No. 26 of 2026

REPUBLIC OF MAURITIUS

EIGHTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY

DEBATES

(HANSARD)

(UNREVISED)

FIRST SESSION

FRIDAY 31 JULY 2026

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(Formed by Dr. the Hon. Navinchandra Ramgoolam)

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Hon. Mrs Marie Arianne Navarre-Marie	Deputy Prime Minister Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare
Hon. Shakeel Ahmed Yousuf Abdul Razack Mohamed, GCSK	Minister of Housing and Lands,
Hon. Rajesh Anand Bhagwan, GCSK	Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change
Dr. the Hon. Arvin Boolell, GOSK	Minister of Agro-Industry, Food Security, Blue Economy and Fisheries
Hon. Govindranath Gunness	Minister of National Infrastructure
Hon. Anil Kumar Bachoo, GOSK	Minister of Health and Wellness
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Hon. Ashok Kumar Subron	Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity
Hon. Gavin Patrick Cyril Glover, SC	Attorney-General
Dr. the Hon. Mrs Jyoti Jeetun	Minister of Financial Services and Economic Planning
Hon. Patrick Gervais Assirvaden	Minister of Energy and Public Utilities

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MAURITIUS

Eighth National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 26 of 2026

Sitting of Friday 31 July 2026

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

The National Anthem was played

(Madam Speaker in the Chair)

MOTION

SUSPENSION OF S.O. 10(2)

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

Mr Mohamed rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

PUBLIC BILLS

Second Reading

THE FINANCE BILL (No. XII of 2026)

&

THE ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL MEASURES

(MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS) BILL

(No. XIII of 2026)

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on the following Bills –

(a) The Finance Bill (No. XII of 2026), and

(b) The Economic and Financial Measures (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill (No. XIII of 2026).

Question again proposed.

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

(3.05 p.m.)

Mr G. Lesjongard (The Leader of the Opposition): Merci, Madame la présidente.

Madame la présidente, c'est après tant de zigzag, si je puis me servir de ce mot, après tant de changements de la part de ce gouvernement concernant la réforme de la pension, nous voilà aujourd'hui, enfin, à débattre dans cette auguste Assemblée deux projets de loi : *the Finance Bill,* et *the Economic and Financial Measures (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill*. Deux projets de loi qui à la fin vont permettre de réguler les mesures budgétaires.

Madame la présidente, nous assistons à une précipitation démocratique inacceptable. Ces deux textes majeurs circulaient au milieu de la nuit de vendredi sous couvert d'un certificat d'urgence de l'honorable Premier ministre et ministre des Finances pour être lu en première et deuxième lecture mardi, puis débattu et voté aujourd'hui, alors que nos traditions parlementaires exigent une quinzaine de jours de réflexion entre la première lecture et le vote. Nous n'avons disposé que d'une semaine. Seule unique semaine et ce uniquement, il faut le dire, à la suite des vives protestations venant des bancs de l'opposition. Ceux qui se proclament, de l'autre côté de cette Chambre, les grands défenseurs de notre démocratie, apprécieront sans doute la saveur de ce dictat parlementaire.

La présentation si tardive, Madame la présidente, de ces deux projets de loi soulève des questions fondamentales que nous ne pouvons éluder. Ce calendrier chaotique traduit-il l'amateurisme d'un pouvoir qui navigue à vue ou cache-t-il une volonté délibérée d'esquiver le débat démocratique ? La réalité, Madame la présidente, associe hélas l'incompétence technique à la manœuvre politique. Je l'ai dit lors d'une conférence de presse, je le redis aujourd'hui, le pays est *anba lao.* Ce ne sont pas ces quelques membres du parti Travailliste animés de convictions profondes que j'espère sincères, qui viendront me démentir aujourd'hui. Mais que dire des autres ? Qu'il s'agisse de la bande des 15 ou des papillons, ils renoncent à leur libre arbitre pour suivre passivement un Premier ministre qui orchestre aujourd'hui leur propre naufrage politique.

Je pense que tout est relatif à la pension, Madame la présidente. Il faut aussi se rappeler que ce n'est pas le ministre des Finances qui a fait les consultations. Même pas un ministre de ce gouvernement. C'est un *Junior Minister* qui a fait les consultations. Ensuite, la réunion du *Steering Committee* sur la pension présidée par le Premier ministre s'est tenue à la mi-mai, un mois avant la présentation du budget, qu'il faut le reconnaître est aussi une date tardive pour la présentation d'un budget.

Madame la présidente, ces deux projets de loi viennent officialiser la cure d'austérité que ce pouvoir inflige au pays depuis bientôt deux ans. C'est une véritable politique de prédation sociale. Les pensions sont rabotées, les allocations sacrifiées et désormais ce sont les droits fondamentaux des travailleurs de ce pays qui sont pris pour cible. Ce dogme économique est une impasse absolue. Non seulement il asphyxie la population, mais il s'avère incapable d'insuffler le moindre élan d'innovation ou de diversifier nos secteurs d'activité. Ils introduisent des amendements majeurs touchant à la fois notre fiscalité et aussi notre système de pensions. Les réformes proposées trahissent une orientation claire.

Le gouvernement - je vais le dire de cette façon - fait le choix d'optimiser à court terme les recettes publiques par la création de nouveaux impôts, l'alourdissement des taxes existantes et la multiplication des frais administratifs et des pénalités. C'est le refus manifeste d'une stratégie axée sur la stimulation des investissements et la création de la richesse pour générer des revenus fiscaux pérennes. Votre logique économique inversée et incertaine consiste à prélever l'impôt d'abord en espérant naïvement que la croissance survivra.

Madame la présidente, ces deux textes de loi scelleront de manière irréversible le modèle économique, politique et social de notre pays. Nous nous trouvons de toute évidence, cet après-midi, à un tournant de notre histoire.

Madam Speaker, do not let the innocent title of a 'Miscellaneous Provisions Bill' deceive you for a single second. Hidden within the 87 pieces of legislation amended in these two Bills is a legislative Trojan horse. It is an extensive, unconsulted and deeply authoritarian agenda that seeks to rewrite the social contract of Mauritius, criminalise our religious institutions, engineer inflation through red tape and open the backdoors of public procurement to favouritism.

The hon. Prime Minister stood in this very House during the Budget speech and spoke of protection, of empowerment and of transparency. Yet, the texts of these two Bills tell a radically different, deeply sinister story and I will expose in my intervention those contradictions, Madam Speaker. Let us start with the broken promises to our workers and retirees, Madam Speaker.

Ma première observation sur le *Finance Bill* est par rapport aux amendements circulés mardi dernier. Madame la présidente, l'amendement proposé à la section 12 3C traite l'ajustement de la pension au coût de la vie par la formule *'as may be prescribed'*.

Ne nous y trompons pas. Cette formulation lève toute obligation légale pour le gouvernement d'indexer les pensions sur l'inflation. Le pouvoir s'octroie ainsi la liberté discrétionnaire de geler le montant de ses prestations. C'est un amendement que je qualifierais d'une gravité absolue pour ne pas dire sinistre, Madame la présidente.

And in this country, the social contract has always been clear; you work hard, you contribute, and you retire with dignity at the age of 60.

Et aujourd'hui, c'est un jour triste pour l'État providence. Une des pierres angulaires de cet État providence, la fondation, ce droit acquis grâce au combat de nos aïeux, va être enlevé à travers le vote de cette loi traître, fomentée par le secteur privé.

L'année dernière, nous étions tous présents à débattre sur la première tentative de supprimer la pension, et à l'époque, le gouvernement brandissait à la nation Moody's et FMI.

Un an plus tard, c'est une double trahison. *The Basic Retirement Pension* enlevé, énorme baisse dans le montant de la pension optionnelle à 60 ans et bientôt l'élimination du *Portable Retirement Gratuity Fund*. Pourtant, le jour de la présentation, des ministres avaient qualifié le budget de responsable et de solidaire alors qu'on enlevait la pension et introduisait le *means test*. Certains *ti pe tap latab*. Encore une fois, il y avait des génies de l'autre côté de la Chambre qui sont allés tout de suite défendre cette mesure avant de se brûler les doigts quelques heures plus tard. Face à la fronde que cela a généré, voilà le *means test freezed* dans un premier temps, avant que le Premier Ministre annonce d'une façon héroïque à cette auguste Assemblée avec cette fameuse phrase, Madame la présidente –

« Je vous ai entendu et le *freezing* a été enlevé. »

Madam Speaker, I wish to draw the attention of this House to clause 12 of the Finance Bill which amends the National Pensions Act. Ils omettent de nous dire que c'est uniquement pour la phase de transition et qu'en septembre 2029, l'âge de la pension de vieillesse sera aligné avec l'âge de la retraite. Après août 2029, ceux qui vont avoir 60 ans pourront bénéficier d'une allocation réduite qui va continuer à diminuer avant de disparaître si le Parti travailliste et ses acolytes reviennent au pouvoir en 2029.

Ms Anquetil: Tu as un doute ?

Mr Lesjongard: Ce qui ne sera pas le cas, heureusement, Madame la présidente. Le peuple ne vous pardonnera pas…

(Interruptions)

…de l'avoir escroqué et arnaqué politiquement.

Le peuple ne pardonnera pas ces fausses promesses faites pendant la campagne électorale et en 2034, rien pour ceux de 60 ans. Ils devront tous attendre 65 ans avant de toucher une pension. Le maçon, le boulanger, ceux qui triment dans les champs, ceux qui n'auront plus la force physique de travailler, les diabétiques -presque 20% de cette population sont diabétiques - tous ces gens qui ont contribué à l'avancement de notre pays, à la croissance de ce pays. Et ce n'est pas nous qui sommes assis ici qui créent la richesse de ce pays, ce sont eux, ces travailleurs d'usine, du secteur touristique qui se sacrifient pour faire avancer notre pays. En septembre 2029, ils devront accepter une allocation réduite parce qu'ils seront fatigués et ne pourront plus travailler. Si j'ose m'exprimer ainsi, Madame la présidente, ils ont créé un paradis pour nous, mais nous leur offrirons l'enfer pendant leurs dernières années.

Madame la présidente, le gouvernement nous demande aujourd'hui de croire que le *National Pensions and Provident Fund* ne figure pas dans ce *Finance Bill*. C'est exact sur le plan sémantique. Les quatre lettres 'NPPF' n'y figurent pas. Le 9 juillet, le ministre Ashok Subron, qui est absent cet après-midi, déclarait sans ambiguïté que tout ce qui a trait au *National Pensions and Provident Fund* ne sera pas dans le *Finance Bill,* et il expliquait que cette décision devait permettre un débat national, la publication des documents et des consultations avec les travailleurs, les syndicalistes et la population. Deux semaines plus tard, que découvrons-nous dans ce même *Finance Bill* ? Et je réfère cette auguste Chambre à la section 12, sous-section 45L, la mise en place d'un *Steering Committee* chargé de préparer une *Independent Pensions Regulatory Authority* ayant la responsabilité de définir, je cite -

"A strategic vision and national policy for the entire pension system in Mauritius."

Cette autorité devra éventuellement reprendre la supervision et la réglementation de l'ensemble des pensions publiques et privées de ce pays. Le même comité devra concevoir un *Central Pensions Administration Bureau,* regroupant tous les régimes soutenus par l'État. Le gouvernement n'a donc pas inscrit le nom du NPPF dans la loi, mais il inscrit son architecture, son régulateur, son administration centrale et le mécanisme qui va préparer les amendements législatifs nécessaires. Le NPPF a été retiré de la vitrine, il revient par l'entrée de service, Madame la présidente.

Le gouvernement avait promis une large consultation avant de toucher au deuxième pilier, celui des pensions contributives. Or, le *Finance Bill* confie cette orientation à un comité. Le texte ne prévoit ni livre blanc, ni publication obligatoire des modèles actuariels, ni consultation publique sur les recommandations finales, ni vote préalable sur les principes fondamentaux de la réforme. La formule "*such consultations as may be necessary*" ne constitue pas un engagement démocratique. Elle laisse au comité le pouvoir de décider qui sera consulté, sur quoi et à quel moment. Le débat national annoncé en grande pompe risque ainsi de se réduire à une consultation après que les paramètres essentiels auront déjà été définis.

Le véritable enjeu n'est pas seulement la création d'une nouvelle autorité. Il réside dans la direction déjà clairement indiquée par la Commission des experts *on pension reform*. Son rapport propose un NPF 2.0, fonctionnant sur une base de *defined contribution* dès juillet 2027, avec l'arrêt des contributions CSG et *PRGF* en juin 2027. Le gouvernement qui dénonçait hier la CSG, ne propose pas aujourd'hui une garantie plus forte. Hier, il reprochait à la CSG de ne pas créer de compte individuel ; aujourd'hui, il crée le compte individuel.

Madame la présidente, ce gouvernement avait promis que le NPPF ne passerait pas par le *Finance Bill*. Il ne respecte ni l'esprit ni la substance de cette promesse. Il ne crée peut-être pas encore le NPPF par son nom, mais il construit la route, installe les institutions, désigne ceux qui traceront les règles et demande au Parlement de lui remettre les clés. Nous ne pouvons, en tant que parlementaires, donner un chèque en blanc sur l'avenir financier de centaines de milliers de travailleurs.

Madam Speaker, let me come to clause 13 of the Finance Bill. A clause that allows the State to deduct any debt due to the Government directly from the citizens' pension benefits before payout. Now, the first question, Madam Speaker, since when did the State become a debt collector of last resort? Since when do we confiscate the hard-earned meagre savings of our elderly to offset alleged State debts without due process or a court order? This is not fiscal responsibility, Madam Speaker. This is a declaration of war on the Mauritian retiree.

Now, let me refer to section 4 of the Bill, on proposed amendments to the Excise Act. Comme le gouvernement n'a pas réussi à trouver de nouveaux pôles de croissance et que l'investissement se fait toujours attendre, les grands cerveaux et les « gros cocos sans sucre » ont proposé de faire plus simple et augmenter les taxes. Ils avaient pensé à augmenter la TVA dans un premier temps. Mais pour éviter de se faire copieusement insulter, ils se sont déguisés en protecteur de l'environnement et de la santé et ont augmenté la taxe sur les produits sucrés. Très intelligent, vu que tout est contenu dans du plastique : du liquide vaisselle, de l'eau, les médicaments. Un prétexte sous couvert d'intentions nobles, sachant qu'il n'y a actuellement pas d'alternative au plastique à usage unique pour contenir ces produits.

Madame la présidente, c'est tout bonnement une nouvelle forme de taxe qui va servir à remplir les caisses de l'État en attendant que les manufacturiers trouvent une option moins coûteuse au plastique.

Ms Anquetil: Tu as la mémoire courte !

Mr Lesjongard: Ce n'est pas le manufacturier qui paiera la taxe sur le plastique et sur les produits sucrés, mais les consommateurs. Sur cet aspect, le ministre du Commerce et de la protection des consommateurs devra vérifier les augmentations déjà applicables sur ce produit même avant le vote de ce *Finance Bill*. Il faut le reconnaître, Madame la présidente, cela aura un impact considérable sur le panier de la ménagère. Et le résultat, c'est que l'inflation va continuer à grimper pendant que les revenus vont diminuer. Nous avons en face de nous un gouvernement qui fonctionne à l'envers, car c'est après avoir imposé cette taxe que, maintenant, on va demander qui peut proposer une alternative au plastique.

C'est comme il y a quelque temps de cela, avec l'institution de cette *Constitution Review Commission*, où on avait nommé les membres en premier et puis, faire le Parlement voter la législation. Et aussi, comme la réforme de la pension, où on a enlevé la pension et puis on entame des consultations.

With regard to clause 59 of the Miscellaneous Bill, the hon. Prime Minister amends the Workers' Rights Act to grant 26 weeks of maternity leave on full pay and introduces one day of menstrual leave per month.

Madam Speaker, let me be absolutely clear. The Opposition fully champions the dignity, health, and rights of women in the workplace, but these measures should have been implemented after proper consultations with the trade unions, the SME organisations, and the private sector at large.

Mr Etwareea: And the MSM!

Mr Lesjongard: Je pense – mais, j'espère que je me trompe – que cette mesure annoncée sans consultation va créer, malheureusement, de la discrimination envers les femmes au niveau des recrutements.

Now, concerning the one day of menstrual leave per month, when one has a closer look at what is prescribed in the Bill, we understand that the leave is not straightforward, Madam Speaker.

An hon. Member: *Sa to bizin demann zot sa!*

Mr Lesjongard: Madam Speaker, let me put it this way. From the pockets of our retirees, we are moving to build a surveillance State. Let me say a few words on the digital panopticon this Government is building, and let me draw the attention of the House to clause 7(q) of the Finance Bill, which amends the Income Tax Act. The hon. Prime Minister is now mandating the CEB and the CWA to electronically report any individual whose utility bills exceeds Rs100,000 in a year. He is forcing insurance companies to report anyone with a vehicle insured for over Rs2 million.

Donc, ces organismes vont transmettre les données de leurs clients à la *Mauritius Revenue Authority.* La question est : Combien de consommateurs utilisent plus de R 100 000 d'électricité annuellement ? D'après mes informations, environ 25 000 consommateurs résidentiels et commerciaux. Donc, la MRA va enquêter sur ces 25 000 consommateurs. Tous ces consommateurs vont être sujets d'enquête de la MRA et, éventuellement, de la FCC.

Now, the above section is coupled, Madam Speaker, with the newly inserted subsection 123G, which grants the Director-General of the MRA direct, real-time, remote electronic access to the civil status database. The State is not only cross-referencing our water bills, our cars, but also, Madam Speaker, our marital status. This is not modern taxation administration. This is State surveillance hidden as fiscal policy, Madam Speaker.

Malheureusement, avec ce que j'ai dit, la présomption d'innocence est remplacée par la présomption de culpabilité. Tous les Mauriciens sont, dorénavant, comme des potentiels coupables à travers cette surveillance accrue de leurs dépenses basiques.

Ms Anquetil: Tu es mal placé pour parler de surveillance !

Mr Lesjongard: La proposition d’amender l’article 64 du *Banking Act* est faite dans ce même état d’esprit – malheureusement. On donne des pouvoirs à la FCC pour fouiller les comptes en banque de tous nos compatriotes et des compagnies étrangères implantées à Maurice, et cela, sans avoir recours à une décision d'un juge comme c'est actuellement le cas.

This amendment in section 64 of the Banking Act, Madam Speaker, is of utmost breach of confidentiality and international bank secrecy. A simple mere order or a notice of the Financial Crimes Commission is going to cause prejudice to the confidentiality and bank secrecy of bank account holders, equity funds, investment funds, and high net worth individuals.

This measure will go against preserving private sensitive information pertaining to their investment portfolios and most importantly cash funds at banks.

Therefore, Madam Speaker, these stakeholders will prefer to change offshore structuring destination whereby making the IFC of Mauritius less attractive and less conducive for doing business. These amendments will jeopardise the ring fencing of funds and asset management structured in Mauritius and will have a negative bearing on different investment groups that have chosen Mauritius as an offshore financial centre.

Madam Speaker, international practices in jurisdictions like Singapore, Dubai and Hong Kong strictly mandate judicial authorisation before any bank account scrutiny can occur. The days of legal deliberation required to obtain such an order are not administrative delays. They are vital safeguards designed to weigh systemic risks against the rights of account holders.

These amendments, as I said earlier, will weaken the attractiveness of our financial services sector and will also discredit our compliance and due diligence framework at both the level of the commercial banks in Mauritius and at the level of compliance in the country across all institutions. This amendment is a testimony that will give the perception that our financial services sector is not rigid, not compliant at international level and most importantly, lacks dexterity to track money-laundering.

Furthermore, Madam Speaker, hidden in clause 25 (p) of the Finance Bill is a stealthy new 5% insurance premium tax on all general insurance policies effective as from January 2027. This Government stands at this podium and claims to fight the cost of living. Yet, its own legislation is actively making home, car and health insurance more expensive for every single Mauritian.

Now, Madam Speaker, the assault extends to our faith, our families and our civil society. Let me now turn to clause 57 of the Miscellaneous Bill which introduces a draconian part, that is, part 7(a) to the Waqf Act. Since when did the hon. Prime Minister decide that our pious Waqf institutions are syndicates of money launderers? Under the guise of financial integrity, he is treating our religious endowments with the same suspicion as high-risk offshore banks. He is legally compelling Waqf auditors to report suspicious transactions directly to the FIU. He is giving the Waqf Board dictatorial powers to suspend mutawallis, freeze assets and impose administrative penalties of up to Rs1 million for failing to comply and clause 52G introduces fines of Rs1 million and up to five years of imprisonment, Madam Speaker.

Now, for Mauritians wishing to marry non-citizens, clause 7 of the Miscellaneous Bill amends the Civil Status Act to demand intrusive, humiliating affidavits providing gainful employment and marital status from the non-citizen's home country. This is not immigration control, this is bureaucratic hostility designed to discourage genuine marriages, Madam Speaker.

Now, let me come to clause 6 of the Finance Bill which is amending the Gambling Regulatory Authority Act. The hon. Prime Minister is so deeply paranoid about the integrity of his own statutory bodies that he is creating an Internal Affairs Division within the GRA to investigate the unexplained wealth of its own employees. The irony is palpable. The Government does not trust their own appointees, Madam Speaker. *Et là, je constate que le gouvernement va corriger la bêtise commise l'année dernière en redonnant statutairement à la* Gambling Regulatory Authority *la responsabilité de préparer* les rules of racing *qui relèvent de la réglementation des courses hippiques.*

Il est important de souligner que la recommandation principale du rapport Paris insistait sur la nécessité absolue de séparer les *regulatory and governance* functions des courses hippiques des attributions de l'organisateur. Le gouvernement avait trouvé approprié à cette époque de l'ignorer totalement. Aujourd'hui, le gouvernement fait marche arrière et mieux vaut tard que jamais.

Deuxième constat, le gouvernement joue à cache-cache sur *le review* du *betting tax* sur les courses hippiques annoncé dans l'annexe du discours du budget. Déjà, on avait compris que ce gouvernement jouait sur les mots pour cacher son intention de renoncer à des recettes fiscales de l'ordre de R 350 millions à R 400 millions alors qu'il imposait toutes sortes de sacrifices à la population prétextant que la caisse est vide.

Le *review* annoncé consisterait - ce que je comprends - à taxer les recettes nettes des *bookmakers* au lieu de taxer la totalité des mises de 14%. Évidemment, l'État aurait récolté des miettes et la mafia dans le giron hippique aurait empoché le pactole. Sentant le tollé que ce depilotage étatique allait provoquer, le *Finance Bill* n'en pipe mot. Le gouvernement a-t-il renoncé au crime qu'il allait commettre sur le dos de la population ? Je me suis posé la question. Et je suis allé aux renseignements.

On m'a fait comprendre que le *review* en question serait parmi les attributions du comité sur la taxation mis sur pied pour proposer des options fiscales suivant les déboires sur la réforme de la pension. Si c'est le cas, il serait machiavélique d'enlever la taxe sur les mises et encourager ainsi les Mauriciens appauvris, d'aller parier aux courses hippiques pour se faire détrousser par la mafia qui sévit impunément.

Troisième constat, le gouvernement persiste à créer des monopoles statutaires. Après le Tôte, désormais un monopole du *Mauritius Turf Club Jockey Club,* voilà que l'importation des chevaux de course subit le même sort. Et là, je me réfère à l'amendement à la section

6(2). Pourquoi certains craignent-ils autant la concurrence ? Et c'est la question qui doit être posée, Madame la présidente.

