is not the destination; this is the beginning.

The beginning of a more disciplined State, the beginning of a more accountable delivery, the beginning of a government that recognises that every policy must ultimately travel from pages of a budget to the streets, homes, villages and communities of our country because public finance is not an abstract matter. When public finances are weak, ordinary people pay the price. Investment slows, confidence weakens, essential projects are delayed. The vulnerable become more exposed and the next generation inherit not opportunity but obligation.

For all these reasons, Madam Speaker, I fully support this budget and congratulate, once again, the hon. Prime Minister for his visionary leadership and unwavering commitment to building a prosperous and sustainable Mauritius.

I thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: If I may, when we prepare speeches which are typed, it is not difficult to know each page how long it takes. It can take between two, three and four minutes. So, if you want to speak 30 minutes, it is easy to know how many pages you should read. Basically, you are not even supposed to read. You are supposed to debate.

Hon. Dr. Boolell, I count on you because you are the last speaker today.

(8.09 p.m.)

The Minister of Agro-Industry, Food Security, Blue Economy and Fisheries (Dr. A. Boolell): I will try to live up to your expectation, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, it is a tradition and we have to stick to tradition to convey our congratulations to the hon. Prime Minister, first amongst the equals, Leader of the House and Minister of Finance. But it is not because of tradition that I am conveying my congratulations. It is because he is a man who is daring and who can make change happen.

We came to this House not to be applauded, but to get things right and to get things right, we have to adapt, otherwise we will perish. It is time for all of us to arise, awake and stop not till the goals are reached. And for the goals to be reached, we need to put up a common front to ward off the threats and to say outright, that the only factor in life which remains constant is change and we have to adapt. I am not saying that we need, Madam Speaker, to have a change to violently disrupt the system. But the hon. Prime Minister got the message and it is a message conveyed by all of us. We stood together not only toward threats, but to convey the right signals to a public whose feelings have been whipped by those who are irresponsible and who act irresponsibly. We are here to deliver. We have a clear mandate and we shall deliver.

In the course of my speech, you will see the difference between them and us. Politics, Madam Speaker, is chivalrous. Today there is no chivalry, there is rivalry. It is not only rivalry, but people who can harm society, who can violently disrupt and provoke social unrest. But we shall not allow any social unrest. We have a clear mandate to govern and we shall govern with all purpose of intent. Let me also extend my congratulations to hon. Damry and the team.

The good thing with the hon. Prime Minister, when we went, of course, to have this interactive meeting in the light of hue and cry, the hon. Prime Minister flexed his muscles and conveyed with confidence and conviction, the merits of pension reform with a human touch. What is the point of being a human being if we are not humane? I have known the hon. Prime Minister since a very long time.

Sometimes we agree to disagree. But when it comes to put up a common front, when it comes to stand for values which we cherish, we stand together and this is the way it should be. I expect all of us to come together and not to be afraid. We have to defend a government which not only stands for the generations of today, but the generations to come and of tomorrow.

I will highlight, Madam Speaker, the bad faith of the previous regime over *Contribution Sociale Généralisée* and pension reform. During my intervention as Leader of the Opposition

on 04 June 2020. On the budget debate 2020-2021 and in my Motion of Disallowance on 17 November 2020, I raised the following points regarding pension reform of the previous government, in particular regarding *Contribution Sociale Généralisée*.

The first point, that the *Contribution Sociale Généralisée* was an unfair tax and certainly not a pension as marketed unfairly by the government which was then in power. It was the biggest scam by con and rogue regime. At the beginning, Madam Speaker, not many persons knew what the then Prime Minister, and Minister of Finance were up to. The then Minister of Finance, shortly after a Cabinet meeting on the 22nd 2020, announced *un plan de relance économique* and in a reply to a question from the press, stated that the *Contribution Sociale Généralisée* had been introduced to narrow the budget deficit of Government, *pour équilibrer le budget*. They never disclosed it was a tax. But this is the naked truth and this is the blunt truth. That the CSG was unfair and people contributing a higher amount would receive the same amount as those who would not have contributed to *Contribution Sociale Généralisée* at all. It was a blatant disregard, disrespect and discrimination vis-à-vis employees of the private sector.

Secondly, that the National Pension Fund contribution had stopped and this would cause prejudice to a lot of employees of the private sector. That is what we said in simple language, but they did not pay heed, Madam Speaker. I would advise all of us to refer to a statement made by hon. Minister Subron to the press on 13 July 2025 – *une trahison électorale déguisée en réforme*.