Quatrième constat, l'État à travers la GRA, finance pratiquement toute l'activité hippique. Plaire à l'organisateur des courses hippiques et satisfaire ses attentes s'avère être les priorités de ce gouvernement. Dans ce *Finance Bill*, nous voyons la création d'un autre fond, le *Horse Racing Fund* à la section 11C (b). Ce fond sera créé pour financer la retransmission en direct des courses hippiques. Déjà, Madame la présidente, j'avais appris que la GRA payait en catimini à la MBC la bagatelle de R400 000 par journée de course.

Aujourd'hui, ce gouvernement légifère pour que cette dépense revienne de facto à la GRA et non à l'organisateur qui historiquement s'acquittait de cette dépense et finalement, ce gouvernement fonce en 4ème vitesse pour autoriser le *interactive gambling by way of remote communication, virtual online gambling*. C'est une activité, Madame la présidente, où les risques de blanchiment d'argent sont significatifs et je vous suggère d'aller demander des conseils à la Banque de Maurice et à la *Financial Services Commission*, ils vous diront. Ces institutions se sont déjà penchées sur les risques réels inhérents à *l'interactive gambling*. Ne mettez pas notre juridiction financière en péril avec ces décisions.

Madam Speaker, finally, let us expose the architecture of nepotism. Now, if the Government truly cares about the cost of living, why is he engineering inflation through his own legislation? But the most dangerous clause in these two Bills, the one that should send a chill down the spine of every honest citizen in this country is found in clause 47 of the Miscellaneous Bill amending the Public Procurement Act.

Madam Speaker, the Public Procurement Board was established to ensure transparency to prevent the looting of State funds and to ensure value for money. The hon. Prime Minister is now bypassing it entirely.

(Interruptions)

He has defined a diaspora member and inserted section 25(3) which allows public bodies to engage in direct procurement, meaning no bid contracts for specialised consulting or other services from these diaspora members. Who defines specialised? Who verifies the diaspora credentials? This is a massive legislated backdoor for cronyism, Madam Speaker.

The hon. Prime Minister has created a blank check to award taxpayer funded no bid contracts to his friends, associates and political allies abroad under the guise of diaspora engagement. We have seen this movie before, Madam Speaker. When the ruling party wants to bypass the law to reward its own, they call it specialised consulting. The Opposition will not allow the Public Procurement Board to be undermined.

(Interruptions)

Permettez-moi de conclure, Madame la présidente. Regardez ce que devient…

Mr Etwareea: Shame!

Madam Speaker: He is concluding!

Mr Etwareea: Shame!

Mr Lesjongard: Yes, I am concluding.

Regardez ce que devient l'histoire de notre pays en cet après-midi hivernal. Le Parti travailliste autrefois pionnier de la justice envers les opprimés…

Mr Bhagwan: Ils le sont encore !

Mr Lesjongard: … orchestre aujourd'hui la suppression de la *Basic Retirement Pension*. Voter ce texte, c'est signer l'arrêt de mort de notre État providence. Cela après une élection gagnée avec de fausses promesses comme l'a avoué un des membres de la majorité sur une radio privée.

An hon. Member: *Kisanla?*

Mr Lesjongard: Vous leur avez promis R 21 500, mais certains auront moins de R 12 000, Madame la présidente. La grande escroquerie. La grande arnaque. La grande trahison politique de l'histoire de notre pays.

(Interruptions)

Ms Anquetil: Grâce à vous !

Mr Lesjongard: La détresse sociale frappe aux portes et la population souffre en silence. Le constat est sans appel. Vous avez perdu l'adhésion populaire.

Madam Speaker: Pas vous ! Pas Vous ! Vous, c'est moi ?

Mr Lesjongard: *I said* 'vous'. Vous avez perdu l'adhésion populaire. Vous avez épuisé la crédibilité de votre parole et la confiance de nos concitoyens envers votre action est aujourd'hui totalement consumée. Cet après-midi, les députés fidèles aux idéaux du socialisme seront placés devant un choix décisif.

(Interruptions)

En votant ces deux projets de loi, ils s'apprêtent à fragiliser le pouvoir d'achat de nos aînés tout en ouvrant – écoutez avec beaucoup d'attention – tout en ouvrant la voie à une rentabilité sans précédent pour les organismes de retraite complémentaire privée, Madame la présidente. Nos aînés ont consacré leurs existences entières à bâtir la prospérité de notre nation. Ceux qui ont façonné la richesse et la grandeur de notre pays méritent notre gratitude. Non, notre rigueur en prolongeant leur vie de labeur pour transformer leurs années de repos légitime en un horizon de privation.

À la fin des débats, chaque membre de cette auguste Assemblée sera placé devant sa responsabilité souveraine. Celle d'approuver ou de rejeter ces deux projets de loi. Nous serons, Madame la présidente, alors confrontés de manière historique à ce qui constitue sans doute notre plus grande décision politique et sociale. Rappelons-nous, mes chers collègues de cette auguste Assemblée, que nos votes ne s'effacerons pas. Le peuple regarde notre Assemblée et l'histoire retiendra avec précision qui parmi nous aura choisi de soutenir la population dans cette épreuve.

J'en ai terminé, Madame la présidente.

Madam Speaker: Merci, Hon. Minister of Labour !

(3.51 p.m.)

The Minister of Labour and Industrial Relations (Mr R. Uteem): Madame la présidente, en écoutant l'honorable leader de l'opposition, je ne sais pas si on devrait pleurer ou rire. Heureusement que le ridicule ne tue pas, et malheureusement, il n'y a pas de taxe sur la bêtise. L'honorable leader de l'opposition ose parler de *Public Procurement Act*.

Ce matin au Cabinet, on était en train de discuter Pack & Blister.

Madam Speaker: You are not supposed…

Mr Uteem: Avez-vous oublié, l'honorable leader de l'opposition…

Madam Speaker: Hon. Minister!

Mr Uteem: …ce qu'avait fait votre gouvernement durant la Covid-19 ?

Madam Speaker: Hon. Minister!

(Interruptions)

Mr Jhummun: Molnupiravir!

Madam Speaker: Hon. Minister, you are not supposed to tell us what is happening in Cabinet. Be careful, be careful. Be careful! Be careful!

Mr Jhummun: *Nek dir Pack & Blister la.*

(Interruptions)

Mr Uteem: The decision will be official, anyway. Pack & Blister – Rs103 million. Who? He is talking about diaspora? The own adviser to the Prime Minister was sending emails and receiving emails.

Ms Anquetil: *Donn so nom!*

An hon. Member: *Donn so nom!*

Mr Uteem: He is talking about procurement.

An hon. Member: Molnupiravir!

Mr Uteem: His own leader, members of his…

Mr Lesjongard: Madam Speaker…

Mr Uteem: No, you said procurement. I have to tell you. Your own leader is queuing and members of your former government is queuing up in the case of Mercantile & Maritime Group where unsolicited contracts were given for billions of rupees and then you are pointing fingers at us.

An hon. Member: R 4 milliards !

Mr Uteem: Et l'honorable leader de l'opposition ne manque vraiment pas de culot. Si son gouvernement n'avait pas dilapidé la Contribution sociale généralisée - une taxe sur la sueur des travailleurs. Si son gouvernement n'avait pas doublé notre dette publique. Si son gouvernement n'avait pas laissé une économie à genoux. Nous ne serions pas là aujourd'hui, Madame la présidente.

Ce n'est certainement pas de gaieté de cœur que nous devons réformer notre système de pension, sachant pertinemment bien le prix politique à payer. Je ne reviendrai pas sur les raisons pour lesquelles nous devons réformer notre système de pension avec le vieillissement de la population et la baisse de la population active. Mais il y a eu tellement de confusion dans la population alimentée, malheureusement par des pseudos experts et des politiciens opportunistes et trop souvent mal intentionnés, que je suis obligé de revenir sur les mesures dans la *Finance Bill* concernant la pension.

Tout d'abord, je compte dissiper les fausses rumeurs. Cette réforme n'affecte pas les personnes qui reçoivent déjà une pension de vieillesse. Toutes les personnes qui reçoivent une pension de vieillesse continueront à avoir leur pension de vieillesse. Ils ne sont pas concernés par la réforme, du tout. Cette réforme n'affecte pas la pension des personnes invalides et des veuves. Ces personnes-là continueront à recevoir leur pension jusqu'à l'âge de 65 ans. Et contrairement à ce que le MSM a voulu faire croire dans leur *meeting* mercredi dernier, tout le monde touchera une pension même s'ils ont des revenus mensuels supérieurs à R 50 000. Il n'y aura pas de ciblage, pas de *means testing*.

Au fait, Madame la présidente, ce que le *Finance Bill* propose aujourd'hui est une nette amélioration de ce qui était proposé, ce qui a été adopté l'année dernière suite au comité présidé par l'ancien *DPM*. Vous vous souviendrez que le comité d'alors avait suggéré qu'on vienne de l'avant avec un *Income Support* de R 10 000 à toutes les personnes qui ont un revenu de moins de R 10 000 ou tous les couples qui ont un revenu de moins de R 20 000. Le problème avec le *Income Support*, c'est que c'était une mesure ciblée. Cela touchait seulement une partie considérable de personnes qui touchaient moins de R 10 000.

Avec ce que nous proposons aujourd'hui dans le *Finance Bill*, le *Income Support* disparaîtra à partir du 1er janvier 2027 et sera remplacé par un système où chaque personne arrivée à l'âge de 60 ans, elle pourra décider à quel âge elle veut toucher sa pension. Elle peut le toucher à l'âge de 60 ans. Donc, tous ceux qui ont dit qu'on n'aura pas de pension à 60 ans, c'est faux. Elle pourra la toucher à l'âge de 61 ans, 62 ans, 63 ans, 64 ans, 65 ans et même jusqu'à 70 ans. Donc, c'est la personne qui décide quand elle veut toucher sa pension, à partir de quel âge. Bien sûr, étant donné qu'elle touchera sa pension avant l'âge normale de la pension, sa pension sera ajustée par 0.5% par mois, soit 6% par année. Donc, par exemple, si une personne décide de prendre sa pension un an à l'avance, allons dire l'âge de la pension est à 65 ans, elle décide de la prendre à 64 ans, sa pension sera ajustée par 6%. Si elle la prend par exemple à l'âge de 63 ans au lieu de 65, la pension sera ajustée de 12%. Si elle choisit de la prendre à l'âge de 60 ans au lieu de 65 ans, la pension sera ajustée par 30%.

Mais dans tous les cas de figure – et ce malgré ce que certaines personnes de l'Opposition ont fait croire – toute personne désireuse de prendre leur pension à l'âge de 60 ans pourront avoir leur pension et tout le monde aura une pension supérieure à l'*Income Support* de R 10 000, dans tous les cas de figure. Et il est important que le public comprenne que la possibilité donnée à une personne de prendre *an early pension*, ce n'est pas nouveau. C'est déjà en vigueur dans tous les fonds de pension contributifs ; que ce soit dans le secteur privé, que ce soit parmi les fonctionnaires, les travailleurs ont droit après un certain nombre d'années d'aller à la retraite avant l'âge de 65 ans, et ils touchent un *lump sum* moins et une mensualité moins. Donc, c'est le même principe qu'on est en train d'appliquer aujourd'hui à la pension universelle. Si vous voulez partir à l'âge de 65 ans, vous avez un *full pension*. Si vous voulez partir avant l'âge de 65 ans, c'est réduit dépendant de quand vous décidez de prendre votre pension.

Une autre fausseté, et là j'ai entendu l'honorable Leader de l'Opposition mentionner que la pension sera réduite jusqu'à être éliminée. Il y a certaines personnes qui ont dit qu'une fois que vous prenez votre pension, c'est fixé à vie. Faux, archi faux ! Tous les ans, il y a une compensation salariale pour compenser la hausse du coût de la vie des travailleurs. De la même manière, la pension va être réévaluée tous les ans et la politique de ce gouvernement – contrairement à ce qu'a voulu nous faire croire le Leader de l'Opposition – a toujours été d'augmenter la pension chaque année pour prendre en considération l'augmentation du coût de la vie. Cette année, on l'a fait. Cette année en 2026, on a donné une augmentation de 3.7%, R 550 à tous les retraités de la pension vieillesse. On n'a pas dû attendre le *Finance Bill* pour le faire.

Et étant donné que certaines personnes qui se déclarent légistes ont cru que l'absence du mot '*shall'*, cela veut dire qu'il n'y aura pas d'obligation de payer, on l'a mis noir sur blanc dans les amendements proposés. Et dans les amendements, on le fait encore plus clair que cela ne concerne pas que la pension optionnelle à 60 ans. Cela s'applique à toutes les pensions, même les personnes âgées qui touchent déjà leur pension, elles ont 70 ans, elles ont 75 ans, elles pourront avoir une augmentation chaque année. La loi va plus loin. C'est maintenant dans la loi qu'à l'âge de 65 ans, à l'âge de 75 ans, à l'âge de 90 ans, à l'âge de 100 ans, vous allez avoir une augmentation de la pension, même si vous avez choisi de prendre votre pension à l'âge de 60 ans. Cela s'applique et pour l'instant, c'est R 1 000 à 65 ans, R 1 500 à 75 ans, R 7 995 à 90 ans et R 5 158 à l'âge de 100 ans.

Maintenant, Madame la présidente, je vais aller encore plus loin. Le montant de la pension pourrait aussi être revu à la hausse à l'avenir, même pour ceux qui ont choisi de prendre leur pension à l'âge de 60 ans, suite à une recommandation de l'*Independent Pensions Regulatory Authority*. La création du *Independent Pensions Regulatory Authority* et *Central Pensions Administration Board* sont des mesures phare du comité d'experts qui est maintenant aujourd'hui devant nous dans l'amendement au *Pensions Act*. Le *Independent Pensions Regulatory Authority* sera chargé d'élaborer une vision stratégique et une politique nationale pour l'ensemble du système de la pension. Tout comme aujourd'hui, le *Pay Research Bureau (PRB),* le *National Remuneration Board* dans le secteur privé font des recommandations pour les conditions de travail, ce sont des organisations indépendantes. Même le *National Wage Consultative Council* qui fait des recommandations sur le salaire minimum, ce sont des *independent bodies* qui font des recommandations au gouvernement et puis le gouvernement décide d'appliquer ou de ne pas appliquer les recommandations.

De la même manière, cette nouvelle entité ; *Independent Pensions Regulatory Authority* va faire des recommandations au gouvernement, et le gouvernement va décider d'appliquer ou de ne pas appliquer ces recommandations. Mais une chose sera sûre, à l'avenir avec le

Independent Pensions Regulatory Authority, la pension ne sera plus politisée. Il n'y aura plus de marchandage sur le montant de la pension. Il y aura un organisme indépendant. Le Leader de l'Opposition fait toute une assiette sur le *Steering Committee*. Je pense que malheureusement, il n'a pas bien lu le texte de loi et peut-être qu'il serait mieux que je fasse référence. Sur le *National Pensions*…

Ms Anquetil: Rafraichir la mémoire!

Mr Uteem: C'est sur le *National Pensions Act*, à la clause 12. C'est à la page 69 –

> "(1) There is established a Steering Committee which shall be responsible for undertaking studies and research, and conducting such consultations as may be necessary for the establishment of –
>
> (a) an Independent Pensions Regulatory Authority (IPRA) (…)
>
> (b) a Central Pensions Administration Bureau (CPAB) (…)".

Seulement deux responsabilités du Steering Committee.

Rien concernant le *National Pension and Provident Fund*. Rien sur le PRGF. Cela va être fait en consultation par le Comité d'experts. Donc, ne venez pas induire la population en erreur, en voulant faire croire que le Steering Committee maintenant, sans consultation, va venir décider du *National Pension and Provident Fund*. Non, ce n'est pas vrai. Il y aura consultation, comme l'a bien fait souligner mon collègue, l'honorable Subron. Il y aura la consultation et c'est la raison pour laquelle on n'a pas inscrit le *National Pension and Provident Fund* dans le *Finance Bill*. Et ce ne sera pas le Steering Committee, contrairement à ce que vous avez faire croire, qui sera en charge de faire cette politique.

Madame la présidente, l'autre aspect de la réforme de la pension, c'est qu'une personne pourra aussi toucher sa pension après l'âge de 65 ans. Vous avez des personnes qui, aujourd'hui, travaillent jusqu'à l'âge de 67 ans. Vous avez celles qui travaillent encore plus. Mais, ces personnes-là, s'ils décident de prendre leur pension après l'âge de 65 ans, le montant de la pension sera ajusté par 0.75 % par mois, soit 9 %. Par exemple, s'ils décident de prendre la pension à l'âge de 70 ans, leur pension sera 45 % plus que s'ils le prennent à l'âge de 65 ans.

Le leader de l'opposition a parlé du *National Pension and Provident Fund*. En vérité, ce que le gouvernement veut, c'est d'avoir un fonds de pension contributif qui va permettre aux salariés, une fois arrivé à l'âge de la retraite, de ne pas dépendre exclusivement sur la pension de vieillesse du gouvernement. La pension de vieillesse du gouvernement sera là. Mais, il y aura une deuxième pension contributive qui leur permettrait, à tous les travailleurs et même les *self-employed*, de toucher une allocation additionnelle, une pension additionnelle, à l'âge de la retraite.

Je dois aussi souligner – et l'honorable leader de l'opposition ne l'a pas souligner – que dans un esprit de solidarité, dans le *Finance Bill*, nous avons revu le système de pension pour les députés et ministres, qui passe d'un système de *defined benefit* à un système de *defined contribution*. Dorénavant, le montant de leur pension ne dépendra pas de leur salaire à l'âge qu'ils prennent la retraite, mais du montant qu'ils ont contribué pendant leur mandat. La date normale pour qu'un député ou ministre touche cette pension contributive sera maintenant à 65 ans, comme pour toutes les personnes qui bénéficient de la pension de vieillesse. Donc, même pour les députés et les ministres, à partir de cet amendement à la loi, les nouveaux députés et les nouveaux ministres toucheront leur pension à l'âge de 65 ans.

Madam Speaker, it is unfortunate that everybody has been focusing only on the provisions relating to pension, when there are so many other measures that are being introduced in the Finance Bill and in the Economic and Financial Measures (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill to improve the life of our citizens. One of the greatest achievements of this Government is that it has restored the rule of law and given back the liberty and freedom to all the citizens.

Again, the hon. Leader of the Opposition was talking about *État de surveillance*. *Moustass Leaks*, c'est qui ? C'est nous ?

Ms Anquetil: Mal placé !

Mr Uteem: Présomption de culpabilité : qui procédait à des arrestations, menottait, filmait seulement pour voir après quelques mois que toutes les charges étaient rayées – *strike off* ?

An hon. Member: Striking Team!

Mr Uteem: Qui avait une équipe spécialisée qui allait faire du *planting* chez les opposants politiques? Et, aujourd'hui, ils osent venir parler d'État de surveillance ?

Ms Anquetil: Quel culot !

(Interruptions)

Mr Uteem: Madam Speaker…

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Minister…

Mr Uteem: Comme l'a souligné… Gabbar Singh c'est de l'autre côté, pas de ce côté-ci !

Madam Speaker: Minister, concentrate on your time!

Mr Uteem: Yes, yes.

An important measure, Madam Speaker, which has gone unnoticed is the removal of the absolute discretion which was given to the Prime Minister to deprive a resident of his status of resident in, supposedly, public interest, under the Immigration Act.

The Immigration (Amendment) Bill was introduced in Parliament on 16 April 2019, with a Certificate of Urgency – he was talking about Certificate of Urgency – First, Second and Third Reading. And I remember because I was there when it was voted – voted at 2.00 a.m. in the morning. I intervened at one o'clock in the morning. I remember. And all this, why? Because they needed to pass a law to prevent the pilot, Mr Hofmann, from getting married and staying in Mauritius.

When I intervened on that Bill, Madam Speaker, I had already said why giving such unfettered absolute discretion was dangerous and utterly unacceptable in a democratic society. Worse, such an amendment was in breach of Article 12 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 8 of the European Convention of Human Rights and Article 9 of the Convention of the Rights of the Child which imposes an obligation not to separate a child from his parents.

With the proposed amendment to the Immigration Act in the Economic and Financial Measures (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill, the Prime Minister will no longer have such arbitrary unfettered discretion.

Madam Speaker: You have one more minute, Minister.

Mr Uteem: One more minute? I thought…

Madam Speaker: Yes!

Mr Uteem: Okay. So, I will just give a reply on the menstrual leave. Let me bring certain clarifications, Madam Speaker. This historical measure applied to all women. All women, irrespective of their salary. Even if they earn more than Rs50,000, they are covered. This measure applies from day one. So, they do not have to wait for the end of their probation period. This is applicable from day one. Unlike sick leave, the women workers do not have to wait for one year to be entitled to menstrual leave. The menstrual leave is a paid leave. The menstrual leave – and the law expressly provides for that – is not deemed to be "absent", when she takes a menstrual leave, for the purpose of computing continuous employment which will give rise to annual leave and sick leave.

Now, more importantly, contrary to the lies that have been circulated, the women will not – and I repeat, will not – be required to provide a Medical Certificate before taking a menstrual leave. However, just like the employer has the right today, under the Workers' Rights Act, at his own expense, to cause a worker to be medically examined when a worker is on sick leave, similarly, the employer will have the right, at his cost, to have a woman on menstrual leave to be medically examined. But that will be exceptional in circumstances. That will be not be the general.

Now, to answer the hon. Leader of Opposition on the maternity leave, we have taken into consideration what was discussed during the debate, especially what Dr. Aumeer, a renowned gynaecologist, had said. So, the number of weeks that can be taken before confinement has now been increased to 12 weeks. I totally disagree and I have heard that from several hon. Members of the Opposition – I am concluding on that – that people will not employ women because of pregnancy. As if women are employed only if they are barren. I think that is an absolute scandalous thought to think that someone is going to employ a woman and let her not to get a baby. This is scandalous!

Madam Speaker: Thank you hon. Minister. I have given you quite a lot of time. I am sorry.

Mr Uteem: Okay. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Hon. A. Duval, yes!

(4.15 p.m.)

Mr A. Duval (Fourth Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue): Thank you, Madam Speaker. I better note the time.

Madam Speaker: Speak in the mic.

Mr A. Duval: Yes, thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, similar to my introduction to the budget speech the last time, my introduction to this Finance Bill is the same.

Madam Speaker: Do not repeat.

Mr A. Duval: No. Last year.

Madam Speaker: Ahh, last year!

Mr A. Duval: It is the same. What did I say last year? Hastiness!

Et qu'on se détrompe. Ce n'est pas parce que le gouvernement était démocrate qu'il a renvoyé les débats mardi. C'est parce que les *Explanatory Notes* essentielles d'ailleurs, vous allez voir mes *Explanatory Notes* sont essentiellement ce que je me réfère ; essentielles à la préparation de ce débat ont été circulés à 4.24 p.m., le 28 juillet quand l'honorable Premier ministre faisait son discours. Voilà pourquoi il a renvoyé. Allons être honnête sur ça au moins. Ça, c'est la première chose. Donc ce n'est pas par excès ou par éloge démocratie. D'ailleurs, j'avais dit l'année dernière.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Let him talk!

Mr A. Duval: L'ancien gouvernement donnait 12 jours pour préparer. 12 jours ! Accompagné de quoi ? De tous les documents.

Madam Speaker: Parlez-moi.

Mr A. Duval: Mais je vous parle là. Toujours. Et il faut que je répète donc ceci.

Madame la présidente, la pension. Je réponds vite fait à l'honorable Uteem avant de rentrer dans le vif. La pension – il faut être clair, Madame la présidente, sur ce qu'est l'amendement le *State Age Pension* aujourd'hui. Les Mauriciens ne comprennent plus. Tellement de chiffres, tellement de changements. On va le dire clairement et de manière simple. Quel est aujourd'hui le *State Age Pension* ? C'est très simple. Il y a une différence entre ceux qui sont nés après le 1er septembre 1969 et ceux qui sont nés avant. Toutes personnes nées après le 1er septembre 1969 bénéficieront à partir du 1er septembre 2029 de R 12 772 si elles la prennent à 60 ans et j'ai démontré qu'un homme perd 40 % de sa pension totale si on prend en compte son espérance de vie s'il la prend à 65 ans. Donc, tous les hommes prendront et les femmes marginalement ont plus à gagner, mais vu la manière dont le gouvernement a mené ses réformes, toutes les femmes aussi prendront la pension à 60 ans.

Qui veut dire quoi ? Ce qui veut dire qu'aujourd'hui, on a bel et bien coupé la pension par 30 %. Il faut être simple dans nos explications. On a coupé la pension de 30 %. Le 1er septembre 2029, le pensionnaire de 65 ans touchera R 18246. Celui qui prend, comme j'ai démontré à tout le monde, aura R 12772. Et que l'honorable Uteem se détrompe. Il est vrai qu'il y aura une augmentation de 3,5 % par an. Encore heureux que le gouvernement soit revenu sur ça, qui n'était pas prévu initialement. Encore heureux que vous ayez changé d'avis. Mais même ça.

(Interruptions)

Mais même ça, Madame la présidente, ce n'est pas que le montant à 60 ans qui augmentera. Ce sera aussi le montant à 65 ans. Donc cette différence de 30 % ne sera jamais pallier. Jamais ! Et ça alors, il faut être clair quand nous parlons de la réforme de la pension.

Madame la présidente, laissez-moi venir sur les autres mesures. Pensons toujours. J'attendais, Madame la présidente, du gouvernement qu'il vienne expliquer maintenant qu'il y a un trou de R 6 milliards et quelque dans l'approbation entre les sommes votées, budgétées pour le paiement de la pension et aujourd'hui, le State Age Pension sous le Finance Bill, ça crée un trou de 6 milliards et quelque. Ajoutez à cela l'incertitude sur l'argent des Chagos qu'on a compté comme revenu et qui est toujours en suspens, ça fait potentiellement R 16 milliards de différence. J'aurais attendu du gouvernement qu'il vienne expliquer comment il allait réallouer parce que les sommes appropriées à chaque ministère ont été votées par cette Chambre et doivent être réallouées. Comment est-ce que ces sommes vont être réallouées ? J'espère que l'honorable Premier ministre répondra.

An hon. Member: *To ti al bonheur sa zour-la!*

Mr A. Duval: Voilà ce qu'on aimerait savoir. Et qu'on le dise dans les détails, pas simplement de dire qu'on va faire des réductions à gauche ou à droite sans nommer clairement les réductions.

Madame la présidente, *parallel importation*. Le grand absent du budget. Malgré les garanties de mon bon ami Shakeel Mohamed données à la radio la dernière fois, il est triste pour moi de constater, je suis sûr pour lui aussi, que le *parallel importation* reste le grand absent de ces deux projets de loi. Rien n'a été fait dans le *Industrial Property Act* pour permettre aujourd'hui le *parallel importation* et le coût de la vie, Madame la présidente, est probablement le plus grand enjeu aujourd'hui du gouvernement. La plus grande priorité des Mauriciens, c'est le coût grandissant du coût de la vie, de leurs dépenses ménagères, et on aurait donc espéré que finalement, le gouvernement tienne sa parole sur l'importation parallèle. Je l'ai dit, je le redis : sur un marché de R 500 milliards de consommation annuels, R 2 milliards, c'est 0,4 %, ça ne représente rien.

*Donc, il faut venir avec l'importation parallèle. A*nybody who understands, Madam Speaker, the regime of the Industrial Property Act with regard to trademarks will understand that there exist two regimes. The national exhaustion and the international exhaustion. At present, Mauritius has a national exhaustion regime with regard to trademarks. What does that mean? It means that only the person who has the right, the consent and the authorisation from the trademark owner can import into Mauritius a brand, whatever it is. Anyone else, even if he has acquired those goods legally, will be precluded and will be barred from bringing them into Mauritius for the purposes of selling them.

That is the situation. We have, therefore, a national exhaustion regime. What amendments should have been brought here would be to change that regime to the international exhaustion regime. Like it is done in most countries, Madam Speaker. So therefore, where you buy something, provided it is not counterfeit, it is genuine; provided that you have purchased it legally, you bring it here, and you can sell it. The question is therefore what happened between the moment the hon. Shakeel Mohamed gave that guarantee between the moment that the budget speech was read to that effect, saying, and I quote –

"a clear framework for the parallel imports will be introduced"

And now the Finance and Economic Bill. What happened? Who are we protecting? There is today no doubt on this subject. There needs to be competition to drive prices down for anything we consume. That is the only solution today. True it is that for medicines and for other specialised products, then it might not be the solution, but for products that we consume, Madam Speaker, it absolutely is. So therefore, and I say it here, it is *le grand absent aujourd'hui de ces projets de loi*.

Madame la présidente, je vais parler de la clause 3 du Economic Bill, les amendements à section 64 du Banking Act. Vous allez voir, Madame la présidente, qu'aujourd'hui, on enlève plutôt le principe de la confidentialité quand il s'agit de la FCC.

(Interruptions)

Je vais expliquer. Si, je vais expliquer. Ce que nous faisons aujourd'hui, Madame la présidente, c'est qu'on provide *aujourd'hui* that the duty of confidentiality shall not apply where a financial institution is required to provide information in compliance with an order or notice pressure to the Financial Crimes Act. This will now include customer information, which, contrary to account information, provides much more detail on the person. It provides, for example, details. It provides, for example, details as to whether the person holds an account, of course.

It also provides the customer due diligence records or the KYC information, particulars relating to the customer, the account holder, which if, in the opinion of the Commission, is relevant. That is the first thing it does. Therefore, no need to go to a to a Judge in Chambers to get all these extensive list of information for the FCC. It is no longer the case. It does something else. It now widens the order of disclosure for any competent authority, including the Mauritius Revenue Authority, including foreign authorities to now obtain these extensive records and personal information on any person. That is what it does. The problem, Madam Speaker, I have no problem if we contain it to drug trafficking, to terrorism financing. I have no problem with it at all. But I have a problem if we are going to use it for other purposes. I also have a problem that we give so much powers unchecked.

Finally, I have a problem and I am surprised that the hon. Minister Uteem does not, on what it does to our financial services sector, the offshore sector. On the message it sends to the offshore sector and I can tell you, they are already worried. Because what stops tomorrow a foreign country from making a request for information on one of its citizen to Mauritius? Who will want to invest in a country where all those extensive documentation, including beneficial ownership and what not, is now subject to disclosure?

Do you not think, Madam Speaker, does Government not think that it is putting in jeopardy the financial services sector? Why then does it not limit it? That is all I am asking. Why did you not limit it? Limit it to drug trafficking. Limit it to terrorism financing. But why give such a blanket and open-ended power and mandate to the FCC when it puts an already strained financial services sector in jeopardy? That is the question, Madam Speaker.

I would have expected further amendments. I raised it last time here. I raised it last time, further amendments under the FCC Act. I said it for companies; the discrepancy between the duty of companies to have procedures to detect and report money laundering and the duty to abide to guidelines of the FCC, whilst on the other hand, the FCC itself is not making it mandatory, but only optional to follow its guidelines. That I would have expected. I would have expected like I said last time, for industries like in the car dealership business to have enhanced reporting duties. Not just for the CEB to go and report whoever consumes more than Rs100 worth of power, but also for those who are selling Rs30-40 million rupees in one transaction without any duty to report. I would have expected that from the last time I made my plea to have found its way in the Finance Bill. It has not.

What the Bill does, Madam Speaker, it cuts both ways. Several measures were announced in the budget speech. For example, under the Environmental Protection Act, to increase fines for nuisance, noise pollution from Rs10,000 to Rs20,000 - announced in the budget speech, and did not find its way in the Bill.

The same goes to the measure for the annual rental of registration mark. Announced in the budget speech, but what we have here is a general provision, no concrete, no prescribed fee has been given. On the other hand, Madam Speaker, what was not announced, but what Government strive to move quickly was with regard to the FSC fees. Doubling the fees, stopping the FSC, one application for making payments, blocking payments, imposing in an abrupt manner on financial services sector a doubled fees imposition - increase in fees. I say it now, that was abrupt and that was uncalled for and now it raises serious transparency and good faith concerns over the FSC's conduct.

More importantly, Madam Speaker, when you take all of those together, I am saying it now. I have listened carefully to the hon. Minister of Financial Services reply to a PQ that there was no migration of offshore companies to other less expensive jurisdiction like Seychelles. Maybe not for now, because they have just been forced to pay their annual fee, to renew it. But let us watch by the end of this Financial Year what happens. Let us also look at the trend of new offshore companies registering in Mauritius, whether that will be impacted or not. This is how we will know the impact of these measures, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Your time is up!

Mr A. Duval: Yes, Madam Speaker, very quickly, Workers' Rights Act.

Madam Speaker: Just one!

Mr A. Duval: Maternity leave. Six months maternity leave, Madam Speaker, on full pay, and another six months on half pay at the option of the employee. It makes a total cost of nine months of maternity leave full payment to the employer! So, the employer now has to bear the charge. So, do you not think now that it will inevitably, unintentionally, unintendedly, l*e revers de la médaille*, today put woman as a second-class citizen in this country? The employer will have to pay for these nine months. Do you not think without any safeguard that you just believe that the employer is not going to discriminate? I hope so. But I do not think so. I do not think so. I do not think so. Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Time is up! Your time is up!

Mr A. Duval: Madam Speaker, there was so many other things I wanted to talk about.

Madam Speaker: Of course.

Mr A. Duval: I will just say what? Tourism Authority Act, Citizenship Act, the Economic Development Board Act, the Non-Citizen Employment Restriction Act. So many, time is too little. We used to give more time to this, but I am wasting time saying this anyway. To conclude, Madam Speaker, there has been genuine noise.

Madam Speaker, hon. Uteem was given has given a bit more time.

Madam Speaker: I have already given you enough.

Mr A. Duval: No, he was given five minutes additional.

Madam Speaker: No, no, no, no.

Mr A. Duval: Five minutes additional.

Madam Speaker: Do not question my decision.

Mr A. Duval: But then be fair, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: I am giving you one more minute.

Mr A. Duval: You gave him five minutes additional, Madam Speaker.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: We did… I was given…

Mr A. Duval: Madam Speaker, you have given him five minutes additional.

Madam Speaker: Please sit down! Please sit down. Did we agree to this time limit?

Ms J. Bérenger: No.

Mr P. Bérenger: No!

An hon. Member: Yes.

Mr P. Bérenger: *Ki yes? Dir nou kan. Ale do!* We have never agreed!

Mr A. Duval: Madam Speaker, my time is being wasted.

Madam Speaker: One moment!

Mr A. Duval: When did we agree? We have never agreed on this time. Anyway, Madam Speaker, you gave him five minutes. Please, give me my time.

Madam Speaker: I am giving you more more minute. One more minute!

Mr A. Duval: Give me my five minutes.

Madam Speaker: I did not.

Mr A. Duval: What is the problem with giving me my five minutes?

Madam Speaker: I asked to check and I checked. I did not give him five minutes. I gave him three minutes.

(Interruptions)

You are wasting time. I gave him three minutes. I am giving you one more minute. Use your minute.

Mr A. Duval: Madam Speaker, I have noted it here. He started at 3:50 and he ended at 4:50. Unless my math is wrong, that is five minutes.

Madam Speaker, the Mauritian Citizenship Act. Let me say it quickly. It is a good thing. what is being done by the hon. Prime Minister to limit his powers. I will also ask him, however, to consider…

Madam Speaker: *Chut*!

Mr A. Duval: To consider applying the same principle to the granting of citizenship. Because the hon. Minister under the Citizenship Act has extensive powers under sections 5, 6 and under section 9 to naturalise or to issue citizenship without having to give any explanation and without being held accountable whatsoever, not even by a court of law. We should have reviewed that as well. Because that may be a source of corruption, it may be.

Madam Speaker, I was saying the Workers' Rights Act, whether we like it or not, you cut social allowances on the one side, CSG and all of that, which were here to encourage people to have children. On the other hand, you are giving added maternity leaves, but at the expense of the employer.

Madam Speaker: You have already argued that!

Mr A. Duval: So, *governman - en kreol on dit - pe tir so kanet dan zwe net*. That being said, Madam Speaker, it is not unfortunately well thought of. It will have; I am afraid, unintended consequences of creating second class citizens.

I listened to the hon. Damry on the radio, breakfast show. He said that Government would think of coming with appropriate safeguards. There are none, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, to finish, there has been genuine noise…

Madam Speaker: You have got four minutes since you…

Mr A. Duval: Genuine noise of disapproval among Members. In fact, many are absent today but rumours have been spreading that some here may not be supporting this legislation. This is why, Madam Speaker, 60-0 or not, I find it apt now to ask you, Madam Speaker, that the vote be done on a division of vote basis…

Madam Speaker: But in due course!

Mr A. Duval: ….so that we may know exactly who is against, who is for, so that *on peut avoir le cœur net*.

Madame la présidente, je vous remercie.

Madam Speaker: Je vous remercie. Now, hon. Junior Minister, hon. Damry.

(4.34 p.m.)

The Junior Minister of Finance (Mr D. Damry): Madame la présidente, ces deux projets de loi permettent aux intervenants de ce côté de la Chambre de rétablir la vérité et de démasquer les véritables traîtres de la nation et je vais démontrer, preuve à l'appui avec trois exemples. Il y en a beaucoup, mais je vais démontrer avec trois exemples.

Madam Speaker: Oui, parce que vous aussi, M. le ministre, vous aurez 15 minutes, comme les membres qui ne sont pas ministres.

Mr Damry: Merci. D'abord, l'honorable Uteem a bien rétabli la vérité sur la pension, mais je dois dire que l'honorable A. Duval a raconté des faussetés sur la pension. La pension en janvier 30 n'est pas de R 12 000, c'est à R 13 298, janvier 31, c'est à R 13 764…

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Do not disturb!

Mr Damry: …janvier 32 est à R 14 245, septembre 26 est à R 14 490. Je ne sais pas, Madame la présidente, où il a inventé le chiffre de R 12 000.

(Interruptions)

Deuxième chose, il a parlé d'un chiffre de R 18 000 quelque chose en janvier 2030.

Mr A. Duval: Septembre !

Mr Damry: En septembre 2030.

Mr A. Duval: 29 !

Mr Damry: Madame la présidente, vous savez, je suis issu du Parti travailliste qui est né dans la défense des travailleurs. Nous protégeons les travailleurs, et c'est dans cette optique que nous protégeons l'universalité de la pension et nous assurons une augmentation pour préserver la dignité des retraités, pour faire face au coût de la vie. L'ancien régime n'a pas donné d'augmentation de pension en janvier 2020, en janvier 2021, en janvier 2022. Ils le font à la veille des élections. C'est du pur marchandage politique, Madame la présidente. Ce que nous rétablissons, c'est la dignité des pensionnaires et le coût de la vie. Le coût de la vie, on parle de l'inflation. Ils ne réfléchissent même pas. L'autre côté de la Chambre ne réfléchit même pas.

Madame la présidente, l'ancien régime n'a pas donné d'augmentation de pension durant les dernières années. Donc, c'est insensé de venir dire que la pension augmentera de R 15 000 à R 18 000, à moins que ce soit un marchandage politique à la veille des élections de 2029.

Ms Anquetil: C'est leur culture.

Mr Damry: C'est leur culture.

Mr Jhummun: *Inn deza koumanse!*

Mr Damry: Madame la présidente, lorsqu'on parle du coût de la vie, on parle de l'inflation. Aujourd'hui, l'inflation est à 4,1 %, mais le panier de coût de la vie d'un retraité, c'est différent du panier du coût de la vie de quelqu'un qui a 30 ans, 40 ans. Un retraité dépense beaucoup plus sur les médicaments, sur les médecins, sur la pharmacie. Un retraité ne paye pas de transport. Donc, cette loi est dans l'avantage des retraités, parce que cela permet une marge de manœuvre au gouvernement d'accorder une augmentation qui compense l'augmentation du coût de la vie.

Madame la présidente, nous sommes les défenseurs des travailleurs et du petit peuple. Au contraire, la plus grande arnaque, dois-je dire, une sinistre manœuvre machiavélique de l'ancien régime était d'abord d'abolir l'université de la pension lorsqu'ils ont introduit la CSG. Ils ont introduit une contribution sur les pensions de vieillesse qui est une pension universelle, Madame la présidente. Et parlant de la CSG, ils ont collecté R 41 milliards en 2020 et 2024, et l'argent a été dépensé dans le budget, pas pour la pension universelle et pas pour la pension contributive, laissant un déficit.

Chers amis, écoutez-moi bien, un déficit de R 166 milliards dans les pensions contributives pour les 600 000 travailleurs qui sont concernés. Qui sont les véritables voleurs de pension, Madame la présidente ? Nous sommes en train de protéger la pension à travers ces deux projets de loi.

Le deuxième exemple, je suis choqué, Madame la présidente, par les deux intervenants avant moi sur l'amendement proposé au *Banking Ac*t. L'amendement proposé *still requires a*

Judge's order for the offences. It is only for the asset recovery that a notice is required. Pour les enquêtes, c'est toujours un *Judge's order* qu'il faut. Dans le passé, sous l'ancien gouvernement, il n'y avait que trois offenses. *Three offenses that were concerned under money-laundering* –

(1) money-laundering;

(2) limitation of payment in cash, and

(3) alleged proceeds of crime.

Qu'est-ce que nous ajoutons, Madame la présidente ? *Corruption offenses !* Alors qu'est-ce qu'on fait ? Le Parti travailliste, le gouvernement, le MMM, le REA, Nouveaux Démocrates, Madame la présidente, s*hould we not include corruption offenses ? Or should we do like the previous Government and partake in corruption? The other offense is fraud offense. Should we not include fraud offenses? Financing of drug dealing, should we not include financing of drug dealing?* Madame la présidente, o*ffenses are offenses and this Government, we will hunt down criminals and not protect them unlike the previous Government!*

And I will try to conclude avec un troisième exemple que personne n'a cité. Peut-être qu'ils n'ont pas parlé de cela parce qu'ils ne voulaient pas parler de cela. C'est un amendement proposé au *Bank of Mauritius Act,* où le gouvernement est en train d'amender pour pouvoir injecter *equity in the paid up capital* de la Banque de Maurice. Et là c'est important d'écouter. Pourquoi est-ce qu'on fait cela ? Le Leader de l'Opposition a donné des leçons, Madame la présidente. Pourquoi on le fait ? Parce que l'ancien gouvernement a mis la main dans les caisses de la Banque centrale, a retiré R 97 milliards et a dépensé ces R 97 milliards dans le budget.

(Interruptions)

Madame la présidente, créant de la dette pour R 97 milliards, ce qui fait un paiement annuel d'intérêt que de R 4 milliards par la population, un paiement des intérêts de R 12 millions par le peuple par le jour. C'est parce que l'ancien régime aujourd'hui met un fardeau de R 12 millions d'intérêt par jour sur le peuple que nous avons besoin d'injecter *equity in the paid up capital of the Bank of Mauritius, and we brought this amendment. And like this* *amendment, there are so many other amendments that we have brought in the Finance Bill, but they are not talking about it because if they talk about it*, leurs péchés vont sortir, Madame la présidente. Tout ce qu'ils font, c'est semer de la confusion. Ils sont en train de jouer avec les sentiments du peuple pour leurs intérêts personnels.

Madame la présidente, si vous me le permettez, il y a huit amendements pour la protection sociale et pour la mobilité sociale. Par exemple, l'amendement *Social Integration and Empowerment Act* –

- *the threshold rises from Rs3,575 to Rs4,000 under the SRM ;*
- *the child threshold increases from Rs2,500 to Rs2,800, and*
- *the household income threshold increases from Rs14,650 to Rs16,400.*

Madame la présidente, nous sommes en train d'aider plus de gens vulnérables. Nous avons huit amendements comme cela. Cela n'est qu'un amendement dont je vous donne l'exemple.

En ce qui concerne la classe moyenne, par exemple, il y a le *Registration Duty Act* où le –

- *ceiling has increased from 2.5 million to 3 million for the acquisition of bare land, and*
- *for the acquisition of an apartment from 5 million to 6 million.*

Plus de jeunes, plus de familles de la classe moyenne pourront acheter une maison, construire un toit pour eux. Nous avons six amendements comme cela.

Et en ce qui concerne la croissance, nous avons 14 amendements qui touchent directement la croissance, parmi le *AI City Scheme* et le *Start-up Revoluti*on. Donc, ces deux projets de loi concernent 83 amendements et l'opposition ne parle que sur 2-3 amendements qui sont électoralistes. Ils ne parlent pas dans l'intérêt du peuple, dans l'intérêt des travailleurs, dans l'intérêt du petit peuple. Et c'est là où je veux en venir.

Le leader de l'opposition a dit qu'un *Junior Minister* a fait des consultations. Mais, ce qu'il ne sait pas du Parti travailliste, Madame la présidente, lorsqu'il s'agit de l'intérêt des travailleurs, lorsqu'il s'agit de l'intérêt du petit peuple, nous allons toujours œuvrer dans cette direction. Nous allons toujours œuvrer dans la direction des travailleurs et du petit peuple, jamais dans notre intérêt personnel. S'il faudra recommencer, nous allons recommencer à zéro. C'est l'intérêt de la nation qui prime pour nous, Madame la présidente. C'est ça la différence entre cette partie de la Chambre et ce côté de la Chambre.

Madame la présidente, tout le monde de ce côté de la Chambre soutient les deux projets de loi. Enfin, étant donné que l'honorable Rajesh Bhagwan a dit quelque chose. L'honorable leader de l'opposition parle toujours de Jai *and* Veeru, de Sholay…

Madam Speaker: Do not go into that!

Mr Damry: …je vais répondre sur ça. Ce qu'il ne sait pas, c'est la nouvelle génération, c'est Dhurandhar qui vient pour lui. Merci, Madame la présidente.

Madam Speaker: Merci, vous avez respecté l'heure.

Hon. Ms Joanna Bérenger, yes.

(4.47 p.m.)

Ms J. Bérenger (First Member for Vacoas & Floréal): Madame la présidente, le gouvernement dit avoir à cœur l'intérêt de la population. J'aimerais relever quelques contradictions dans ce *Finance Bill*.

Pour commencer la pauvreté. Dans son discours, le ministre des Finances a annoncé que le seuil d'éligibilité pour être inscrit sur le Registre social serait augmenté pour aider les plus vulnérables, passant de R 14 000 à R 16 400 pour permettre d'aider plus de personnes à travers les allocations. Mais, c'était sans préciser que ce chiffre concerne une famille de quatre adultes et un enfant ou une famille de cinq adultes. En découvrant le *Finance Bill*, on réalise qu'en réalité, il porte le seuil d'*absolute poverty* de R 3 575 à R 4 000 par mois pour une personne vivant seule.