The fourth, that it would have been in order to restructure the National Pension Fund instead of setting up the *Contribution Sociale Généralisée*. But it fell flat because their intention was against workers of this country. They worked against the interest of workers of this country. They created a wedge and sow a seed of division between those working in public and private sector. Those who had to bell the cat were those who work in the private sector, Madam Speaker.

Next, that it would be in order to restructure the National Pension Fund, as I have stated, instead of setting up the *Contribution Sociale Généralisée*. *Et le ministre ajoute que si les cotisations n'avaient pas été suspendues, le fond atteindrait actuellement près de Rs200 milliards en tenant compte d'un rendement annualisé de 7.5%, le taux moyen enregistré sur les cinq dernières années et d'un apport annuel de R5 milliards en cotisation.*

Our friend, the hon. Minister of Social Security was dead right and in line with policy spelled out by this Government with vigour, Madam Speaker. At the end of my opening speech of my Motion of Disallowance of 11 November 2020, I impressed upon the then government that it was never too late. I asked them to think twice and to reverse a decision which was doing a lot of harm. I insisted that the *Contribution Sociale Généralisée* was a harm which could be irreparable.

It is to be remembered that the pension system which prevailed during the mandate of the last Government was a clear example of opacity when it was introduced. It did not go through any process of consultation. There was no consultation. It is a fact that the then Pension Reform Committee had no say in the pension system that prevailed during the period 2019 and 2024. During the mandate of the last government from 2019 to 2024, the objective of the *Contribution Sociale Généralisée* changed drastically to a financial support mechanism as opposed to being the vehicle for increasing non-contributory pension from Rs9,000 to Rs13,500. The overall result of this dramatic change, as was earlier highlighted by hon. Patrick Assirvaden, is that the *CSG* had turned out to be lamentably unsustainable, short of Rs25 billion. There was a heavy price to pay for hoarding, for inflation, for speculation, corruption and complacency.

Figures, Madam Speaker, do not lie, especially if you do not fiddle with the figures, but they are here to be seen by one and all. Let it be heard by one and all that from 2014 to 2024, we did not have a government, we had a bunch of people running this country like *mafiosi*. Like *mafiosi* – decadent, filthy, corrupt to the bones. Never ever should they ever come back to this House.

I call upon the decency of the electorate to think once, to think twice, but to think positively. We had the courage to bring fundamental changes because we are preparing the ground, not only for those who are here today, but for those who are coming for the next generation, Madam Speaker.

Unlike the MSM-led regime, we are not introducing any additional tax like the *Contribution Sociale Généralisée*, but we are restructuring the National Pensions Fund and turning it into a National Pension and Provident Fund. Initially, we also announced a means test for eligibility to the State Age Pension, the revised BRP. But beyond statistics and variants, there is also a human factor. The hon. Prime Minister being humane, paid heed to what he heard. I know he not only heard, but he also has a clear conscience. In as much as we

want to rush things through, we might as well bring the changes in such a manner that we do not violently disrupt any system. I say hats off to the hon. Prime Minister.

There have been hue and cry from the heart of the hardworking people who have retired and are saying that their hard-earned contributory and non-contributory pension as taxpayers are sacrosanct. They will fight for the sacrosanctity of their hard work. We acted collectively, and as a responsible Government, we paid heed. If we had to bend backwards to pay heed, we certainly did it because we are a responsible Government. And Labour, which is leading the alliance, Madam Speaker, thrives on values of federalism.

What did they do in 2004? In 2004, the Labour Party in Opposition stood up and fought bitterly against the means test. The government of the day, led by hon. Bérenger and Pravind Jugnauth, was insensitive and indifferent to the outcry of the population. The Leader of the Opposition put three PNQs on pension reform. The regime was cruel and had an arrogance second to none. There was no discussion at the bar of public opinion, no consultation. They wanted us to give them our blessings on the threshold of general elections. They should have been all hazed and nuts, Madam Speaker. They sent a form to senior citizens who were traumatised and frightened by the threat contained in the form which was circulated. I read paragraph 5 of the form stated –

“Any beneficiary who makes a false or incorrect declaration shall commit an offence and may be liable to a fine not exceeding Rs5,000 and to an imprisonment for a term not exceeding three months.”

This is the vast difference between them and us. The Minister of Finance, hon. Pravind Jugnauth, pampered by the then Prime Minister as his younger brother, despite the fact that he was the most controversial Minister of Finance exercising undue influence. We put an end to it in 2005 when the Labour-led alliance by Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam won the general elections. The voice of the people is being heard and listened to. The hon. Prime Minister and all of us listened and paid heed. He is a man of integrity and puts people first.