Sur quelle étude, sur quelle méthodologie ce nouveau seuil est-il fondé ? R 4 000, c'est à peine R 133 par jour. Le gouvernement avait lui-même reconnu la nécessité de revoir le *proxy means test* dont la dernière révision remontait à 2013. Cette révision a-t-elle été faite ?

Est-ce que ce gouvernement pense qu'il est vraiment possible de vivre avec R 4 000 par jour ? Est-ce qu'il pense que cela reflète réellement le coût de la vie ? Ce n'est pas raisonnable. Et puis combattre la pauvreté, ce n'est pas simplement modifier le seuil qui la défini.

(Interruptions)

La justice fiscale…

Madam Speaker: Qu'est-ce qui se passe là ?

Ms J. Bérenger: Qui a fait l'effort…

Madam Speaker: Une petite seconde.

Ms J. Bérenger: Qui fait l'effort fiscale ?

Madam Speaker: Hon., could you, please, keep quiet so I can hear her? Carry on!

Ms J. Bérenger: La justice fiscale – qui fait l'effort fiscal ? Le gouvernement retire, à la section 16(b), l'augmentation prévue des droits d'enregistrement qui devait faire passer de 5 % à 10 % le taux applicable aux étrangers acquérant certaines propriétés résidentielles de luxe sous le régime EDB. En bref, l'achat d'un bien par un étranger sous le régime EDB devait coûter 5 % de plus pour les étrangers. Cette hausse devait d'entrer en vigueur le 1^er^ juillet 2026. Elle est finalement supprimée avant même d'avoir été appliquée. Qu'est-ce qui s'est passé ? Comme l'an dernier, avec l'affaire *Share Contribution* qui devait inclure la taxation des dividendes, des pressions venant de cercles fermés sont exercées et des mesures, qui permettraient non seulement de remplir les caisses de l'État, mais aussi de ramener un peu de justice fiscale, sont retirées.

Pendant ce temps, le salarié mauricien continue de supporter la pression fiscale. Dès que son *chargeable income* dépasse R 1 million par an, le taux marginal d'imposition passe à 20 % et il y reste jusqu'à 12 millions par an. Autrement dit, un cadre dont le *chargeable income* s'élève à 1.5 million par an est logé à la même enseigne qu'un grand patron qui gagne 11 millions par an avec le même taux marginal de 20 %. À cela, s'ajoute 15 % de TVA sur sa consommation. Et pour lui, le salarié mauricien, aucun allègement sur les droits d'enregistrement dans ce *Finance Bill*.

Pourquoi demander des efforts toujours à ceux qui travaillent à Maurice, consomment à Maurice, paient leurs impôts à Maurice et cherchent simplement à se loger à Maurice tout en retirant une hausse de taxation qui concernait des acquisitions immobilières de luxe par des étrangers ? Nous ne sommes pas contre l'investissement étranger, mais la fiscalité doit être juste et équitable. Il faut penser aux Mauriciens et à leurs intérêts en premier. La classe moyenne ne peut pas systématiquement être celle qui paye pendant que les acquisitions immobilières de grande valeur par les étrangers bénéficient d'un traitement favorable, alors qu'ils peuvent payer plus. Protégeons notre population.

L'écologie – la clause 38 de *l'Economic and Financial Measures (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill* modifie le *Morcellement Act*. À la lecture de l'Annexe du budget, on pouvait croire que le gouvernement proposait un simple ajustement. Mais, en lisant le texte de loi, on comprend que cela signifie une protection environnementale qui disparaît. Alors que le gouvernement ne cesse de parler de réchauffement climatique, de renforcer notre résilience, mais d'un côté, les beaux discours et de l'autre, il enlève l'obligation de *green forest* pour les nouveaux morcellements. Je trouve ce choix incompréhensible.

Au moment où l'Europe connaît des canicules de plus en plus intenses, une leçon s'impose partout. Les arbres ne sont pas un luxe. Ils sont une protection contre les îlots de chaleur. Ils rafraîchissent nos villes, améliorent la qualité de l'air et préserve la biodiversité. Pendant que de nombreux pays renforcent la végétalisation de leurs villes, Maurice choisit d'affaiblir ses exigences environnementales pour les nouveaux morcellements. Pourquoi enlever cette exigence de plantation d'arbres ? Tous les espaces verts ne se valent pas. Une pelouse n'apporte ni de l'ombre, ni le rafraîchissement, ni les bénéfices écologiques d'un couvert arboré. Face au changement climatique, nous devrions renforcer la place des arbres dans nos développements et non pas la réduire.

Le plastique – dans son discours sur le Budget, le ministre des Finances a annoncé que le gouvernement étend sa taxe d'accise de R 2 à l'ensemble des bouteilles en plastique. Ensuite, on découvre à la section 4 du *Finance Bill* toute une série d'exemptions. Le gouvernement attend 135 millions supplémentaires pour l'exercice financier 2026-2027 grâce à cette mesure.

Mais, une politique écologique ne peut pas simplement consister à dire polluer et puis payer. Nous devons dire produisez autrement.

Où est la responsabilité élargie du producteur ? Où est l'obligation pour les producteurs et les importateurs de trouver des alternatives ? Oui, c'est sûr, c'est beaucoup plus facile d'exempter. Mais ce n'est pas sur le consommateur que doit peser ce choix de facilité. La transition écologique doit changer notre modèle de production et de consommation. Elle ne doit pas simplement devenir une nouvelle recette fiscale sur le dos des consommateurs. Le *Finance Bill,* introduit à la section 15, *le Golden Visa scheme.*

Encore une fois, nous ne sommes pas contre l'investissement étranger. Mais d'abord, pourquoi est-ce que l'obligation d'investir au minimum 1 million de dollars doit être fait après avoir obtenu le *Golden Visa* ? Est-ce que cela ne devrait pas plutôt être une condition pour obtenir le *Golden Visa* ? Et quelle sera l'autorité qui s'assurera que le minimum de 1 million de dollars aura bien été investi ? Quel sera l'impact sur notre foncier, notre logement et tous ces jeunes qui ont de plus en plus de difficultés à se loger ? Quelles études ont été faites pour évaluer l'impact de ce genre de *scheme* similaire qui ont déjà existé dans le passé, avant de venir en proposer encore un ?

Est-ce que son efficacité, ses bénéfices pour la population en entier ont été démontrés ? Non ! Combien d'emplois ont été créés avec ces *schemes* ? On ne le sait. Combien d'emplois seront créés avec ce nouveau *scheme* ? On ne le sait. Et quelle inégalité ces *schemes* déjà existants, ont aggravé en termes d'accès à la propriété ? Notre terre est limitée, notre logement est limité, notre pays n'est pas une marchandise. Des garanties devraient être apportées et des critères plus rigoureux devraient être imposés.

D'un côté, le gouvernement continue de faciliter la vente de notre patrimoine aux étrangers, et de l'autre, il sacrifie nos terres en construisant à coup de milliards de nouvelles routes et autoroutes dont la nécessité reste à être démontrée. Dans quels intérêts ? *Le gambling,* le gouvernement élargit à la section 6, page 23 *du Finance Bill, le gambling* en ligne, ce qui remplira certainement les caisses de l'État. Mais combien cela coûtera à nos familles ? Il faut financer la prévention et le traitement de l'addiction avec une partie des recettes du secteur. On ne peut pas privatiser les profits et socialiser les dégâts. Encore une fois, protégeons nos citoyens. Et enfin pour finir, les pensions. On nous dit que la pension reste accessible à 60 ans.

Mais après avoir reculé sur le *means test,* le *Bill* prévoit désormais dans sa section 12, une réduction de 0.5% par mois avant l'âge de référence. L'âge de la pension complète est donc à 65 ans. Si elle est prise à 60 ans, elle sera de 30% de moins. Pourquoi pénaliser financièrement une personne qui, après une vie de labeur, ne peut plus continuer de travailler à 60 ans ? Un travailleur manuel n'est pas dans la même situation qu'un cadre de bureau à 60 ans. Ce sont ceux qui exercent les métiers les plus pénibles et ceux qui n'ont pas beaucoup de moyens financiers, qui seront obligés d'accepter cette pension réduite. Ce nouveau système ne prend en compte ni la vulnérabilité financière ni la pénibilité de l'emploi. Ce système est injuste. Une réforme des pensions ne peut pas être uniquement une équation actuarielle et il faudrait arrêter de dire que notre État providence est un luxe. Derrière les chiffres, il y a des êtres humains. Aujourd'hui, la *Basic Retirement Pension* représente environ 7.8% du PIB. Mais si Maurice retrouvait une croissance moyenne de 5.1%, la part du Basic Retirement Pension dans le PIB descendrait à 5.9% d'ici 2035.

Donc, la question n'est pas seulement combien coûte la pension, mais elle est surtout quelle économie voulons-nous construire pour pouvoir financer dignement nos retraités ? Concernant l'indexation, l'honorable ministre de la Sécurité sociale avait dit que la pension serait indexée sur l'inflation. Au final, le texte, au vu de l'amendement proposé à la dernière minute mardi dernier, dit que la pension doit être augmentée, mais il dit aussi qu'elle doit l'être basée sur un taux qui pourrait être prescrit. Ce n'est donc pas une augmentation automatique. Et surtout, il n'est même pas question d'indexation. Juste d'une augmentation possible basée non pas sur l'inflation, mais sur le coût de la vie. Une augmentation de pension qui dépendra d'une décision future n'offre pas la même garantie qu'une pension dont le pouvoir d'achat est protégé automatiquement.

Pour ce qui est du NPFF, il a disparu, mais contrairement à ce que l'honorable ministre Subron avait annoncé, c'est-à-dire, que le projet de réforme de la NPF ne passerait pas par le *Finance Bill*. C'est fatigant, madame la Présidente, d'entendre tous ces bavardages, mais, *okay*.

Madam Speaker: Allez-y ! Moi, je vous entends. Je vous entends.

Ms J. Bérenger: Oui, ce n'est pas grave, je dis simplement que vous n'êtes pas en train de les reprendre à l'ordre, mais bon, *okay*.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Ne me dites pas ce qu'il faut que je fasse. Je vous écoute et vous avez encore une minute. Allez-y. J'entends. Je ne peux pas dire 100 fois par jour qu'il faut qu'il y ait plus de murmure. 100 fois, je ne peux pas. Allez-y.

Ms J. Bérenger: Ça a été sans arrêt depuis le début et à aucun moment, je ne vous ai entendu les reprendre à l'ordre. Mais bon, *okay.*

Madam Speaker: Allez-y.

Ms J. Bérenger: Pour ce qui est du NPFF, il a disparu, mais je reprends cette partie-là du coup. Mais contrairement à ce que l'honorable ministre Subron avait annoncé, c'est-à-dire que le projet de réforme de la NPF ne passerait pas par le *Finance Bill*, l'honorable Premier ministre a choisi lui d'introduire la réforme à travers la mise en place d'un *steering committee* qui formulera des recommandations pour la création du *Independent Pension Regulatory Authority* et d'un *Central Pensions Administration Bureau*. Le *steering committee* répondra à l'honorable ministre des Finances directement, sera présidé par le secrétaire financier et soumettra son rapport directement au ministre des Finances.

Le CPAB va créer un nouveau système unique de pension qui va incorporer la NPF et les régimes gérés par la SICOM pour le compte de l'État et ses employés. Donc, en d'autres mots, exactement la même chose que proposait, je cite, "la petite clique" dénoncée par l'honorable ministre de la Sécurité sociale et on se demande comment est-ce que ce ministre va faire respecter sa promesse d'une large consultation sur le sujet de la réforme de la NPFF. Tout cela ne fait que renforcer le flou et les inquiétudes de la population qui méritait d'être consultée comme il se doit. Une telle réforme ne peut pas se faire sans la population, elle doit se faire avec elle.

Une énième contradiction et reculade est d'ailleurs le fait que l'honorable Premier ministre et ministre des Finances a annoncé dans le discours du budget l'introduction de l'importation parallèle pour stopper la flambée des prix et soutenir le pouvoir d'achat des ménages. Mais l'honorable Premier ministre nous annonce désormais mardi dernier dans son discours, qu'il faut plus de préparation pour venir avec l'implémentation de cette annonce. Si le gouvernement peut repousser cette mesure pourtant essentielle pour soulager la population pour des raisons de préparation technique, cela aurait dû avoir été le cas pour la réforme de la pension également, vu les levées de boucliers et le manque de clarté.

N'entendez-vous pas la rue qui gronde, les syndicats, les jeunes qui se mobilisent dehors ? N'entendez-vous pas les appels au secours de nos seniors ? N'entendez-vous pas tous ces gens qui se mobilisent dans nos rues, nos villages, devant le Parlement en ce moment même ? Ne voyez-vous pas la crise sociale ? Vous en portez la responsabilité. Revoyez vos priorités, la population vous a mis là pour défendre ses intérêts.

Je terminerai en rappelant qu'il faudrait que la croissance serve la population, serve nos concitoyens et non pas l'inverse. Qu'il existe d'autres choix. Faire contribuer davantage ceux qui possèdent davantage. Lutter contre l'évasion et l'optimisation fiscale. Améliorer l'efficacité des dépenses publiques. Revoir les exemptions et incitations fiscales qui ne produisent pas les bénéfices attendus. Nous ne sommes pas condamnés à sacrifier notre État providence. D'autres voies existent.

Madam Speaker: Merci. Hon. Minister Ameer Meea!

(5.03 p.m.)

The Minister of Industry, SME and Cooperatives (Mr A. Ameer Meea): Yes, thank you, Madam Speaker. Before I start my speech, I would just respond to one or two issues that has been raised by the orator before me.

Firstly, in relation to fair share contribution. I would like to clarify, and this has been going on and on for quite some time and it is the time for me to clarify. Last year, for the computation of income tax, fair share contribution did include dividend. I do not know where the hon. member got it.

Ms J. Bérenger: Ce n'est pas taxé.

Madam Speaker: Do not reply.

Mr Ameer Meea: When you compute fair share contribution of last year, it did, I say it again; it did include dividend. And this year, we have introduced another rate band up to 35%, which was not the case for last year.

Ms J. Bérenger: Ce n’est pas taxé à Maurice…

Madam Speaker: Do not speak from a sitting position.

Mr Ameer Meea: Secondly…

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: One moment, hon. Minister. I have asked some people to stop speaking while you were speaking. I heard a bit of rumour as well. That is true.

But I can hear you and he is trying to speak. So, are you going to do everything that everybody else is doing?

Ms J. Bérenger: Il était le premier à parler pendant que… Il était le premier à piquer…

Madam Speaker: Malheureusement, je n'ai pas entendu. Mais je ne peux pas tout entendre et tout voir.

Ms J. Bérenger: Okay. D’accord.

Madam Speaker: Il vous faut avoir un peu confiance en moi. Allez-y, l’honorable ministre.

Mr Ameer Meea: Madame la présidente, je vais réexpliquer. L'année dernière, il y avait un taux de 20 % et au-dessus de 20 %, il y avait 15 % de taux pour le *fair share contribution*, un total de 35 % incluant les dividendes. J'espère que c'est clair maintenant.

Mr P. Bérenger: Non. Faux !

Mr Ameer Meea: Allez vérifier.

Ms J. Bérenger: On a vérifié.

Mr Ameer Meea: Deuxièmement, par rapport au *land duties and taxes*. Je vais référer la Chambre à la clause 9 which amends the Land (Duties and Taxes) Act. The introduction of a new subsection in section 4 of the Act, the provision levies an additional duty of 10% on State land and on *Pas Géométrique* for non-citizen for the acquisition of a residential property and a last item on parallel imports which hon. A Duval also mentioned.

I would just like to state in relation to what hon. A. Duval mentioned, I quote *Top FM du 30 mai 2026 -*

"Lors de la conférence de presse du Parti Mauricien Social-Démocrate ce samedi 30 mai 2026, le leader du parti, Xavier Luc Duval a dénoncé la manque de concurrence…"

Ms J. Bérenger: La manque.

Mr Ameer Meea: Comment?

Madam Speaker: Do not correct, please.

Mr Lesjongard: But he is quoting.

Mr Ameer Meea: I am quoting, Madam Speaker.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: You should not quote.

Non, mais elle a corrigé la grammaire.

Ms J. Bérenger: He is quoting from the press, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Do not…

Mr Ameer Meea: Par rapport au *parallel import…*

Madam Speaker: Hon. Minister!

Mr Lesjongard: This is the second time, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: We have said several times, we do not quote from newspapers, we do not quote from Top FM, please. That was not what I was annoyed about; it was correcting grammar.

Mr Ameer Meea: I was just quoting from publicly available information that Xavier Duval stated that par rapport au *parallel import*, Madame la présidente, il met en garde contre les risques de l'importation parallèle. Pourquoi ? C'est pour cela que l'honorable Premier ministre a dit qu'on a mis un comité sur place pour étudier toute la question parce que cela comporte beaucoup de risques par rapport aux médicaments. Et c'est pour cela que je voulais apporter cette précision, Madame la présidente.

Madame la présidente, je vais aller directement au *Finance Bill*. The duty is dealt with at clause 4 of the Finance Bill and in its Third Schedule. The Bill also validates the resolution of this Assembly of 19 June 2026.

Madam Speaker, it is in relation to the excise duty on sugar sweetened products. This is not a new tax. Let me give the House the history plainly. It began on 04 February 2013, a 2 cents per gram of sugar under the Finance (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2012 and on November 2013, it increased to 3% and from 01 October 2016, the regime was widened to sugar sweetened non-alcoholic beverages including juices and milk-based drinks.

The 2020 legislation increased the rate to 6% and broadened the statutory concept from sugar sweetened non-alcoholic beverages to sugar sweetened products, opening the way for specified non-staple food products to be included. On 06 June 2025, the rate was doubled from 6 to 12% and from 01 October 2025, the scope was extended to chocolates and ice creams. On 20 June 2026, the rate increased to 15% per gram of sugar for products already within the excise schedule.

Madam Speaker, in 2020, government legislated to broaden the regime to specified non-staple sweetened foods, but implementation was deferred and the framework reworked. In 2021, legislation introduced a zero-rate threshold for registered manufacturers and importers.

On 01 July 2022, a covered product qualified where total sugar did not exceed 4 grams per 100 grams. This is an eligibility test, not a deduction of the first four grams. Or below the threshold, the rate is zero. Above it, duty applies to the product's total sugar content. There is a consequence of these increases of excise duties and it is one that concerns my Ministry most directly.

We are a small economy, our local manufacturer produces here, employs here and bears reformulation and certification cost. But both local manufacturers and importers, even for products at or below 4-gram threshold, must register, hold the relevant excise licence and provide the required product and sugar content documents. The exemptions remove the duty, not the compliance obligation.

Madam Speaker, Cabinet has decided to set up a committee under my chairmanship to consult stakeholders, hear technical experts and examine all the relevant evidence. The committee will include representatives of the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Commerce, Ministry of Finance, the Mauritius Revenue Authority, the MCCI and other stakeholders. It will review the products already subject to the duty, as well as the additional categories announced for 01 October 2026, including confectionery, sweet biscuit, waffles, wafers, certain fruit preparation and chewing gum.

Madam Speaker, let there be no misunderstanding. The adoption of clause 4(e)(i)(E) not mean that the duty on these additional products will come into force immediately. The clause specifically provides for implementation by proclamation. The measure will, therefore, not be proclaimed until the committee has completed its consultations and made recommendations on the products to be covered. The applicable threshold, the rate of duty and the overall mechanism. Those recommendations will be submitted to Cabinet for consideration and approval. Only after Cabinet has approved an acceptable mechanism will the relevant provisions be proclaimed and brought into operation. I hope this clarifies whatever misunderstanding in relation to sweet sweetened sugar.

Madam Speaker, clause 4 (e)(ii) gives a zero rate of excise duty on specified utility vehicle to an SME with valid registration turnover of at least Rs3 million, at least two years of operation, local manufacturing and at least 25% of value addition. It covers a single or a double cab space cabin up to 3,000cc or a lorry of 2.5 tons, generally once every five years with one early replacement after an accident-causing total loss. This is a targeted manufacturing SME concession that this Government has done, Madam Speaker, and it is not a general vehicle exemption.

Second, clause 7(w)(ii)(D) gives a 10-year tax exemption to an eligible start-up on or after 19 June 2026, managed in Mauritius, operating here, or in Africa under the National SME Incubator Scheme, supported by an accredited incubator with an annual turnover not exceeding Rs100 million. A company with no taxable income pays no income tax. The benefit begins when earnings arise allowing more reinvestment during the scale up.

Also, Madam Speaker, clause 7 extends the qualifying period of the Income Tax Act 2026 to 2029. Subject to the law, a qualifying manufacturer receives a 15% credit on qualifying expenditure for new plant and machinery, Artificial Intelligence and patents in the acquisition year and each of the next two income years. Motor cars are excluded. That certainty can turn a project on paper into investment on the factory floor.

Madam Speaker, the work does not stop with these Bills. As announced in the Budget Speech, Government will introduce an SME Bill to create a more conducive business environment. My Ministry will also mobilise international technical expertise as we develop the industrial sector strategic plan. These are measures for balance sheets, not for headlines, and my officers will go out to the enterprises because suppose nobody knows about this support that does not exist.

Madam Speaker, in relation to cooperative sector, clause 12 of the Economic and Financial Measures Bill introduces a substantial reform of the Cooperative Act. For far too many years, our cooperatives have been treated as a social arrangement. That is not how I see them, a cooperative is an enterprise; it produces, it employs, it sells, and it must be able to grow. The new sections 73A, 73H, 73G and 73K with the new seven schedules, categorise by annual turnover from micro to large and align audit fees and reportings accordingly. Section 93A and 94A allow simplified cancellation respectively for a society with no assets or liabilities on its application, and one dormant continuously for two years since inception. Less paperwork, cost and delay but where a society handles the savings of its members, nothing is relaxed. Credit and financial services cooperatives are excluded from the specific micro society exemption in Section 73E, whilst new section 55A requires every society to designate an internal controller or equivalent officer for governance and compliance oversight.

The reform continues beyond this Bill. Government Notice of 129 of 2026 creates a regulated mechanism for registered labour contractors to supply migrant workers to small planters and farmers. The contractor remains the employer and statutory pay and conditions apply. It may help cooperative members access labour collectively, but it is not direct recruitment free of employer obligations.

Madam Speaker, now I will turn to the jewellery sector and the Assay Office which also fall under my Ministry. Clause 29 of the Economic and Financial Measures Bill establishes the Assay Office as a public office, adds the verification and grading of precious and semi-precious stones and assigns the director functions and the Jewellery Act, FIAMLA and the United Nations Sanctions Act 2019. The director may supervise, monitor and guide members under the office purview. Specified records must be kept for seven years up from five. Mauritius entered FATF increased monitoring in February 2020 and left it in October 2021 after addressing the identified deficiencies. The lesson is that weaknesses anywhere in a national AML/CFT system can affect the whole jurisdiction. Clear Assay Office authority strengthens compliance, protects honest jewellers and supports market confidence.

Madam Speaker, before I conclude, I would like to comment on clause 57 of the Economic and Financial Measures Bill which was also commented by the hon. Leader of Opposition in relation to the Waqf Act. Let me first say what this Government will not do. We will not do politics with Waqf. It is a permanent and religious institution, and this Government treats it with the seriousness it deserves, nor was this text drafted by one Ministry alone in an office. Three of us worked on it together under the chairmanship of hon. Minister Mohamed, with the legal expertise of hon. Minister Uteem, and with my own Ministry associated at every stage. We went through it, clause by clause with one objective: to satisfy the standards by which Mauritius is judged, while genuinely hearing the concerns of the Muslim community.

Madam Speaker, I do not intend to take this House through every section. I will give it the substance. The new part draws on the governance and financial integrity mechanism this Parliament has already applied to our associations. This is the whole principle. A Waqf is asked to meet the standard of good governance we have already asked for comparable bodies. It is not asked to meet a higher one, and where the two differ, Madam Speaker, it is the Waqf that is the better protected. An association that misapplies its funds can have its registration cancelled and wound up. There is no power anywhere in this new part to dissolve a Waqf. None. What the board may do is act against the person responsible; a private warning, a penalty, a suspension of a mutawalli or removal, and before it does so, it must give notice and allow 21 days to answer. An association can be refused registration or have it cancelled on terrorism ground. Here too, there is no power to dissolve a Waqf. That risk is met through supervision, investigation and referral to the Financial Intelligence Unit, and a decision may be challenged twice, first before the review panel and then before the Supreme Court.

Madam Speaker, let me also dispose of two claims made outside this House and that are simply not in the Bill. No Waqf is required to carry out customer due diligence, and a small Waqf with annual receipts up to Rs500,000 files a simplified return, and there is one provision I would like hon. Members to read before they speak on this subject. It provides that no beneficial owner of a Waqf needs to be identified, that a controller is not a beneficial owner, and the Trust Act does not apply to a Waqf, and that the beneficiaries are those named in the Waqf Nama and nobody else. Far from importing trust law in our Waqf, the Bill shuts it out.

So let me be categorical, there is no transfer of ownership, no dissolution of Waqf property. The properties and the endowments remain governed by the Waqf Act and by the Waqf Nama, and we are not taking authority away from the institution. We are reinforcing its governance and giving the Board clearer means to do its work. I thank you for your attention.

Madam Speaker: Thank you. I will now suspend for half an hour.

At 5.23 p.m., the Sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 6.08 p.m. with Madam Speaker in the Chair.

Madam Speaker: Please be seated!

Yes, hon. Baboolall!

Mr C. Baboolall (First Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE): Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Two Bills. 250 pages. Close to 90 Acts of this Republic reopened in a single sitting. Madam Speaker, I state that once as a fact about how this House is legislating tonight, not as a complaint because facts do not need my permission to speak for themselves. Published on a Friday night when this country had gone to bed, debated on Tuesday, and every remaining stage, second reading, committee stage, third reading of two Bills, 83 clauses between them, certified urgent under the Standing Order 65, and compressed into this single sitting, not weeks, not days – one afternoon. And time given is only 15 minutes. This is not a way forward.

I say this in company of the ex-Deputy Prime Minister, hon. Paul Bérenger, five decades in this Chamber, who called this timetable unreasonable. It was he who caught what many would have missed, that this Bill's pension protections turn on a single pair of words, 'whether the Minister may act or shall act'. "May" is a promise Government can break without breaking the law. "Shall" is a promise the law enforces. The President of the Mauritius Labour Congress even went further still. He called this process revolting and anti-democratic.

Madam Speaker, of everything in these two Bills, one issue outweighed all the others. This reform was just placed before this country on 19 June, in the Budget Speech, 42 days ago – six weeks. And tonight, ordinary Mauritians still cannot tell you with any confidence what they will be given when they retire, not because pensions are beyond explanation, but because this Government has changed its own answer three times in six weeks and has yet to give one single stable sentence to hold on to.

Let me put a face on these 42 days, Madam Speaker. Last week, a woman who had spent over 30 years in a textile factory, in my own constituency, met me. She did not ask me about clauses or residency tests. She asked one question in the words she actually used, '*Ki mo pou gagne*?' What will I actually receive? I could not give her a straight answer, even the Ministers cannot. Not because I had not read the Bill, but because after six weeks and three reversals, nobody in this country can, neither her Member of Parliament nor, it seems, this Government. We even had Ministers talking before me and no one has come with precise precision on how much a person can get.

Clause 12 does the real work of this Bill. It retires the Basic Retirement Pension, brings in the State Age Pension, sets new residency and eligibility rules, and hence, a Steering Committee to the task of sorting out the rest later. Madam Speaker, my case tonight is simple. This Government cannot be trusted with how it has told the country about this change because there has been no consultation at all. Count with me, Madam Speaker –

First, a means test, announced on the Friday of the Budget Speech and frozen just three days later on 22 June. The Prime Minister, himself, later placed before this House - a sum of Rs6.2 billion will be missing. Not a considered policy reversal, Madam Speaker, a panic so severe that it could not survive a single weekend.

Second, the measure on the vehicle registration plates, quietly suspended. Quietly – the way this Government prefers to retreat. What is the impact on the Finance Bill?

Third, we have the backpedalling of many weeks a proposal that the same budget to quadruple the fine of an unlawful gathering from Rs25,000 to Rs100,000 with prison terms extended to five years, abandoned only after the CTPS, the Mauritius Labour Congress and this country's own legal community forced its removal from this Bill.

Fourth, confirmed only this week, and only because I asked, a residency test softened from three full years before a claim to 12 cumulative months within three. Four reversals, Madam Speaker, across two entirely different subjects. Six weeks, and this House learned of that loss only because a hon. Member of this opposition forced the question into the open. Nowhere in these 28 clauses has government named the expenditure cut or revenue measure that replaces the Rs6.2 billion lost when the means test fell. The single largest hole blown in this budget, unaccounted for in the very Bill meant to give it legal force. Which clause closes it, Madam Speaker? If the hon. Prime Minister cannot answer, this House is not passing a balanced Finance Bill tonight. It is signing a promise to balance it later. On the question that should matter most, how many of our own people abroad this touches? The hon. Prime Minister has told this House the Government has no estimate at all. The number can only be known when each person applies. You cannot call a 15-year threshold fair considered answer to a national challenge and admit in the same breath, you do not know the size of that challenge.

It goes further. I asked the hon. Prime Minister whether any actuarial study set this figure at 15 years. Not 12, not 10, not 20. His answer in his own words, it was a policy decision, a political decision. Not modelled, not costed, a political decision wrapped in a language of fairness is not fairness. It is a guess defended after the fact. A Mauritian who spent a working life abroad, who kept a home and a family on his island the whole time, is not a stranger arriving at last minute and let this House remember, Madam Speaker, this same diaspora sends home close to Rs3 billion a year in remittances alone by the Bank of Mauritius' own figures. Money that reaches household in every one of our constituencies. That person is a citizen and a contributor still. This House should think hard before it legislates a second class of citizenship through the back door of a residency schedule.

Madam Speaker, let no hon. Member mistake a calm debate for a calm country. These were not people with nothing left to lose who marched. Most were people with job, a home, a pension they had planned around. When comfortable, settled citizens march, and today they are standing outside the Parliament, that is not desperation. That is principle. The union have kept a general strike on the table and says it stays there unless Government goes back further and when this country writes the history of Budget 2026-2027, I believe it will be remembered as the most controversial in a generation. Not for its ambition, but for the confusion it inflicted on the very citizens it claims to protect.

That is not a threat, Madam Speaker, it is simply the truth. Madam Speaker, in relation to education, education tells the same story. One week before the Budget was even presented, Cabinet revised the grant-in-aid scheme for private pre-primary school. Cutting operational reimbursement to 50%, capping rent support at Rs5,000 and withdrawing the per student subsidy entirely from 106 schools effective January 2027, with no consultation with parents and no published assessment of the impact on low-income families, pension, public gathering, and now our youngest children's generation.

Madam Speaker, three unrelated policy areas and in every one of them, the same Government, same six weeks and the absence of anyone asking the people affected what they thought first. Clause 7 of the Finance Bill is a very serious provision in this Bill. It inserts a new section, Section 123G into the Income Tax Act, giving the Director General of the MRA direct, real-time, remote electronic access to the Civil Status Database and the Central Population Database. Notwithstanding the Civil Status Act, notwithstanding the Data Protection Act, notwithstanding any other law of this Republic. Two acts of this very parliament set aside in one clause, inside a Bill explained to the country in one sentence.

The same clause compels the CEB and the CWA and our motor insurers to hand your bills, your policies, your consumption to the taxman every year without your knowledge. The CWA is owed Rs697 million and is in debt of some Rs3.47 billion. The CEB, Madam Speaker, carries Rs9.3 billion of debt and its tariff has already increased. The CEB, on the other hand, recovers only Rs3 billion against Rs4.8 billion in rising cost. It does not even close its own gap.

Two utilities, Madam Speaker, both drowning, both handed a new power to watch you while neither can keep the lights on or the taps running. That is the Government's order priorities in one sentence. Institution fit enough to police your bill not fit enough to fix your pipes or keep your lights on. The companion bill lets the Minister of Finance after merely consulting the Governor, transfer public funds into the Bank of Mauritius to bolster its own capital. The opposite of what the IMF called for in May, safeguarding the bank's independence and this country does not even have a Minister of Finance distinct from the hon. Prime Minister to wield that power with restraint. One man presented the budget, tabled this Bill and answered for its cost. Sir Winston Churchill said –

> "A nation taxing itself into prosperity is like a man standing in a bucket trying to lift himself by the handle"

I offer that with a smile, Madam Speaker, but I mean it in earnest. Madam Speaker, this country does not need patchwork fixtures smuggled through a Finance Bill. It needs real structural reform debated in an open and build to outlast whichever Government holds office. Edmund Burke once described a nation not as a contract between the living alone, but as a partnership between those who are living, those who come before us and those not yet born. Madam Speaker, when this House votes tonight, we are not voting only for ourselves. We are voting on behalf of a child not yet born in Triolet, in Bel Air, in Port Louis, in every village and every town of this island. A child who will inherit whatever pension system, whatever fiscal habits, whatever culture of confusion or consultation, we choose tonight to leave behind.

Our young people do not need another clause smuggled past them in the dark. They need commitment, real; written, binding commitment from a Government willing to build for the next generation, not merely survive its own term in office. Dr. Ambedkar, architect of India's own constitution, whose thinking speaks so to many families in this country who trace their root to that same soil, warned his Constituent Assembly that however good a constitution may be, it is sure to turn out bad if those entrusted to work it, prove unworthy of the task. A good principle is not a good outcome, Madam Speaker.

The how matters as much as the what. And a Government governing by Certificate of urgency, by contradiction, by six weeks of silence is proving Dr. Ambedkar's warning correct tonight, clause by clause. I say this not as an enemy to the Government, Madam Speaker, because I want Mauritius to succeed, regardless of which benches occupied that side of the House and let me be constructive.

A pension reform this country could trust, would look different in three respects. The actuarial study before the threshold, not after months of real consultation, not hours, one Minister, one clear answer given once and kept. None of that is radical. It is not too late to do it even tonight.

If this Government withdraws this Bill, does the work properly and bring it back again. James Madison warned that knowledge will forever govern ignorance and that a people who mean to govern themselves must arm themselves with power that knowledge gives. This Bill, Madam Speaker, does not arm our people with knowledge. It arms the MRA with a population database. It arms the Minister of Finance with a route to the back of Mauritius's own capital. It arms Government with a certificate of urgency and leaves the pensioner, the importer, the ordinary citizen to learn what has happened to them after the fact from anyone but their own Government. Dr. Martin Luther King Junior said –

"Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter."

Madam Speaker, pension matters. Honesty in this House matters. A citizen's data matters. Six weeks of a nation not knowing what it is retiring into matters. I did not come into this House to be silent about any of it.

Madam Speaker, as a patriot and I will use that word without any embarrassment, I cannot lend my vote to a Bill assembled on this notice, riddled with many unresolved contradictions between the very Ministers meant to explain it to our people. That is not obstruction. It is the minimum scrutiny this House owes the country it exists to serve.

For these reasons, Madam Speaker, I will not vote in favour of this Bill tonight. Not one clause of it and we respectfully, but without hesitation, that the vote being taken by division, so that the record of this House shows in black and white, by name, exactly where every hon. Member stood on the night when we were asked to legislate, in such a haste, on the retirement security of our own people. History does not remember the members who stayed quiet on the night that mattered.

Madam Speaker, it remembers only how each of us voted. Six weeks of confusion is enough. Let this House end it tonight, not with another promise, but with a vote that this country can finally trust.

> “If you cannot say wrong is wrong, then you are at the last stage of slavery." - a quote by Che Guevara.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Thank you very much. Yes, hon. François.

(6.27 p.m.)

Mr J. F. François (Second Member for Rodrigues): Thank you, Madam Speaker. I welcome the opportunity to briefly speak on the Finance Bill No. XII and the Economic and Financial Measures (Miscellaneous Provision) Bill No. XIII of 2026.

The two Bills contain 83 enabling legislations in support of the approved National Budget 2026-2027 pronounced on 19 June last by the hon. Prime Minister, Dr. Ramgoolam. The Bills operationalise many of the commitments made to the nation where policy begins to take shape as law. Fairness and promises gain structure. Responsibility is recognised and the machinery of the State is adjusted to better serve our citizens. The two Bills embody the Government's vision and direction for the Republic as we move forward. Madam Speaker, I must acknowledge with humility that not all measures are yet fully embraced by our citizens. Whether in Mauritius or in Rodrigues, some reforms are difficult and some burdens weigh.

We are in a delicate situation where Government proposed and considered. But at times, our communication has not reached every Household, every mind or every heart. It may feel as though our voice echoes in a vacuum. The challenge before our nation is how to strike the right balance, the right equilibrium and satisfaction to ensure that reforms are understood, that burdens are shared fairly and that progress is carried by unity rather than division. Surely none of us wishes to see our Republic sink like the Titanic.

What we desire is a nation that sails forward with resilience, solidarity and hope. How do we reach consensus in the best interest of all, involving sacrifices and responsibility while making progress? That is the reality we must face.

Madam Speaker, now I shall comment on a few specific clauses of the two Bills together. I begin with the caring attitude toward our disabled persons. The Excise Act is amended to allow purchase of a motor car with an engine capacity not exceeding 1600 CC or 200 KW or a double cabin vehicle in the case of Rodrigues residents for a person with disability.

I am informed from a previous beneficiary from Rodrigues that the process is lengthy at the Ministry and the MRA. Some potential beneficiaries have even abandoned the process due to its complexity. Madam Speaker, I propose for an administrative review to smoothen procedures to assist those in need.

In addition, I recommend that Government provide assistance for the modification of a car for a person with a disability. Whether a new car, an existing family car or a business vehicle under what I call a special vehicle modification funding with defined criteria and guidelines.

The New Zealand model is a good reference. Madam Speaker, let me look at the Economic and Financial Measures Bill, clause 12. The Co-operatives Act is amended to provide a new section 73A - Categorisation of societies, whereby every society shall be categorised as micro, small, medium or large society and section 73H empowers the Registrar to review and re-categorise a society based on the audited financial statements filed for the preceding Financial Year.

Madam Speaker, in Rodrigues cooperative societies are part of our economic structure and future, which implies better management. For example, the bus operators of Rodrigues Multipurpose Cooperative Society Limited exist to provide essential public transport across Rodrigues on the routes assigned by the NLTA. This society is currently under a Caretaker Board which is raising questions and is contested by some bus owners. This new cooperative legislation will definitely help to remedy this vital sector. *Bizin asir progre ek sirvi lindistri transpor dan Rodrigues.*

Clause 21, the Food and Agricultural Research and Extension Institute Act is amended, which aligns the international definition of food security as the physical, social and economic access at all times to sufficient, safe, nutritious food to meet dietary needs and preferences for an active and healthy life.

Madam Speaker, the World Bank's Food and Nutrition Security update for June 26, notes that global food and nutrition security is becoming more fragile due to geopolitical shocks, climate risk and rising input costs. Fertilisers prices are projected to rise by 38% in 2026 and food commodity prices by about 3%. The amendments proposed in the Bill will partly address our concerns for food security. I support the inclusion, hon. Dr. Boolell, of the concept of food sovereignty and food self-sufficiency together. This is a national priority, urgency and the answer lies in agricultural development that will ensure that our people have access to affordable, healthy, sustainable food while being inclusive and community driven. Very important for our Republic, community driven.

Madam Speaker, advancing our food sovereignty requires Government, policy makers, NGOs and community organisation to empower our local communities and prioritise sustainable, locally controlled and cultural food systems like in Rodrigues, small scale farming - we have a model in Rodrigues.

And let me say it, Madam Speaker, if you allow me, *nou bizin prodir nou manze ki sorti dans nou later e an mem tan evit gaspiyaz bann manze ki nou inporte*.

Madam Speaker, clause 30 amends the Land Drainage Authority Act. With climate change and increasing flood risks, the amendment will empower NDU to correct past weaknesses, institutionalise best practices and build a culture of rapid and timely project delivery, anchored in value for money and results-oriented delivery. As a former PPS, I believe that giving the NDU authority to prioritise implementation of projects is the right direction to avoid two things: any dichotomy and delays that lead to inefficiencies. However, the LDA remains the main institution to provide expert advice and recommendations on drainage projects.

Madam Speaker, I remain concerned about the cancellation of the Acacia drainage project in Rodrigues in 2023, requiring urgent flood mitigation measures for around 100 residential houses, despite approval by the LDA and financial clearance obtained. This cancellation is exposing the inhabitants to ongoing risks of flooding. Central Government must remain committed for the necessary funds for Rodrigues’ drainage infrastructure under the Climate and Sustainability Fund.

Madam Speaker, road safety is an urgent development priority, a major health issue and a social equity issue. Clause 48 of the Bill, the Road Traffic Act is amended to create a new Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit as the lead agency for traffic management and road safety in Mauritius. When we say Mauritius, it includes Rodrigues as well. This aligns Mauritius with the UN General Assembly of 2022 Political Declaration to Improve Road Safety by 2030, and TMRSU will surely collaborate with the Rodrigues Regional Assembly to promote effective traffic management in Rodrigues.

Madam Speaker, I am deeply concerned about road traffic accidents, which remain unacceptably high for a small island like Rodrigues. The rate of accidents and fatalities over the past five years shows a clear need for stronger interventions and safer infrastructure. Statistics from Police on number of road accidents in Rodrigues is as follows -

- 2022, 149;
- 2023, 188;
- 2024, 198;
- 2025, 195, and
- 2026 as at June, 134.

Fatal accidents, 12 people were killed for the last five years, 503 casualties out of which, 70 seriously injured.

Madam Speaker, construction of new roads integrated with environmental protection, climate change consideration, poverty alleviation, job creation and the sustainable development goals remains a priority for my beloved country, island Rodrigues, and not only extensive resurfacing. *Met koltar nef lor bon koltar*.

(Interruptions)

*Tand bien la? Met koltar nef lor bon koltar***.**

Clause 46 amends the Public Holidays Act, section 3...

Madam Speaker: Nobody understood.

Ms Anquetil: Oui, on n'a pas compris.

Madam Speaker: Say it again and translate.

Mr François: Madam Speaker...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: No, nonetheless say it again.

Mr François: La construction de la route à Rodrigues...

Madam Speaker: No, no, that...

Mr François: Yes, I am coming to that.

(Interruptions)

...remains a priority for Rodrigues. Construction of roads and not only extensive resurfacing, which means *pe met koltar nef lor bon koltar. La rout la deza bon, pe remet koltar lor la.*

Madam Speaker: Okay, *aster noun konpran*.

Mr François: Now I am talking to the people out there as well. Clause 46 amends the Public Holidays Act, section 3, so that when a public holiday falls on a Sunday, the following day shall be observed as a public holiday. Madam Speaker, in the same spirit, I again urge Central Government to officially declare 12 October as Rodrigues Day and a public holiday for the autonomous Rodrigues Island only. This defines our dignity and specificity. This date commemorates Rodrigues' autonomy as established by the Constitution in 2001. It is not normal that on Rodrigues Day, when some people are celebrating, gather to honour their autonomy monument at Malabar, and hold religious ceremonies, others are working, as if it is a normal day. Let us rectify this.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Of course!

Mr François: Madam Speaker, I will not be long. Let me conclude. We are in a decisive stage, and my message to all those entrusted with executing the various projects and exercising legal powers, Government officials and implementing agencies; my message is to serve with honour and to place the interest of our Republic and our people first and above all considerations. Let us deliver the best of our abilities with the right cost from our limited resources, with integrity and speed, not only for today's citizens but for future generations. Let us build the right future, the right institutions, the right spirit as the foundation of an indivisible nation of today and tomorrow. It is a calling and a sacred mission for our nation building; *responsabilité, solidarité, efficacité économique et justice sociale comme précisé par le Premier ministre*.

Madame la présidente, la jeunesse et les enfants de la République nous regardent. With these words, I am done.

Madam Speaker: Thank you for respecting the time. Yes, hon. Minister!

(6.41 p.m.)

The Minister of Financial Services and Economic Planning (Dr. Ms J. Jeetun): Madam Speaker, over the past year, we have implemented wide-ranging reforms in the financial services sector. These reforms were necessary to safeguard the reputation and integrity of our sector. They were necessary because of global regulatory changes and innovation.

Earlier in the year, Parliament enacted the Anti-Money Laundering, Combatting the Financing of Terrorism and Countering Proliferation Financing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, which brought forward a comprehensive and forward-looking set of reforms ahead of the mutual evaluation by ESAAMLG in 2027. Today, we are making some further amendments that complement the technical compliance that Mauritius needs to demonstrate. In this context, the Bills in front of the House, address several legislations including the FIAMLA, the Banking Act, the Co-operatives Act, the Companies Act, the Waqf Act and the Jewellery Act.

First, the FIAMLA. We are amending the Fifth Schedule to exclude third-party administrators from AML/CFT obligations. These administrators perform largely administrative functions on behalf of licensed insurers and do not deal directly with consumer funds or transactions, yet are currently required to comply with the full set of AML/CFT requirements.

The proposed amendments to the Banking Act will strengthen information sharing between financial institutions and competent authorities. Regarding the Co-operatives Act, certain *sociétés* which are performing credit union activities are currently not covered. The definition of credit union is being expanded under the FIAMLA to include any society under the Co-operatives Act which provides financial services to its members. This protects depositors, often small planters who use these entities. It ensures compliance with the AML/CFT/CPF framework.

In the same spirit, the Jewellery Act is being amended to assist in the implementation of AML/CFT supervisory functions of the Assay Office.

The Companies Act is also being amended to extend Beneficial Ownership requirements to partnerships, including *société civile* and *société commerciale*, ensuring that competent authorities have timely access to accurate and up-to-date Beneficial Ownership information in line with FATF Recommendation 24. This reform further strengthens Mauritius framework for combating money laundering and the misuse of complex legal structures.

The Waqf Act – the Bill is strengthening the governance, accountability and financial integrity of waqfs. It introduces clear definitions aligned with Mauritius' AML/CFT Framework, and the amendments also establish a comprehensive governance framework by empowering the Waqf Board.

Over and above the AML/CFT provisions, the Bill proposes further amendments to ensure that we are looking at the financial sector in a holistic manner.