Yes, there is an alternative pathway, but there is a risk. The risk has to be mitigated. The hon. Prime Minister, with the full support of his Cabinet and all MPs, has acted decisively. The statement made by the hon. Prime Minister is praiseworthy. Chief among the laudable decisions is the removal of the means test for eligibility to the State Age Pension. The hon. Prime Minister emphatically stated in his reply to the PNQ that the means test is buried fathom deep.

A historic commitment to our citizens indeed. As a responsible Government, we have acted collectively. But let us be candid, Madam Speaker, there is no free lunch. We must work harder and smarter to sustain these additional expenditures. It is precisely because you have an ageing force that pension policy, diaspora, circular migration, selective migration are being debated. It has to be debated openly without fear or prejudice. But to stay ahead of the curve, we need growth, productive growth with gainful employment. The enabling environment is being created to attract investment. The budget highlights the potential of existing and emerging sectors. The low hanging fruits are ready to be picked as the bumper crop is inevitable with the gradual drop in the price of fuel, food, feed and freight.

Notwithstanding the massive support from a caring Government to bring down the prices of food and medicine, I have been told that more than Rs2 billion have been earmarked. The ease of doing business is back. Some people, I understand, want interest rates to be lowered. The CareEdge Ratings Africa affirms that this budget makes credible provision for productivity through sectoral reform with Artificial Intelligence as a key enabler. The Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security, Blue Economy and Fisheries is partnering with the Ministry of IT to be more effective.

Madam Speaker, we are climbing down from a mountain of debt inherited from a decadent regime that recklessly ripped off the reserves of the Bank of Mauritius. The MSM-led regime has a culture of crime and corruption. As a responsible Government, under the leadership of the hon. Prime Minister, we have embarked on sound macroeconomic management. Public sector debt is projected to fall below 80% of GDP before 2029, notwithstanding the recent oil crisis, the 12% US tariff on import and the 10 billion lease payment still outstanding from the United Kingdom. I will not highlight what the hon. Attorney General stated in relation to the statement made by the UK's Attorney General.

But one thing is certain. Funding agencies and credit rating agencies have said loud and clear that our economy is now exhibiting resilience. I am not saying that we have to take it for granted, relax, enjoy armchair comfortability and say all is well. No! But the culture of restraint of expenditure should not be ruled out, hence the relevance of the programme-based budgeting.

The second budget of this Government continues on the path of fiscal rebalancing to reduce the yawning gap between revenue and expenditure. Our first budgetary exercise has brought down the fiscal deficit from Rs67 billion to Rs47 billion in 2025-2026 or a decrease

of Rs20 billion. Relative to GDP, the deficit fell from 9.3 to 6%, which is without contest a remarkable achievement.

Madam Speaker, let me say that as from January next year to July, measures to contain the additional deficit of Rs6.2 billion have to be taken. It starts at the level of each ministry and parastatal bodies. There are tax proposals which are less palatable. The Minister of Finance will come up with appropriate budgetary measures to address the shortfall. There will be tax buoyancy from increasing revenue from a world economy which is bound to grow. Mauritius has to position itself with a new level of preparedness.

Madam Speaker, I will now come to my ministry's mandate. No ministry in this Government can afford armchair comfort. We are here to deliver. The total allocation for my Ministry rises from Rs4.46 billion in 2025-2026 to Rs5.164 billion in 2026-2027. An increase of Rs704 million. The increase is not merely a number. It is a statement of Government's unwavering determination to invest in food security, resilience, innovation and sustainability. The food security allocation has grown from Rs1.3 billion to Rs1.5 billion.

The phrase “produce what we eat and eat what we produce” is not a sound bite, it is a natural imperative. Over the last 10 years, more than 20,000 acres of agricultural land have been abandoned or converted to non-agricultural use. This trend must be and will be reversed.

Despite difficult conditions, Madam Speaker, food crop production increased by approximately 10% from 159,278 tons in 2024 to 175,122 tons in 2025. The area harvested under open field crops rose by 4.4% from 9,567 to 9,991 hectares. Last year alone, Rs800 million were invested in grants and subsidies to farmers through FAREI, Farmers Small Farmers Welfare Fund and AMB. I appeal, of course, like any other hon. Minister for quick disbursement. Let me come to an issue which is cherished by the hon. Prime Minister, canvassed by the hon. Prime Minister and I can tell the hon. Prime Minister will faithfully implement the 25by35 Food Security Programme. This is an absolute national directive.

By 2035, Mauritius must produce at least 25% of its food requirements with no dependence on imported inputs. Ambitious, but it is achievable and it will define our generation's legacy. This morning, I was at Toolsy Government School to have an early harvest. It is a good initiative of the Ministry of Agriculture, Education, and Rotary Club of Curepipe.

To achieve 25by35, we cannot operate Food Agricultural Research Extension Institute on the basis of the 2013 Act. The institute legal mandate must expand horizontally from field extension and agro processing to logistics, storage, and cross-sectoral business coordination.

The FAREI Act will be amended accordingly, and Small Farmers Welfare Fund will have to operate under the aegis of FAREI to improve efficiency. In parallel, the Food Security and Nutrition Bill is a landmark legislative step. But every great Bill needs a strong executive arm. The modernised FAREI will serve as the arm transformed from a field extension body into a scientific and commercial spine of a food security architecture.

A land bank of more than 20,000 acres have been earmarked to increase local production. Guided by our Ministry's land suitability map, this bank will match crops to suitable land and incentivise farmers to keep it in cultivation.

Prior to 2014, Madam Speaker, Mauritius produced 24,000 tons of potato. By 2024, this figure has collapsed to 14,000 tons. We are addressing the challenges of labour, input cost, and land through a master plan targeting 27,500 tons of potatoes, 21,000 tons of onions, and 2,200 tons of garlic.

The Rose Belle Sugar Estate and Sugar Investment Trust have been called to contribute and they must deliver in line with best agricultural practices to strengthen food security. Importation of agricultural labour from India is being finalised with a new remuneration order and complementary legislation. By 15 July, planters should be able to import additional workforce.

The fertilizer envelope for small farmers expanded with allocation rising from Rs80 million to Rs100 million and bio fertilizer rising from Rs10 million to Rs13 million and I thank the hon. Prime Minister for both initiatives. The subsidy on first class potato seeds from France and Holland has been raised from 50% to 75%. It is worth noting that regular meetings have been held by the Agricultural Marketing Board to gauge the challenges faced by small planters and other growers.

As such, an envelope of Rs150 million has been provided to cater inter alia for potato and onion seeds. Payment to the corporate sector and small planters have started as from today to reach some 500 growers comprising corporate small planters covering an acreage of 1,400 arpents.

I want to make it clear, there will be no increase in the retail selling price of potatoes and onions. Sugar built this nation, Madam Speaker, but of course, one issue that has to be

addressed, notwithstanding water stress, land abandonment and labour scarcity. It is the availability of tractors and it is time to make sure that we have the fund to acquire the equipment.

I have been told that we are obtaining in all Rs210 million for the equipment, Rs35 million from this budget and Rs175 million from the International Finance Corporation of Mauritius. Madam Speaker, livestock and veterinary services are being revamped. A substantial sum of Rs207 million inclusive of Rs50 million will be disbursed for construction of a state-of-the-art veterinary hospital at Wooton, Belle Rive.

Let me now come to blue economy. As was stated by my colleague, hon. Junior Minister David, the Bill is in the pipeline and blue economy will be the next frontier of development. And I am glad that the Indian Government is going to disburse Rs1 billion under a Government-to-Government arrangement with India to enable us to modernise our port and to turn it into a regional port.

Hon. Lobine highlighted it and we reinforced it more than once. Some 40,000 vessels ply the South for Western Indian Sea route. A transshipment terminal with container port facilities is not a luxury, it is inevitable and the multiplier effect from bunkering to dry dock will be immense. We can say with not only honesty of purpose, but we are going to make it happen; we can certainly double the blue economy's contribution to GDP from 10 to 20%.

Our national blue economy strategy and implementation road map 2026-2035 will be ready by July 2026, covering six priority areas –

- (i) Sustainable fisheries;
- (ii) Aquaculture;
- (iii) Seafood Processing;
- (iv) Ocean Tourism;
- (v) Marine Transport;
- (vi) Marine Renewable Energy, And
- (vii) Marine Biotechnology.

As I stated earlier, the Bill hopefully on blue economy will be circulated before October. My Ministry remains committed to unlocking the immense potential of our blue economy while ensuring the sustainable management and responsible utilisation of our marine resources.