Let me start with the Financial Services Act. Section 19 (1) of the Financial Services Act currently allows a licensee who has submitted false or misleading information to avoid enforcement action simply by surrendering its licence. We are closing that loophole by extending the offence to past licensees. And under section 31, the FSC currently has no power to act against misleading advertisements or promotional activity that could undermine investor confidence or market integrity. The amendment now empowers the FSC to take action against any person, licensed or not, engaged in such deceptive advertising.

New sections 48A to 48D establish a conservatorship framework allowing the FSC to intervene in distressed licensees by appointing a conservator to protect assets, safeguard client interests and support rehabilitation or reorganisation where appropriate, providing an alternative to immediate licence revocation.

Section 71 (3) (b) is being amended to require global business licensees to operate their bank accounts under signatory arrangements compliant with FSC guidelines, giving legal effect to the requirement that authorised signatories include at least one approved officer of the Management Company. This measure reinforces the substance requirement of management and control in Mauritius, strengthens corporate governance and ensures that operation of bank account reflect genuine oversight and accountability within the jurisdiction.

A new section 79B introduces a Private Wealth Management Licence Framework allowing licence providers to offer approved services under the FSC rules. The framework aims to enhance Mauritius' appeal as a regulated and trusted jurisdiction for high net worth and ultra-high net worth individuals.

Madam Speaker, the Commission's accounts are currently audited by foreign private audit firms. In order to ensure institutional efficiency, section 85 is being amended so that FSC's financial statements are audited either by the Director of Audit or another external auditor on a defined statutory timeline and through a transparent and competitive process.

A new section 87D requires that all applications to the FSC, including for the appointment of officers, be submitted through the FSC One Platform or as determined, promoting digitalisation and easing the burden of dealing with both manual and online channels. Section 88 (1) extends immunity and protection from liability, currently available to board members, employees and Chief Executive acting in good faith, to administrators and conservators appointed by the FSC.

Madam Speaker, I also informed the House during the budget debates that the National Fintech Strategy launched recently has the potential to be a game-changer for our economy. This Bill amends the Financial Services Act to establish the National Fintech Governance Committee as the central coordination and oversight body for implementing that strategy. This body will have the responsibility to implement the Fintech Strategy and ensure that there is focus on execution and delivery with demonstrable results so we can shape the next generation of financial services value proposition.

Madam Speaker, let me now turn to the Financial Reporting Act. Investors and stakeholders increasingly consider ESG disclosures as an essential part of modern corporate reporting and responsible business practices. We are inserting a definition of "sustainability reporting standards" into section 2 of the Financial Reporting Act.

We are adding a new section 73A to enable the Financial Reporting Council to establish a sustainability reporting framework and provide for its implementation on either a voluntary or mandatory basis. This approach will allow Mauritius to adopt internationally recognised sustainability reporting standards while ensuring that implementation remains proportionate and appropriate to the country.

To ensure the effectiveness of the Financial Reporting Act, sections 76 and 79 (1) are being amended so that the Council can take enforcement action, where entities that fail to comply with the required standard, exercising the same oversight over sustainability reporting as it already does over financial reporting. These reforms, Madam Speaker, will help Mauritian businesses and the Mauritius IFC to better exploit sustainable source of finance.

Madam Speaker, the Variable Capital Companies (VCCs) Act – the amendments to the Act allow protected cell companies to convert directly into VCCs, removing administrative barriers and ensuring legal continuity. They also clarify that VCCs may, with prior Commission's approval, provide certain services to their sub-funds, strengthening Mauritius' competitiveness as an investment fund jurisdiction.

The Virtual Asset and Initial Token Offering Services Act. These amendments strengthen the digital asset framework by clarifying that Senior Executives of virtual asset service providers must be both Mauritius residents and hold senior management position. It also prohibits unlicensed persons from soliciting investors in Mauritius for virtual assets activities or initial token offerings.

The Captive Insurance Act – section 16 is being amended to allow the Financial Services Commission to grant captive insurance extensions for regulatory filings where valid reasons exist, providing flexibility while maintaining oversight.

The Income Tax Act – the Income Tax Act clarifies the definition of a global business entity through amendments to section 2. This provides greater legal certainty while ensuring our global business regime remains genuinely focused on international activities.

Madam Speaker, another very important amendment brought forward by the Budget 2026-2027 in the Bill is to ensure that non-executive directors are no longer personally liable under the Income Tax Act, as they are not involved in the operational decisions of the company. This was a matter of major concern among operators in the financial services sector, in the global business sector, especially Management Companies.

My Ministry, through the Financial Services Consultative Council Tax Working Group, has worked on this amendment in the law as it has direct impact on the ease and cost of doing business in Mauritius. It gives more clarity to businesses. Currently, a secretary, a manager or other principal officers of a company are deemed to be agents of that company and may become personally liable for the company's unpaid income tax.

In order to restrict directors' liabilities for unpaid income tax only to officers in an executive management position, the Finance Bill has amended the income tax Act to define principal officer. These measures promote stronger corporate governance, encourage timely compliance and reinforce the integrity of our tax administration. They are fully consistent with Government's commitment to enhance tax compliance while ensuring clarity and fairness in the administration of our tax laws. In another case in point, the Bill introduces a number of measures relating to qualified domestic minimum top-up tax, QDMTT.

Again, the Tax Working Group under the Financial Services Consultative Council has been working with the relevant stakeholders towards identifying appropriate measures to ensure compliance with OECD Pillar 2 rules while maintaining Mauritius' competitiveness. All these amendments, Madam Speaker, reinforce both the credibility and the competitiveness of our international financial centre and demonstrate that Mauritius continues to implement international tax reforms in a pragmatic and responsible manner.

Madam Speaker, these Bills in front of the House are not simply about amending legislation. It is about preparing Mauritius for the future. The Bills presented today will serve us this fiscal year and beyond. The Bills are fully aligned with our broader national ambition under Vision 2050, where the financial sector is one of the strongest drivers of future growth.

Madam Speaker, in my previous budget remarks, I had commended the Prime Minister for choosing leadership rather than political expediency, for being bold in taking the necessary decisions to secure both our present and our future. Madam Speaker, being the Minister of Finance is perhaps one of the toughest jobs, if not the toughest job at this point in time. Let me borrow a quote from the first speech of the hon. British Prime Minister, Andy Burnham, last week. He says and I quote –

> "Let us take a problem-solving rather than a point-scoring approach. Let us have the courage to fix the big things that politics has neglected and have the convictions to go about their together and argue for our plans."

So, in conclusion, Madam Speaker, let me therefore again congratulate the hon. Prime Minister for having the audacity and the courage to solve today's problems and not do politics with the future of this nation and I therefore commend these Bills to the House and give them my full support. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Thank you. Yes, thank you for respecting time. Yes, hon. Minister of Social Security.

(6.58 p.m.)

The Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity (Mr A. Subron): Madam Speaker, I am intervening tonight in my capacity of Minister of Social Security, hon. Member of the National Assembly representing Constituency No.4, spokesperson of my party, but also as a long-standing trade unionist and social movement activist for some 40 years. I know that many people in the country are awaiting the content of my speech tonight. I thank them for this attention.

Madam Speaker, I would humbly request your indulgence to allow me to contextualize the very Finance Bill itself, especially on pension and social matters before the House tonight. This is a rare Finance Bill when not all measures announced or mentioned in the budget speech are translated into necessary immediate enactment.

So, my speech will deal to both kind of measures, those found and not found in the Bill but which were mentioned in the budget. To situate the present Finance Bill on pension, that the sections amending the National Pensions Act falling under my Ministry, we cannot not go back to the last Budget 2025/2026. At the time, many people from outside and inside this House raised serious concerns on the proposed pension reforms when the last budget raised the basic retirement pension entitlement age from 60 years old to 65 years old. This included my party, "*Rezistans ek Alternativ*".

In a letter addressed to our partners in the Government, we said that such fundamental change should have been conducted in consultation with the people and the organizations. Out of the concerns of the people at the time, the parties of the then constituted Government, initiated interim measures to provide an income support to all pensioners earning less than Rs10,000 individually or if a couple earns up to Rs20,000.

In addition, all persons who were receiving the basic invalid pension and basic widow's pension at attaining 60 years, would continue to receive their pensions up to the new pension age, that is 65 years old. In parallel, a committee of experts was set up after the budget to look into the whole pension system of Mauritius. The Finance Bill contains some of the proposal by the said committee. In this budget, in June 2026, when the budget was in elaboration and finally presented, many people inside and outside the Government raised some concerns. Subsequently, many events occurred and decisions taken by Government, especially the hon. Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance.

Madam Speaker, the present Finance Bill on pension reform, I will focus on this issue as it is the major one, is the product of budget-related events and decisions. Madam Speaker, tonight, I stand up in this House in the context of this Finance Bill, which represents the positively mutated version of the pension reform. Madam Speaker, I would never have stood up tonight if this Bill did not include the principle of payment of an optional universal pension to all citizens as from the age of 60 years. I stand up because the Government has taken into consideration the plight of all of our fellow citizens; workers, women, people living in precarious conditions, self-employed and people in small production. Madam Speaker, I would not have stood up tonight if the Finance Bill included the means test that would have applied cuts to existing pensioners' pensions. It is now public domain that my party was contemplating of leaving the Government in this context.

Again, let me thank all the hon. Members of the National Assembly, hon. Ministers and especially the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance for his maturity and the people of Mauritius. Together, we co-produced this important change, this critical mutation of the pension reform. Madam Speaker, I would not have stood up tonight if the report and documents related to the committee of expert was not rendered public. A democratically respected society deserves that citizens, workers, women, pensioners and the youth be made aware of what are being proposed by a committee set up on their present and future living realities.

Madam Speaker, I would not have stood up tonight had the National Pension Fund 2.0 be rushed into and included in the Finance Bill. Our Government decided that the process follows its due course to enable more reflections and consultations.

I would also like, here, to mention the answer of the hon. Prime Minister to a PQ where he stressed the need for more consultation, and equally important, his guarantee that no employee will be worse off with the new system of the National Pension Provident Fund. This section is not per se in the Finance Bill, but will be subject of consultations and discussion in parallel.

Madam Speaker, I would never have stood up if there were not any legal clarification and guarantee that, as from January next year, pensions would be annually increased, taking into consideration the cost of living of the previous year for old age pensioners, whether under the existing system in transition or the new State Age Pension (SAP) as from January 2027.

Madam Speaker, I must now convey to the House that I am convinced that the mutated pension reform forming part of this Finance Bill is now laying the foundation of a new progressive pension system for present and future generations. There are several major amendments in the National Pensions Act. The first amendment relates to section 3, and this amendment is to ensure the continuity of payments of the existing BRP to existing pensioners and payment of pension to new pensioners under the new State Age Pension (SAP).

The second major amendment relates to the inclusion of a new section, section 3A entitled State Age Pension, and it is being inserted in section 3. This amendment is to make provision for three transition periods for persons attaining the age of 60 on or after 01 January 2026 to be eligible to the State Age Pension. For persons attaining 60 on or after 01 January 2026 but before 31 December 2026 shall be eligible to receive the State Age Pension as from 01 January 2027.

And on or after 01 January 2027 but before 31 August 2029 to be able to receive the new SAP. What I have just described is in the new section 3A. The other section, the third major amendment, is 3B, and this amendment is to make provision for State Age Pension for persons attaining the age of 60 on or after 01 December 2029.

The fourth major amendment is in 3C; to increase the State Age Pension. I wish to clarify two important issues here. First, that the increase already granted in the law to pensioners at the age of 65, 75, 90 and 100 years, centenarians, are all guaranteed under the new system; the new SAP. Second - and this is for the first time in the history of the country - , pensioners' pension will be readjusted every January, taking into consideration the cost of living. Of course, cost of living is measured with the CPI. I have heard some Members of the Opposition say that it should not have been cost of living. This is semantic.

So, it will be adjusted, and the principle of the increase is legally enshrined in the law now. Every January! And this is not very different from workers' compensation. I have been in the trade union movement. Some of us have been in the trade union movement. Every January, compensation to salaries is given to workers, and then the law. There is not even a law for negotiating and guaranteeing salary increase to workers. It is the first time, for pensioners, that such a disposition will be included in the law of Mauritius. I have also heard comments from the Opposition on this disposition.

I must stress that it is not the fact of the increase which is subject to 'may be'. It is only the actual rate to be prescribed which is subject to the 'may'. My colleague, hon. Baboolall, has stated that we have not circulated figures. We have circulated many figures in our press conference. But let me give you an idea about what the new system will give.

For example, if someone aged 55 today, that is, in 2026 - I am simplifying it - opts for a pension at 60, this person will receive Rs13,764, depending on the month. If this person opts to have a pension at the age of 63, he will be entitled to Rs19,188, and if this person opts for 65, he will be entitled at Rs23,352. You can go on like this.

Let me go to the last one. If someone has 25 years today and opts for a pension at 60 years, this person will earn Rs38,661 and Rs65,546. All this is assuming that the inflation rate is increased by 3.5. The 3.5 is not a magical figure; it is a figure proposed by the Bank of Mauritius and the IMF.

Now, let me come to the other major amendment to the National Pensions Act, that is, the Steering Committee on Pension Reform. In this amendment, the Government wants to go further and have reflections, inputs and consultations on the issue of Independent Pensions Regulatory Authority and the Central Pensions Administration Bureau. One thing is very important. We have decided not to rush into any institution to be set up with this Finance Bill. So, the Government has created space for the Steering Committee to give a report within three months for the Central Pensions Administration Bureau and six months for the Independent Pensions Regulatory Authority.

Madam Speaker, I come to the NPPF or the NPF 2.0. I have been listening to some Members of the Opposition. Let me say that the NPPF or NPF 2.0 has deliberately not been included. It is not that there is a silence. It has deliberately not been included in the Finance Bill because, precisely, we want consultations, we want all the parties to bring in their inputs, bring in their concerns, bring in their criticisms. I myself have some issues with some of the proposals, and it is alright for people to have space for discussion.

So, it has not been included, and I refer all the hon. Members of the Opposition to PQ B/964 where the hon. Prime Minister replied to this question. He said, 'I wish to emphasise that the reform of pillar two and pillar three - that is, the NPF 2.0 - of the pension system, as I mentioned, the contributory pension schemes and the voluntary private schemes are not yet finalised. The implementation will require a dedicated legislation, extensive consultation with stakeholders'. This is a promise I made to the union movement, and we have kept this promise.

Madam Speaker, as an MP, a Minister, and a trade unionist, I think it is important to state that there is one element that has not been included in this debate; in the whole country. I have never seen it. First, since 2008 up to 2018, the retirement age has been brought to 65. This is a reality. Nobody challenged it. Neither the Opposition parties nor the trade union movement in which I formed part.

The only thing that we did at the time – I remember with my friend, he is not here now, Rashid Imrith – we organised so that workers get a reduced contributory pension at the age of 60. We struggled to get the optional retirement age to be 60. It is still in the law right now. What I am saying, if you look at the civil servants, as from 2018, civil servants are required to work for a certain number of months. 33 *un tier* first, and then it has become 38.5. What I am trying to say is that retirement age is already 65, and every entitlement that workers get a reduced entitlement when they opt for 60 years, and I think this is very important in the debate.

What happened now, not last year; what is happening now, we are bringing the same principle to the old age pensions. That is, the old age pension is aligning to 65, and we are giving the option to any citizen to opt for a readjusted reduced pension of 60. If you look at a private sector worker, the private sector worker may now opt to a PRGF, that is 15 days per years of service. If the worker works up to 65, he will get the PRGF five years more because he is working five years more from 60 to 65. If the worker opts to retire at 60, he will have five years less. So, I would say this was the rational that was elaborated when the retirement age changed, and not last year, but now, this is what the Government is doing. So, we have been thinking and thinking of the rational. I do not think the rational is different from what has been adopted by consensus in this country from 2008 to 2018, be it from all the parties in this Assembly and the Trade Union in which I was part of.

Madam Speaker, this Finance Bill and the mutation of the pension reform is laying the foundation of the three-tier pension system to protect the interest of existing pensioners, newcomers pensioners and new generations. The mutated reform, born I must say out of the people, challenge, dissent from Trade Union movement, challenge and dissent from senior citizens, from the youth, from representatives of the people in every constituency of this country. This mutated reform is itself paving the way for the pension system imagined by our independence struggle pioneers and the militant trade unions of the early 70s, the General Workers Federation. A combined system where state solidarity is granted to all citizens reaching retirement with the contributory system where contributions are made by employers by a higher rate and employees at a lower rate. This is why the NPF was born in 1976 and 1978 and this is why economic lobbies did not want the NPF to succeed, but they succeeded in 2020 when the previous regime destroyed the NPF.

Madam Speaker, we can imagine the system that is emerging. Someone 25 years old earning Rs30,000 is estimated to get Rs60,000 when he reaches 65, and to get a monthly pension of Rs55,000 if we take all the money of the CSG going to the budget and transfer it to the own account of the employees, and this young guy who would turn 65 will earn a consequent lump sum. Now, let me give another important contribution to the debate.

An hon. Member: Three minutes.

Mr Subron: Three minutes, but let me then reply to the official Opposition. Okay? *Zot inn dir...*

(Interruptions)

They said that *zot pou fer kouma avan*. Yes, *fer kouma avan, retourn kouma avan*. They are saying that *trahison, larnak.* One question I have to them: if you are returning where we were, would you continue to request Rs14 billion contributions from the workers of the country? Now the fund directed to the CSG is Rs14 billion. Will you continue? Give an answer to this question. Second, if you are returning, will you continue the destruction of the National Pensions Fund?

Mr Lesjongard: You are not supposed to put questions.

Mr Subron: No, I am not talking to you. I am talking to the people of Mauritius.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Address me, Minister! Minister!

Mr Subron: Do not take it personally.

(Interruptions)

Do not take it! You destroyed it!

Madam Speaker: Minister, address me, please! Address me!

Mr Subron: Yes, please. Will they continue?

(Interruptions)

Will they continue to take Rs14 billion from the workers of this country? So, these are the questions and if we want to put the question, will they return the retirement age to 60 then? If they are going in this logic, will they return the retirement to 60? Why not? They have been in power in between 2024 at least to 2018 when the cycle was completed.

Madam Speaker, I stand up to say with conviction that the new system in evolution will be one of the most progressive and socially advanced since independence. I am a man of conviction, when I am convinced that something is progressive, I will stand and defend it tooth and nail. We the Government, the Alliance *Rezistans ek Alternativ* have created a historical space. It is up to the people who are struggling, many with passion, to bring reason and to take our pension system ahead. What will happen in the future depends on what we do with our hearts, but with reasoning. Many of them are realising that the official Opposition's mantra and their acolytes are not the best enlightened road for this struggle. Some are saying that it is a sad day for the Welfare State. No, we are consolidating the Welfare State. I do not see how when we are providing domiciliary visits to the pensioners aged 85 is a regression of the Welfare State, and I will say that we are a Government that have decided to set up a Constitutional Review Commission to insert Economic and Social Rights within our Constitution. Article 9 of this Economic and Social Rights recognises the right of everyone to social security, including social insurance.

Madam Speaker: You mean from the Government?

Mr Subron: ECOSOC, yes...

Madam Speaker: From the Government?

Mr Subron: The United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). This is what will be...

Madam Speaker: Yes, Government?

Mr Subron: Yes. So, I conclude by addressing all the people; workers, pensioners, youth and women. Some people are saying, that we should not vote the Finance Bill. I have been baffling with this reasoning. If we do not vote the Finance Bill, technically and legally, it would mean that the raising of the pension age to 60 would stay as it was in last year, we are not improving it. So, I do not see the reasoning. To those who are calling for a Division of Votes, rest assured, I will vote this Finance Bill. No need for a Division of Votes for me. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Thank you, Minister. Yes, hon. First Member for Stanley and Rose Hill!

(7.24 p.m.)

Mr P. Bérenger (First Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) Merci, *Madam Speaker*.

Madam Speaker, je tiens à dénoncer en tout premier lieu la façon de faire du gouvernement dans toute cette affaire du *Finance Bill* 2026 et du *Economic and Financial Measures (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill* 2026. Les deux *Bills*, les deux amendements, en fait, amendent 83 différentes lois. Et pourtant, ces deux *Bills* ont été circulés au milieu de la nuit vendredi dernier et devaient être votés *first*, *second and third reading* mardi dernier. Elles le seront, aujourd'hui, ce qui n'est guère mieux.

Et pourtant, *Madam Speaker*, ces 83 amendements touchent presque toutes les professions et soulèvent des problèmes très compliqués que nous n'avons pas eu le temps – malgré un renvoi de quelques jours – de discuter avec tous ceux concernés, surtout les différentes professions touchées par ces amendements.

En fait, toute la façon de faire du gouvernement, l'absence totale de dialogue n'aura été qu'une provocation révoltante. Et nous en sommes là ; les syndicats, à l'unanimité, font bloc contre cette façon de faire. Une provocation révoltante et qui n'était pas du tout nécessaire, *Madam Speaker*.

Dans le cas du budget, on nous demande de voter ce *Finance Bill*, alors que les revenus pour l'année financière 2026-2027 ne sont même pas finalisés. L'abandon du *means testing* a pour résultat un trou budgétaire de plus de R 6 milliards qui s'ajouteront aux 10 milliards des Chagos qui risquent, malheureusement, de tarder. L'expression utilisée dans le dernier rapport du FMI – le gouvernement a promis au FMI et à Moody's des *offsetting measures*, soit, inévitablement, un deuxième budget dans quelques mois, d'autres mesures de revenus dans quelques mois.

Dans le cas des 58 amendements contenus dans le *Economic and Financial Measures (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill*, je me limiterai pour ce soir à trois remarques. Le *Bank of Mauritius Act* est amendé, mais les amendements demandés, année après année, par le FMI pour donner une vraie indépendance à la Banque de Maurice et empêcher des dérapages comme la *MIC* ne sont pas parmi les amendements circulés.

N'en déplaise à ce que j'ai entendu, le *Banking Act* est amendé pour porter un coup terrible à la confidentialité bancaire en donnant à la *Financial Crimes Commission* le pouvoir d'obtenir des informations des banques sans passer par un juge en chambre, alors que même le Commissaire de police, lui-même, est obligé et continue d'être obligé de le faire.

Le *Waqf* Board est amendé. J'écouterai attentivement le ministre du Logement, le numéro 3 du gouvernement. Mais, en attendant, j'ai prêté une oreille attentive à tout ce qui a été dit autour de la question. Le *Waqf Act* est amendé sans qu'on nous dise si ceux directement concernés sont d'accord avec les 13 pages d'amendements proposés. Nous avons au moins le droit de savoir ça.

Je viens, *Madam Speaker*, au vrai problème d'aujourd'hui, le *pension reform*. Le *Finance Bill* propose que ce soit à 65 ans que ceux et celles concernés aient un *full pansion vieyes*, comme on dit, et qu'entre 60 et 65 ans, un système compliqué s'applique où la personne concernée perd 0.5% par mois si elle prend sa pension avant 65 ans. Les syndicats sont unanimement contre cela – unanimement et férocement contre cela. Ils rejettent en bloc. Mais, *Madam Speaker*, c'est la façon de faire du gouvernement et l'absence de dialogue. On nous dit, maintenant, qu'il y aura un grand dialogue sur le NPF nouvelle vague. Très bien ! Mais c'est ce qu'il fallait avoir pour cette réforme de la pension qui est devant nous. La façon de faire du gouvernement et l'absence de dialogue nous ont menés où nous sommes aujourd'hui.