We are formally positioning Mauritius to develop an indigenous blue economy model; one that simultaneously advances economic prosperity while safeguarding marine ecosystem. In 2025, local fish production reached a record of 37,821 tons, including 1,807 tons from aquaculture. Export of fish and fish products reached 82,644 tons, generating export earnings of approximately Rs15.2 billion. Fish consumption stands at approximately 36 kg per capita. This sector contributes around 1.5% to national gross value added. I am not going to highlight all the advantages being extended to fishers; from Canotte Scheme to facilities being extended off lagoon. The fishing scheme has provided Rs12 million to fishing cooperatives for vessels up to 24 meters.

In Financial Year 2025, 12 cooperatives received approximately Rs65 million in Government support and eight new vessels are expected to join the fleet. Now, with constant breakthrough in technology, fish aggregating devices are equipped with satellite tracking and we have secured an additional quota – 500 tons of yellow tuna fish, bringing our catch limitation to 10,990 tons for 2027. With the fleet expansion underway, Government is giving serious consideration to a dedicated fishing port to serve an approximately 900 annual calls from foreign vessels and our growing local fleet, positioning Mauritius as the premier fisheries and seafood hub of the Indian Ocean.

Yes, we will make provision for the construction of a fish auction market. I recall in the past, money was disbursed by Greece up to Rs25 million, but unfortunately, not much was done. On aquaculture, we will err on the side of caution and we will make sure that everybody will be on board. Notwithstanding projects which will be examined by the Economic Development Board, but of course, no project will be implemented if it is not bankable.

But, to widen the circle, there will be wide discussion with all stakeholders, be they fishers or the NGOs. We will make sure that in relation to participation, there is a call for fishers to be part of the process. But as we say, we err on the side of caution, because you have to make sure that we strike the right balance, because our country is a major tourist destination. Strike the right balance to ensure that there is sustainability and environmental safety.

Let me, Madam Speaker, conclude by saying that there will be two new hatcheries, and this will help us to boost the fishery sector; Rs41 billion have been here and the hatcheries will be at the Albion Fisheries Research Centre.

I am not going to talk of seaweed, that has been highlighted by my friend, hon. Junior Minister, David, but it is good to recall that the International University of Monaco is pioneering regenerative biomass and they will be a partner of Mauritius in this process.

There is one issue that we need to address. We have a comparative advantage in relation to market access, to EU and to Britain specially, in relation to export of our tuna. It is unfortunate that Britain has extended the most favoured nation status to countries in Thailand and in the Pacific, which means that we have to compete, but you cannot put in the ring a bantamweight against a heavyweight. We have talked to the UK High Commissioner, both the hon. Minister responsible for Foreign Affairs and International Trade; we put up a common front, and we also grasped the opportunities to highlight the problem with González, EU representative of Fisheries.

So, our friends in the private sector can rest assured, we are leaving no stone unturned. Madam Speaker, let me conclude...

Madam Speaker: Do not tease.

Dr. Boolell: ...by stating....

Madam Speaker: Do not tease us.

Dr. Boolell: ...what I said at the beginning. We did not come to this House to be applauded. We came to do what is right. We did not make these decisions to win tomorrow's headlines; we made them to secure tomorrow's Mauritius. There is no easy road from weakness to strength. There is no painless passage from debt to prosperity. But the passage exists and we are walking it.

This Government chose a different path. We chose the harder path. We chose responsibility over popularity, and resilience over short-term relief. Yet, as I have stated earlier, these are challenging times. Yes, difficult decisions have had to be made. No one disputes that, but Madam Speaker, there is no courage in telling people only what they wish to hear.

True leadership is about guiding the nation through the dark passage, knowing with conviction the light lies ahead and let me say this plainly, Madam Speaker, and let it be heard across the island. The arc of true leadership bends always towards what is right, not what is easy.

Difficulty is not defeat. Sacrifice, Madam Speaker, is not failure and the people of Mauritius, resilient, wise, strong, understand the difference between a government that flatters them and a government that serves them and this is the object of the hon. Prime Minister. This is the mission of the hon. Prime Minister. This is why we need to arise, awake and stop not and convey the message loud and clear to all our friends, and there is no retreat, no surrender! The message is going to be conveyed, Madam Speaker.

We are not governing for next election. We are governing for the next generation. History will be determined by whether we have the courage today, to rethink tomorrow.

Thank you very much.

Madam Speaker: Thank you, hon. Minister for respecting the time.

Mr Bhagwan: Madam Speaker, I move that the debate be now adjourned.

Dr. Boolell rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Debate adjourned accordingly.

ADJOURNMENT

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Friday 26 June 2026 at 3.00 p.m.

The Deputy Prime Minister rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Madam Speaker: The House stands adjourned!

At 8.47 p.m. the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Friday 26 June 2026 at 3.00 p.m.