Ce que la situation actuelle exige, *Madam Speaker*, c'est de remettre les pendules à zéro, pas à l'heure, et d'engager un vrai dialogue avec tous ceux concernés, à commencer par les syndicats. Je me répète, avec votre permission, ce que la situation malsaine, explosive actuelle exige, c'est de remettre les pendules à zéro et d'engager un vrai dialogue avec tous ceux concernés, à commencer par les syndicats.

Quant à la question de l'indexation, *indexing* des pensions, tel que le ministre de la Sécurité sociale l'avait proposé et présenté – indexation –, le 11 juillet dernier dans une conférence de presse, rappelons d'abord ce que l'indexation veut dire. L'indexation veut dire que les pensions ou les salaires sont indexés sur l'inflation. En d'autres mots, que les pensions ou salaires seront automatiquement augmentés au même taux que l'inflation, que l'inflation soit de 5% ou 10% ou plus. Je ne me prononce pas pour ou contre l'indexation. L'indexation a été adoptée dans certains pays. L'indexation a fait des dégâts considérables dans d'autres pays. Mais c'est ce qui avait été promis et qui dans cette conférence de presse a été présenté comme un grand pas en avant pour les syndicats et pour les travailleurs – l'indexation. À moins qu'on ne savait pas de quoi on parlait. Mais l'indexation c'est l'indexation. Une augmentation de salaire ou des pensions de vieillesse, c'est une autre chose. C'est une augmentation, ce n'est pas l'indexation. Ce qui est proposé, maintenant, ce n'est pas l'indexation. Voyons les choses en face. D'ailleurs, c'est assez amusant si la situation n'était pas tragique ces jours-ci.

Dans le *Finance Bill*, il était proposé que les pensions *may be increased* chaque année en se basant sur le taux d'inflation de l'année précédente, mais à la discrétion du gouvernement. Un amendement est devant nous – j'espère que ça ne va pas changer entre temps, parce que j'ai entendu un ministre dire qu'il y aura d'autres amendements. Nous ne sommes toujours pas en présence de ces amendements. Mais en tous les cas, un amendement est devant nous, qui a été circulé mardi dernier, qui propose que les pensions *shall*, pas *may*, *increase* à un taux – ça fait rire, mais je ne devrais pas rire. Il y avait deux « *may* » dans le *Finance Bill.* La pension de vieillesse '*may be increased' by* un chiffre '*that may be prescribed'* – deux « *may* ». Là, on a retiré le premier « *may* », on a oublié de voir ce qu'il faut faire pour le deuxième « *may* ». Alors, maintenant, '*there shall be an increase, but which may be prescribed.*' Allez comprendre quelque chose.

Peut-être qu'il y aura un amendement entre maintenant et le moment du vote plus tard, jusqu'au *committee stage*. Mais c'est d'un ridicule enfin ! Et ce changement d'un « *may* » mais pas deux « *may* » ne change donc pas grand-chose. En tout cas, ce n'est pas l'indexation promise publiquement aux travailleurs et aux syndicats. Là-dessus aussi, il faut avoir un vrai débat. Le pays ne peut pas continuer comme ça ; un vrai dialogue, un vrai débat. Ceux qui ont tort ont droit à des explications pourquoi ils ont tort. Mais on ne peut pas *run things through throats* comme ce gouvernement-là a fait jusqu'à présent. Maintenant il y aura des consultations. Très bien ! C'est pourquoi j'ai dit ma position. Là où nous sommes rendus, remettons les pendules à zéro et engageons un vrai dialogue avec les syndicats.

Dans le discours du budget, il avait été annoncé qu'un *Unified Independent Pensions Regulatory Authority* serait créé. Mais il avait été aussi annoncé que le NPF renaîtrait en tant que *National Pension and Provident Fund*, NPPF ; grand progrès. On nous avait dit que le NPPF absorberait en temps et lieu le *National Savings Fund* et le *Portable Retirement Gratuity Fund*, et on nous avait aussi dit que le *Pensions Regulator* proposerait les réformes nécessaires pour réaliser tout cela et se pencherait aussi sur les pensions dans le secteur privé, les corps paraétatiques et le service civil.

Dans le *Finance Bill*, rien n'est dit sur tout cela. Mais même ce qui était dit, un *regulator* est un *regulator* ! Là, on était venu nous dire dans le discours du budget que le *regulator* déciderait des *policy decisions*. Mais enfin ! Soyons sérieux ! *A regulator regulates* ! Un *regulator* ne fait pas le *policy*. Il faut repenser ; tout ça, c'est un désordre, c'est un *charabia*. En tous les cas, dans le *Finance Bill*, - parce qu'il y aura maintenant des consultations - rien n'est dit de tout ça. Et c'est tout un chantier qui est devant nous, qui va prendre des années pour être réalisé et qu'il faut réaliser, mais dans le dialogue, non en imposant.

Pire, *Madam Speaker*, aujourd'hui on nous dit qu'un *Steering Committee on Pensions Reform*, présidé par le *Financial Secretary*, sera mis sur pied pour proposer - c'est lui qui va proposer maintenant - un *Independent Pensions Regulatory Authority*. Je cite ce qui est dans le *Finance Bill*. C'est ce *Steering Committee* présidé par le *Financial Secretary*, avec des fonctionnaires, d'autres fonctionnaires sur ce comité, qui va venir, et je cite –

> "*An Independent Pension Regulatory Authority which will have the responsibility to develop the strategic vision and national policy for the entire pension system*".

On est parti pour la gloire. Alors là, on a un *Steering Committee* présidé par le *Financial Secretary*. Je ne doute pas de ses capacités. Mais un comité de fonctionnaires qui va maintenant venir, lui, faire des études pour venir proposer, donc, un *Independent Pensions Regulatory Authority* ; un régulateur qui va maintenant, à son tour, développer un *strategic vision and national policy for the entire pension system*. Mais c'est la confusion totale. Et en passant, c'est non seulement la confusion totale, mais on ne parle plus du comité d'experts présidé par M. Prayag. C'est lui qui était et qui est supposé nous proposer une réforme en profondeur de tout ce qui concerne les pensions.

Maintenant, on n'en parle plus dans le *Finance Bill*. On n'entend plus parler. Ils sont supposés continuer leur travail. Maintenant un *Steering Committee* qui va créer un *Regulatory Authority*, et c'est le Regulatory qui va proposer des *policy decisions*. Non, c'est vraiment la confusion la plus totale, et il n'est pas trop tard pour que le gouvernement se ressaisisse et fasse les choses comme il faut le faire et non pas de cette façon-là. Là encore, et je terminerai là-dessus, *Madam Speaker*, ce qu'il faut, c'est remettre les pendules à zéro et engager un vrai dialogue avec tous ceux et celles concernés, en fait, avec toute la population.

Merci.

Madam Speaker: *Merci*. Thank you for respecting time. Yes, hon. Minister.

(7.40 p.m.)

The Minister of Housing and Lands (Mr S. Mohamed): Thank you, Madam Speaker. I will try my best to do exactly what the previous orator did; to respect time.

I would like to start out immediately by very rapidly going through certain changes that the Finance Bill is bringing forward; clause 20 of the Bill, the State Lands Act. You will recall, Madam Speaker, that, at one point in time, the former Government had introduced a series of relief measures to support businesses, including industrial sites, leases on State land, and among those measures were deferment facilities. So, deferment facilities for payment of rents, and this is what was basically offered by the previous Government. There has been an abuse of the system. There is no reason why this matter *doit perdurer*, and that is why there is necessity to strengthen Government revenue mobilisation by removing the deferment facilities and restoring normal collection of rents on State land.

The second important element is the exemption for NHDC and New Social Living Development. They would be exempted as far as the Eighth Schedule is concerned, by inserting a new paragraph. So, it exempts from duty the transfer of immovable property by the NHDC or the NSLD to a *syndicat de copropriétaires*. There is an issue which I will also rapidly do. I will deal with the matters concerning my Ministry rapidly. I recall earlier on there was a reference by hon. J. Bérenger to matters pertaining to - if I am not mistaken, it was the green forest that she made mention of.

Now, with regard to green forest, I must say that, unfortunately, she does not have all the facts, and the facts are as follows. And that is why I believe, and I humbly say so, she is wrong. So, as far as this issue is concerned, clause 38 of the Bill amends the Morcellement Act. Now, this is directly relevant to my Ministry. First, it deletes *Association Foncière* and green forest from Section 2. I think it is important, Madam Speaker, here, for hon. Members who, I believe, should understand what is the policy rationale. The *Association Foncière* was a mechanism that required the formation of a property owners' association for certain morcellements and the green forest requirement mandated a specific type of landscaping or environment buffer. While these requirements were well intentioned - well, certain people believe, maybe hon. J. Beranger believes it was well intentioned. Maybe she should try to remember the reason it was brought through the back door in a Finance Bill by the previous Minister of Finance of the old regime. It was because he wanted to have certain conditions imposed in the law to ensure that no one could have a morcellement in front of his property. Understand that! You know where! So, it was not well intentioned. It was disguised as being well intentioned. There is, therefore, the *Association Foncière*, the mechanism that required the formation of a property owners' association morcellement and the green forest requirement mandated specific type of landscaping and environment buffer.

I should clarify, Madam Speaker, that 2% green space requirement for morcellement of more than 20 lots is retained. So, this is something which maybe the hon. Member is not aware of. So, I say it again, 2% green space requirement is maintained in the law if it is for more than 20 lots.

Now, let me come to the issue in which, I humbly say, the hon. Bérenger Senior and the hon. Bérenger Junior, as well as the hon. Leader of the Opposition, and as well as hon. A. Duval, I believe, are totally wrong when it comes to their reading of the law. I am sure that hon. Bérenger Senior will be comforted when I explain how he was wrong, and he will feel better. I will explain.

Banking confidentiality exists on two levels in Mauritius. One, there is an implied contractual duty at common law and that implied duty is unaffected by the Bill, unaffected. There is, secondly, Madam Speaker, a statutory duty under Section 64(3) of the Banking Act and that section has always contained and continues to contain a list of exceptions. Now, those lists of exceptions, if you allow me to go through them, because a lot of people easily listen to the Opposition that are proving to be just alarmists. When in fact, a proper reading of the law would show to them and show to the people, there is no need to be fearmongering. No need whatsoever. It just simply takes a good, simple reading of what the law is. So, as I said, those exceptions always existed. Exception at Section 64(3) was with regard to –

1. credit charge card default disclosure to other card users;
2. customer bankruptcy or company winding up, and

3. deceased customer succession estate.

All those were exceptions to the duty of confidentiality, and it went all the way through to paragraph (k) and further. But what did paragraph (k) say? Paragraph (k) referred to the Asset Recovery Act of 2011 - that is important. It referred to the Asset Recovery Act of 2011. So, what does this Act do?

Back in 2023, Madam Speaker, when he was in Government, the hon. Leader of the Opposition now, the FCC Act of 2023 contained already the exemption which then read, what did it read? Asset Recovery Act of 2011. So, there is a need to update the law. Why? Because FATF surveillance or tests are coming forward in 2027. Do we need to update our law? Yes, because the law has changed in the meantime. What does the law now read? Does it say Asset Recovery Act of 2011? Of course not! Because it has all been put together under one umbrella. Now, it is under the FCC Act of 2023 as amended. So, what changes in the law? Zilch. Nothing. *Nada. Kuch nahi. Nanye.* Rien du tout ne change.

Simplement l'appellation de la loi, Madame la présidente, parce que la loi a changé et il faut vivre avec son temps. Il faut simplement évoluer. Mais au lieu de cela, il est dommage qu'on voit que les honorables membres de l'opposition, peut-être *not wrongly intentioned - I would not want to think they were wrongly intentioned, apart for a certain exceptions* - they are saying bank confidentiality is gone. Let me say it clearly: bank confidentiality exists. This is only for asset recovery measures and it is an only an update of legislation. Full stop. Nothing else. So, for God's sake.

So, Madam Speaker, let us talk about something else. I have showed again one example of that. Now, there is something else which I found in hon. Joe Lesjongard.

Madam Speaker: You mean in his speech?

Mr Mohamed: Of course.

Madam Speaker: You said in him.

Mr Mohamed: But it comes from him. It comes from his oratory skills.

Madam Speaker: Oh, okay.

Mr Mohamed: His oratory skills have made me realise that he has discovered a few words: justice, democracy, nepotism, cronyism. He has just discovered those terms, just like his leader. Can you imagine? He sits here telling us that democracy and justice requires A, B, C and D. Democracy? Justice? Was he not then in Cabinet when I saw, in the place where hon. Ms Savabaddy is sitting, one Prime Minister called Sir Anerood Jugnauth tell me in my face that he would ensure the police is going to arrest me for something I never did, simply because I was telling him the truth. Then where was the justice of the MSM? Where was their justice?

Where was the justice of the MSM when they started listening to people and sniffing through recordings. Where was the justice and democracy and cronyism? Where was democracy? Where was nepotism? Where were the standards then? It did not exist. When they were listening to hon. A. Duval and finding a way to throw him into jail. It did not exist then. But if the standards of hon. A. Duval are such that he does not mind sitting to those who were ready to kill him politically, and throw him into jail, that is his problem. And if the issue is clear, because I am sure hon. Bérenger, Junior and Senior, would agree, as well as hon. Baboolall, what the MSM have done is unforgivable and they cannot now take the moral high horse or the high ground. Impossible!

Ms Anquetil: Exactly!

Mr Mohamed: So, let me come back. I will come back. I know it hurts the MSM and I am sure hon. Bérenger does not want me to defend them or to hurt them more or maybe.

Mr P. Bérenger: … but come to the…

Mr Mohamed: I will come; I will come. But now, let us look at…

Mr P. Bérenger: *Pe* blah, blah, blah.

Mr Mohamed: Let us look at the….

Mr P. Bérenger: *Ki ou gete? Ou fer dimounn per la?*

Mr Mohamed: Of course not. I like admiring you, just like I always did.

Mr P. Bérenger: *Pa get traver!*

Mr Mohamed: No, no, no, no, no. Apologies. I love admiring you.

Madam Speaker: Please!

Mr Mohamed: You know that.

So, as I was saying.

Mr Lesjongard: He is going outside the debate, Madam Speaker.

Mr Mohamed: The debate is what? I mean, talking about the terms you used and showing how false you were.

Now, Madam Speaker, we talk about the Waqf legislation. You see, this whole preparation of the Finance Bill and one of the legislations that has taught me a lot is the Waqf legislation. It has taught me that politicians or would-be politicians are ready to do anything in order to be able to gain political mileage. When I listened to - you see, tomorrow is 01 August, let me say that. 01 August marks 119 years of the birth of Sir Abdool Razack Mohamed. It was his birthday, 01 August and it would mark 58 years cumulative, of the Mohamed family's service to the public in terms of office - 58 years. I would not, with all this family legacy, go against such a giant and the memory and what he has done for this country.

So, when we sat down together with hon. Ministers, colleagues, hon. Members of Parliament, representatives of the Waqf Board, representatives of the Ministry of Financial Services, we sat down with Muftis, with university experts in matters of Islamic law, in matters of religion when it comes to Waqf. We listened to their views. We started out with a document that clearly said they did not want that the Waqf be *régi* under the template of the Trust Act for simple reasons. A Waqf, whatever the shape it is, it is not and cannot be compared to what the dictates or the responsibilities of a trustee is under the Trust Act. Full stop. I, together with my colleagues hon. Ministers, we went as far as to study what was happening in Malaysia, what was happening in Singapore, in Turkey and we came up with a profound study. Hon. Uteem talked about risk related matters. Hon. Uteem dictated and showed how we should take it in line with what already exists under the Registration of Associations Act.

Today, what is the fearmongering that certain people in the Opposition have tried to do? I have listened. They have tried to say that the Government is trying to seize Waqf property. False. They have tried to raise this issue of what is going on in India, to say, well, the Government of India is doing it and they have passed laws for it. This is the same thing happening in Mauritius. Let me reassure every single member of this country. There is no such agenda and there is nothing in the law that authorises it even *de près ou de loin*.

There is nothing. There is something else they have done. They say, now, they are going to be able to seize Waqf property. No way. You cannot cancel a Waqf. You cannot seize a Waqf. You cannot do all that, Madam Speaker.

Laissez-moi clarifier l'affaire de Waqf, and yes, we have the buy-in of all those associations and organisations and religious bodies we have met. They are agreeable because they looked at it dispassionately and did not get swayed by the falsities that were being thrown around for political mean. Hon. Ameer Meea was right! We do not politicise the issue of Waqf. We ensure that there is the truth that is spoken and this is the truth.

L'Opposition tente de présenter comme dictatorial – I heard the hon. Leader of the Opposition – *un projet de loi qui en réalité plafonne les pénalités administratives à 500 000, alors que la* Registration of Associations Act *n'a pas de plafond*. So, it is even better, and why do I say Registration of Associations Act? Because Temples, *Mandirams*, *Pagodes*, Churches, they are all run under the same AML/CFT rules under the Registration of Associations Act. There are certain Masjids, Mosques that are also running through it. So, what we fought for is parity. We do not want any discrimination. We want all religions to be treated the same because there has to be the same responsibility and duty in the eyes of the law. Some people have said there is no obligation under the ESAAMLG or FATF in order for Waqf to be brought in or roped in. Wrong!

I am very thankful to the hon. Minister of Financial Services because she has played *la carte de la transparence*. She showed us *échanges avec* ESAAMLG, experts were contacted. There was the need ever since 2023 to have Waqf roped in with the AML/CFT. And who started consultations for that back in 2023? The former Government. Look at that political hypocrisy, Madam Speaker! They start the consultations. They make the first proposal for it to be under the strict Trust Act legislation template. They make that proposal and today they pretend that it never happened and they just shove it under the carpet. 'Oh no! We are here to protect you! You are going hit'. Therefore, we need to be able to be what? Win votes, win the Muslim community's votes in such a hypocritical manner. But what we have done, Madam Speaker, is ensuring that the law is aligned with every single other association, religious or charity under the Registration of Associations Act. So, let me now say clearly to the Opposition and I will say that.

Si l'Opposition souhaite maintenir ses allégations de pouvoir dictatoriaux ou de gel de biens de Waqf, *let me ask the Leader of the Opposition and I can ask a rhetorical question*. Qu'elle cite les sections ! Elle ne pourra pas, Madame la présidente, parce que ces sections n'existent pas. J'invite le Leader de l'Opposition à identifier une seule section qui permet au *Board* d'imposer une amende sans avis, sans représentation, sans motivation et sans recours. Ils n'en trouveront aucune. J'invite le Leader de l'Opposition et les autres qui veulent scorer politiquement et rien d'autre, qui ont des discours vides ; une seule section qui permet au *Board* ou à tout organe exécutif de geler, saisir ou prendre possession d'un bien Waqf. Ils n'en trouveront aucune, Madame la présidente. Je les invite à identifier un seul pouvoir dans le projet de loi qui soit plus lourd que le pouvoir équivalant déjà exercé sur les temples hindous, paroisses catholiques ou pagodes bouddhistes en vertu du *Registration of Associations Act*, ils n'en trouveront aucun. Le débat est le bienvenu, mais il doit être fondé, Madame la présidente, sur le texte réel du projet de loi, pas sur les caractérisations politiques que le texte ne soutient pas.

Madame la présidente, let me also talk about what hon. Joanna said. I will finish very soon. Hon. Joanna Bérenger talked about supposedly backpedalling with regard to what certain foreigners had to pay in terms of land transfer tax from 5% to 10% ever since last year and there was a backpedalling on that. And what really hits home, Madam Speaker, is that as I said, there is something called '*girouette'*. There is something called '*girouette'* because last year, I remember carefully that there is a right balance to be done. There is a balance to be done.

We are saying, and the hon. Member said she wants to protect the population. She is right. We all want to protect the Mauritian population. Of course, we want to, but investment from abroad is as important as that because without the investment from abroad, we do not protect the population. So, where do we draw the line? Last year, I recall she was in a meeting and I sat there, and it was decided that we needed to protect a sector and not see them stop buying property in Mauritius that would be a dent in the coffers of the country, in revenue, foreign exchange. I did not hear her say no then. She formed part of Government, she was there. There are Minutes of Proceedings to establish that. I was there, I witnessed it, and today I sit here.

Ms J. Bérenger: Madame...

Mr Mohamed: I am not giving way. On the guise of what? Pretending *de faire une politique autrement comme certains l'ont dit ? De venir me dire aujourd'hui mais attends, c'est ce gouvernement qui se montre irresponsable ? Mais où était la responsabilité alors l'année dernière, quand le gouvernement dans un élan collectif de responsabilité commune, avait décidé de prendre une décision dans l'intérêt supérieur de la nation ? Où en était-elle* ? Where was it gone?

Ms J. Bérenger: Madame...

Mr Mohamed: So, Madam Speaker, *allons mettre les points sur les 'i'.*

Madam Speaker: Please finish it!

Mr Mohamed: I have said what I have to say with all due respect, without personalising the debate. History is easily proved because there are Minutes of Proceedings to what I am saying.

Ms J. Bérenger: Table it! Table it!

Mr Mohamed: Okay, put the question, you will get the Minutes. And what is even worse? Hon. Paul Bérenger was also there! He chaired the meeting. Thank you very much.

(Interruptions)

Ms J. Bérenger: Madam Speaker, on a point of order!

(Interruptions)

Mr P. Bérenger: On a point of explanation. But the last remark of the Deputy...

Mr Mohamed: *Inshallah!*

Mr P. Bérenger: I do not know what.

Madam Speaker: Of the Minister!

Mr P. Bérenger: I challenge him to put the Minutes of Proceedings.

Ms J. Bérenger: Exactly!

Mr P. Bérenger: Table it and then we will discuss!

Mr Mohamed: And you will resign then?

Mr P. Bérenger: Yes, Table it!

Madam Speaker: Minister!

Ms J. Bérenger: *Fasil koze! Tap latab, fer sinema, fasil sa!* Table*!*

Madam Speaker: Hon...

(Interruptions)

Hon. Member! Hon. Member!

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: *Morisiens pa mandian!*

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: I am on my feet!

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: Lâche !

Ms J. Bérenger: *Mo fier monn dir sa!*

Madam Speaker: I am on my feet!

(Interruptions)

Hon...

Mr P. Bérenger: Table it!

Madam Speaker: We have already got a Motion for you to table it. So maybe hon. Minister, you will table it in due course. I will not allow any personal explanation...

Ms J. Bérenger: Mais, il a dit un mensonge, Madame la présidente ! Il a dit un mensonge !

Madam Speaker: But lots of people have done the same!

Mr Mohamed: You voted for the last budget!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: May I speak? May I speak?

(Interruptions)

Mr P. Bérenger: *Asterla koz budget!*

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: I am going to raise if you do not let me speak!

Ms J. Bérenger: Madame...

Madam Speaker: You have to let me speak! You have to let me speak first. If I allow, in this debate, people to make personal explanations, we are here until tomorrow evening. So, I am not going to allow but we will ask the hon. Minister to provide us with the document that he has just promised to provide.

Mr P. Bérenger: Yes, Minutes of Proceedings. Table it.

Madam Speaker: Okay? I will not allow anybody because then the hon. Leader of the Opposition will ask me for personal explanation as well. No, I am not going to allow this.

Mr Lesjongard: It is my right to ask, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: But I am not giving. Now, hon. Prime Minister!

Ms J. Bérenger: Madam Speaker, it is my right also to explain myself. *Il a dit un mensonge ! Il a menti à la Chambre !*

Mr P. Bérenger: C'est une grave allégation !

Ms J. Bérenger: Il a induit la Chambre en erreur !

Mr Mohamed: I ask that the hon. Member withdraws that because she has said I lied.

Ms J. Bérenger: I will not withdraw anything!

Mr Mohamed: I ask that she withdraws it.

Ms J. Bérenger: No!

Mr Mohamed: Because this is against Standing Orders to say that an hon. Member lied. I assume what I am saying. Full stop. She cannot say that I lied.

Mr P. Bérenger: Table the Minutes!

(Interruptions)

Mr Mohamed: You also cannot say it! You also cannot say it! Now that you are there, you change your tune!

Madam Speaker: That is enough!

(Interruptions)

That is enough!

(Interruptions)

Mr P. Bérenger: ... *blaguer!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Mohamed: *Ou enn girouette! Girouette!*

Madam Speaker: That is enough...

Mr Mohamed: *Girouette!*

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: ...from all of you.

Mr P. Bérenger: Non franchement, la tour Eiffel *pli zirouet ki twa!*

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Okay, now...

Ms J. Bérenger: Ce n'est pas correct. Il a induit la Chambre en erreur !

Madam Speaker: Vous n'êtes pas d'accord avec mon *ruling*? Vous n'êtes pas d'accord avec mon *ruling* ?

Ms J. Bérenger: C'est un point of explanation.

Madam Speaker: Mais non, je ne veux pas, parce qu'il y a beaucoup de gens qui peuvent me demander la même chose, parce qu'il s'est passé beaucoup de choses similaires.

Mr Lesjongard : … what is happening in this House, Madam Speaker. She has the right!

Mr P. Bérenger: On a point of order, Personal Explanation is in the Standing Orders of this National Assembly.

Madam Speaker: Of course!

Mr P. Bérenger: It is up to you to rule whether somebody is abusing of it or not, but you cannot decide as a Speaker that suddenly Personal Explanations are out because you will be there till tomorrow morning. You cannot do that!

Madam Speaker: It is a ruling. I am the one to decide. I am not going to allow it now. Okay?

Ms J. Bérenger: When then?

Madam Speaker: He will table that document and then we will get an opportunity.

Ms J. Bérenger: He is a liar.

Madam Speaker: Okay, that is enough!

(Interruptions)

That is enough, hon. Prime Minister!

(8.04 p.m.)

The Prime Minister: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Let me first of all thank all the hon. Members of the House who have participated in the debates on these two Bills, namely the Finance Bill and the Economic and Financial Measures (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill.

I wish to say again, Madam Speaker, that these two Bills constitute an essential part of the Government's Budget implementation framework. They provide the legislative effect necessary for the measures announced in the Budget, that is, the 2026-2027 Budget Speech and its Annex, which are not covered under the legislative framework.

While the Finance Bill gives effect to such measures relating to taxation and national finance, the Economic and Financial Measures (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill supports the wider regulatory, social, and institutional reforms we need to translate policy into action.

I would like to stress here, Madam Speaker, that of the more than 500 measures announced in the Budget – to answer one of the things that was mentioned by, I think, hon. A. Duval – the vast majority of these measures are implementable within the scope of existing statutory and administrative frameworks. There is no need, therefore, for primary legislative change. It is already within the scope of the existing statutory and administrative frameworks. So, the criticisms in some of the media and the Opposition that some measures announced in the Budget Speech and its Annex are not carried in the Bills are, therefore, unfounded.

Together the amendments in the two Bills are anchored on three main policy objectives –

- The first objective is to create the appropriate legal framework for rebuilding the soundness of Government finance. The Bills do so by improving tax administration and broadening compliance.

  The amendments being made will enable Government to close loopholes, strengthen customs controls, and introduce targeted incentives to stimulate productive investments, technological innovation, and growth in strategic sectors.

  Also, specific changes to VAT, customs duty, excise duty, and corporate tax rules which are designed to align revenue policy with our national development endeavour.

- The second objective, Madam Speaker, is to develop a legal framework that is more conducive to higher economic growth and fostering of new "growth poles".

  The Bills, therefore, create the regulatory framework, for example, for the AI sector, for the start-up revolution, for innovation, for spurring the growth of emerging industries, especially such as -

  1. renewable energy,
  2. ocean economy,
  3. modern agriculture, and
  4. clinical tests and trials.

  At the same time, they support economic diversification and the consolidation of traditional sectors.

- The third objective, Madam Speaker, is to establish a regulatory framework that strengthens the social compact for a future-ready Mauritius. It aims to create the right environment for measures that protect and enhance purchasing power, reinforce long-term food security, and prioritise policies that ensure the continuous and reliable supply of energy and water, amongst others.

Madam Speaker, I have listened carefully to the criticisms that have been made on the two Bills from various quarters. I have also listened very carefully to what the Opposition has been saying.

While some of the criticisms could be constructive and we would welcome them, many are focused mainly on false promises or individual gains and losses. There are political motives, especially from the Opposition.

It would seem, Madam Speaker, that some people in this House, and also outside, living in the cosy comfort of their cocoon, are totally oblivious of the real-world problems we face.

Nobody from the Opposition side mentioned, no mention whatsoever of the war in the Middle East and the war in Ukraine and of disruptions in supply chains, which are having catastrophic consequences on the price of imported commodities. Nobody mentions this. They live in a cocoon.

Nobody mentions the threats – perhaps, hon. Joanna Bérenger mentioned it – of climate change. Some scientists are referring to it as the Godzilla El-Nino!

They do not seem to realise, Madam Speaker, that we live in an interconnected world where events even in far-off regions can have a considerable impact on our economy. That is why I made reference the other day to the favourite posture of the ostrich. The ostrich likes to bury its head in the sand, as if nothing is happening outside.

Madam Speaker, Government must look at the overall picture and not at isolated outcomes alone. The measure of a responsible government is whether it acts in the long-term interest of the whole nation, even when it requires difficult and bold decisions. These Bills are guided by that principle. Let me now, respond to some of the criticisms.

First of all, the Bills have been criticised for not doing enough to address the main concerns of the population. The main concern is the erosion of purchasing power. We all know it. The two pieces of legislation directly and indirectly, Madam Speaker, address the top priority of the concerns of people of this country, which is they want to be better protected from the erosion of purchasing power.

That is why we have set the legal framework to make it easier to implement the Purchasing Power Shield national flagship project.

As I stated, Madam Speaker, where markets fail, Government will intervene and lead, but again, within a well-defined legal framework. We have, therefore, decided that Government will act directly and decisively through the State Trading Corporation, as the hon. Minister Sik Yuen mentioned, which will undertake bulk purchases of essential consumer goods to lower living costs. These products will be sold nationwide with capped profit margins, that will result in significant price reductions on a large number of consumer goods.

In the same vein, we have taken the commitment to come up with a new law to crack down on abusive pricing, alongside a clear framework for parallel imports. I heard the complaints about parallel imports not being there. I explained during the speech I made, that it is a complicated matter. It has to be looked at very carefully, especially as hon. Bachoo mentioned, I think, about medicines. It is very, very important that we ensure that it is done properly. That is why it is not there.

The Bills also set the regulatory stage for implementing the 25by35 food security project. This project is about ensuring access to adequate food and nutrition at affordable prices at all times, even in times of severe crisis like a global calamity or wars, like we are seeing in the Middle East at the moment.

By reinforcing each other, the Purchasing Power Shield and the 25by35 projects will bring about a significant improvement in purchasing power and will serve as important channels to curb inflationary pressures, especially for families in the low-income brackets.

Increasingly, Madam Speaker, inflationary pressures are also domestically generated and not only imported. We are conscious of this issue and are combating these pressures with monetary and fiscal policies as well as with structural policies such as, as I mentioned, the Purchasing Power Shield and the 25by35 projects.

In the immediate term, we are making use of the Price Stabilisation Fund for which we have again allocated Rs2 billion for this fiscal year. I know hon. A. Duval said, it is a drop in the ocean. We have limited resources. In fact, we are doing something because we want to do something. We can do what we can do. Let me say, since the setting up of that Fund, we have been able to bring down prices on 19 strategic consumer product categories. It covers some 2,400 items with significant impact on the purchasing power of consumers.

A second criticism, Madam Speaker, concerns the Financial Services Sector. Some operators have expressed the view that the strengthening of regulatory oversight could undermine the development of the sector. But let me be clear. Government is not tightening the regulatory framework for the sake of imposing more stringent regulations.

We are doing so because we believe in a smart, fit-for-purpose regulatory framework, one that safeguards integrity, ensures transparency, establishes Mauritius firmly as a clean and reputable jurisdiction, compliant - we have to be compliant with the Anti-Money Laundering and Combating the Financing of Terrorism requirements. I am referring to AML/CFT. In an increasingly interconnected global financial system, credibility is and will remain the most valuable asset that we have.

Let me also be clear, Madam Speaker. Honest and compliant operators have nothing to fear. On the contrary, a robust regulatory environment protects them from unfair competition and strengthens investor confidence in Mauritius as the destination of choice. It is those who seek to exploit loopholes or operate in the shadows who should be concerned and there are some who are doing this. Our objective is not to as if stifle innovation or deter legitimate business. It is to ensure that Mauritius remains a jurisdiction where financial services can thrive sustainably, underpinned by trust, compliance, and international best practice.

Madam Speaker, I will not come again on the points raised by the hon. Opposition Members, as most of them have already been addressed and rebutted by my colleagues. But let me come to a few points, especially those raised by the hon. Leader of the Opposition. I will start on a general comment and then speak about it because others have also mentioned it. We were expecting frankly constructive criticism. Some have been constructive, I must say. But from the hon. Leader of the Opposition, we all got in an exercise as if in palavering. In other words, talking idly for a long time.

One of the things he mentioned, Madam Speaker, let me say it, they all complained about lack of time. Okay. But the hon. Leader of the Opposition and the hon. Opposition Whip say that it was unprecedented. First, Second, Third Reading, all Readings on the same day. Let me refresh his memories. In 2016 - First, Second, Third Readings done on the same day, 31 August. Who was in Government then? The MSM.

We have agreed to extra time because I agree with what hon. Bérenger mentioned, that there are lots of legislation, we will give them extra time, but do not give us selective amnesia as if this has never been done before.

Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition wants people to believe that we have not done enough for promoting economic growth. Sometimes, I wonder whether they say A and B at the same time. In fact, Madam Speaker, all the macroeconomic fundamentals were fumbled by the previous Government. All of them. Let me recall some of them. A budget deficit of 9.3% of GDP. A public sector debt close to 90% of GDP. A balance of payment in deficit, a high inflationary economy. They were printing money left, right and centre as we know. A dwindling productivity growth and a declining growth path without the creation of a single new economic sector in the 10 years that they have been there. Not one! The reality is, while we are fostering the blue economy, the green economy and all the sectors of activities, they have left behind an economy in dire situation. That is the reality of the fact. That is what we are having to deal with, Madam Speaker.

Everything was in the red. Not only the macroeconomic fundamentals, but also the financial position of our parastatal bodies. I mentioned it the other day in response to a question. A pension system that was going down the drain. They captured our liberty. It was state capture. Let me add here, Madam Speaker, that this Government is not only reforming the pension system. We are, in fact, saving it.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition has again referred to la "*caisse vide*". He is not the only one who pretends that *la caisse n'était pas vide*. His colleague, the former Minister of Finance also said that. *La caisse n'était pas vide, il y avait plein d'argent dans la caisse.*

I have tried to look; I cannot find anything. I leave it to the people with common sense to figure out how a Government running with a deficit of 9.3%, a debt of nearly 90% of GDP, using 12% of its revenues only to pay interest - I think one of the hon. Members mentioned it - 12% of its revenue only to pay interest on its debt and, therefore, they can also claim at the same time *que la caisse n'était pas vide*. How can they do this calculation? It is beyond me.

There is also the case of unpaid overtime in the health sector, hon. Anil Bachoo mentioned it. Unpaid overtime amounting to Rs500 million and on top of that, 444 million, if I am not mistaken, for medical supplies. This is… I do not know which word to use. I do not want to use the word that maybe is not appropriate to use, but it is an illusion. Illusion economics. As if everything was fine and this combined with outright dishonest management of the economy and the financial affairs of the public sector.

Now, with regard to the GRA, the creation of an Internal Affairs Division will, in fact, promote the integrity and accountability of the GRA. The newly created Division will be responsible for verifying the asset declaration of all the board members and employees of the GRA and will be investigating any allegations received against them. Such a Division already exists at the level of the Mauritius Revenue Authority.

Regarding the issue of the payment by the GRA of the broadcasting of races from the Horse Racing Fund, I think the hon. Leader of the Opposition has only read one part of the amendment. He did not read it all because it also provides that the Fund will be financed through a fee which will be remitted by the Horse Racing organiser for the right to disseminate race images abroad and other contributions from licensees. That bit completely escaped you. It is there.

Let me also come to another comment made by hon. A. Duval about FSC fees. Madam Speaker, they are not related to the two Bills we are debating today. I do not know why he brought it up.

Hon. Joanna Bérenger spoke about the changes brought to the income tax and the taxation under EDB property schemes. I think you referred to it just now.

Madam Speaker, we have to promote growth. We have to ensure that while we are taking those measures to try to redirect the economy after the damage that they have done, we also have to make sure that we ensure growth. This is the only reason why this was done as it is. I cannot remember who mentioned the tax on sugar. Well, again, let me remind the hon. Leader of the Opposition what the former Minister of Finance, Dr. Padayachy, said in his Budget Speech of 2021-2022 on 14 June 2022. Paragraph 288, I am quoting –

"The prevalence of diabetes in Mauritius is one of the highest in the world."

His words. Paragraph 289 –

"We need to reverse this trend and effectively reduce sugar contents in products."

Paragraph 290 –

"Therefore, I am doubling the existing sugar tax of 3 cents per gram of sugar."

At least he realised the havoc that diabetes is doing to our citizens. In fact, it is an urgent matter. Health of future generations, our young people are at risk. Sugary drinks contribute to diabetes and the side effects of diabetes, Madam Speaker, nobody seems to realise. They lead to higher health cost. Workers need to take more time off because they are not well. We are dealing with, I do not know the exact number of amputations that we are doing every day, practically. People are becoming blind because of diabetes. They are getting heart attacks because of diabetes. When we eat unhealthy foods, the long-term health and economic costs are hidden from the price you pay. You do not see the price, but the price is there.

This failure health care cost has to be paid and who pays for it? When somebody has an amputation or somebody is in the ICU or whatever for a long time. Or somebody is losing vision in his eyes. Who pays for this? It is the taxpayer. All the taxpayers have to pay. Whether they consume sugary drinks or not, they pay. That is everybody here. The whole society should not subsidise unhealthy foods not only for health reasons, I have just mentioned, which is vital, but because the cost of health care is met by the taxpayer.

We are not telling people what to eat and what not to eat. We are not telling them. They still have a right to consume as much sugar as they want to consume. But they have to pay the tax. That is the only… because you can still consume any amount of sugary drinks except you will have to pay a higher tax because it contributes to the tax revenue for the future health care of everybody, including them. That is why it is essential that we do this, Madam Speaker.

Hon. Baboolall said there was no clarity about the pension. There is confusion. There is confusion because a lot of untruth is being told. I think, hon. Subron just mentioned. He even produced a table, if I am not mistaken. The table, I think, is available. It is being propagated especially by the MSM.

This is deliberately being done. We decided to remove the means test because everybody seemed to be against it. So, we listened. But I must tell you, Madam Speaker, the means test is applied in practically every country and we are an island, a country with no natural resources. But we decided, okay, we can remove it. The means test is there for what? For people, to protect those people who are at the lower rung of the ladder. Those who can contribute should contribute. That is what we said. I think, Madam Speaker, we are the only country - I have never seen this before - where a trade unionist, I do not know whether I should mention his name or not, Reaz Chuttoo, he actually defended the rich. He said: 'No, no, do not put the… Let everybody be treated the same way'. That is what is happening to trade union movement here. But in any case, we removed it.

As for there being the option to take your pension, people were saying we can understand, we listened. People who do hard work like *maçon* and all those people. They were complaining that they will not get their pension at 60. We put that in the budget. It is not a change that we brought. It was already in the budget.

And for the other point that was raised about the pension not being adjustable. We said, but we have to put it in a framework that can be understood. When we said 'may', Madam Speaker, it is 'may' because it quantifies what will be the rate based on the cost of living. We cannot put a figure at this point. But we definitely decided; we have always, in fact, decided that there should be an adjustment to the cost of living.

May I remind the hon. Leader of the Opposition, it is his Government, his leader, who when he was Minister of Finance, did not adjust pensions, not for one year, not for two years, for three years, if I am not mistaken. But he did it on the eve of the election, on the last year. That is when he did it. Nobody else did that.

And also, about the details - I think hon. Shakeel Mohamed mentioned it - that people wanting details of people. It only applies to the asset recovery. That is all. It is not going to tell people, well, you can go and look into everybody's details; it is only when there is asset recovery that is the problem.

Madam Speaker, also, I need to say that for the means testing, I should have said, the additional cost is Rs6.2 billion. We have to find that money somewhere. Now, if you do not take some measures, readjust to ensure that we have growth. If we do not have growth, it is not going to work.

Five committees have been set up to address this gap. There is a Savings Committee. We are re-prioritising the projects, capital projects. We are disposing of non-strategic assets. We are reviewing the tax system. We are reviewing the statutory bodies as well, Madam Speaker. And I should say to assure the hon. Paul Bérenger, the pension regulator will not take policy decision. They will develop a strategic vision. They will suggest, I am sure, there will be a Steering Committee which will make recommendations to Government on how to set up that regulatory authority. But at the end of the day, it is Government which will decide; not the regulator that will decide. Maybe the wording should have been changed, I do not know. But this is what we had to say.

Also, Madam Speaker, I need to say this to hon. Baboolall especially and to all the Opposition. When we have this problem that we have, that is, with the war, especially in the Middle East, which affects us. In economic terms, it is called an adverse supply shock. There was a question, I think, hon. Baboolall asked last time, rightly. He asked whether we are not facing a stagflation. When we get a supply shock like we are witnessing now, inflation goes up, which is going up; unemployment goes up, it is not going up at the moment. But we are facing the increase in petroleum products, increase in price of gas, increase in price of transportation, increase in the price of raw materials.

But in the long run - you know, they used to call it the Phillips curve, that is, there is a relation between inflation and unemployment - this has been proved to be wrong in the 70s when there was the, I cannot remember, Yom Kippur War. That, and also when OPEC decided to restrict oil supply, they had this problem. But then the trade-off between inflation and unemployment turned out to be temporary because when you get this external shock, what is important is that you try to not only accommodate the supply of shock, which we are doing - trying to get other sources for our oil - but also you must try to boost the economy and this is what we are doing. This is why we have to adjust. There was no war before. We have to adjust to this. We have to make sure that the economy is actually growing and then, we get into the problem that you mentioned last time.

So, let me be clear, Madam Speaker. These Bills are about putting in place a modern, fair and future-ready fiscal and regulatory framework which will support growth, but also protect the vulnerable. The amendment before the House will help to consolidate our public finances while safeguarding critical social spending. It will enhance transparency and compliance in our tax and financial systems and will support investment, innovation, job creation across all sectors while also reinforcing our reputation as a clean, well-regulated international financial centre.

What these two Bills offer, Madam Speaker, are not merely a technical update to the law. They mark a change of approach to governance and fiscal stewardship. We are moving from a system that too often has served the interest of a few to one that reaches out to the entire population, to the workers, to the business community and to future generations.

Intergenerational fairness, inclusiveness, environmental sustainability, transparency, respect for human rights and the rule of law are no longer slogans. I think hon. Reza Uteem mentioned it. I took away that discretion of the Prime Minister because we want to show that we believe in democracy. That the Prime Minister should not have this power just to throw somebody out because he does not like his face. The Hoffman case, which, my friend, the hon. Attorney General, knows very well. This is why I removed the power from the Prime Minister, Madam Speaker. Because we want to show that we have respect for human rights and the rule of law is not a slogan for us. They are now embedded in the way we plan, we spend, we tax and account for public resources.

Government, Madam Speaker, stands firmly behind the decisions we have made. We will continue to engage with stakeholders as we implement our policies and measures when necessary and on the basis of evidence alone. We will fine-tune our policies to make sure that they deliver the outcomes which are in the best interests of the nation. That is why, Madam Speaker, these two Bills ensure that the commitments made to the Mauritian people are not just commitments on paper, but they are converted into enforceable measures with clear legal effect.

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

Madam Speaker: Thank you. Yes. Just give me a few seconds, please.

Question put and agreed to.

Bills read a second time and committed.

Mr Lesjongard: May I, Madam Speaker?

Madam Speaker: Yes.

Mr Lesjongard: Madam Speaker, I move for a division of votes.

Madam Speaker: Okay. Yes, let us ring.

Okay, I will raise for 10 minutes. I was expecting division at Committee Stage. Let me check. Anyway, I need 10 minutes myself.

Okay, I had asked actually for me to raise for a few minutes. I am alone today. My good friend is not in Mauritius.

Okay, I will take 10 minutes and the Clerk will help me sort this out.

At 8.36 p.m., the Sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 9.09 p.m. with Madam Speaker in the Chair.

ANNOUNCEMENT

DIVISION OF VOTES - RULING

Madam Speaker: Yes, you may be seated. Hon. Members, hon. Leader of the Opposition, I have consulted and taken time to look at Standing Order 51(1) and I do not think we can call for Division of Votes as you asked.

Mr Lesjongard: May I, Madam Speaker?

Madam Speaker: Yes, you may look at Standing Order 51; it is quite clear.

Mr Lesjongard: I know. I had a look at Standing Order 51. May we know why, then, Madam Speaker? Madam Speaker, when I intervened on the two Bills...

(Interruptions)

Let me make my point, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Yes.

Mr Lesjongard: When I intervened on the two Bills, I said today is a historic day, and I gave the reason. Because what is happening today is the beginning of the dismantling of the Welfare State.

Madam Speaker: Do not make a speech!

(Interruptions)

Mr Lesjongard: May I?

Madam Speaker: Do not make a speech!

Mr Lesjongard: Madam Speaker, people who have voted us in this Parliament, they would wish to know who are those who are voting for...

Mr Glover: Madam Speaker...

Mr Lesjongard: ...and who are those who are voting against the dismantling of the Welfare State, Madam Speaker.

Mr Glover: Madam Speaker on a point of order!

Madam Speaker: Point of order! There is a point of order!

Mr Glover: Point of order! Madam Speaker, I do understand that you have given a ruling, and Standing Order 79 is very clear. You are not bound to give any reason in support of any of your rulings. The ruling is there; it has got to be abided by everyone in this House.

Madam Speaker: And also, it is very clear if you look at Standing Order 51. So, we can proceed. We still have a lot of time before us. I am not challenging your wish to ask for a division, but I have looked at it. Yes, Mr Beechook?

Mr Lesjongard: But this has been accepted in the past, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Yes, Mr Beechook?

Mr Beechook: On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Yes, stand up!

Mr Beechook: Yes, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: But I do not want five points of orders!

Mr Beechook: Unless I am wrong, the word 'liar' has been uttered many times, several times...

Madam Speaker: I do not... Look...

Mr Beechook: ...in this House and has not been withdrawn. I fear that this word might be listed in the Hansard.

Madam Speaker: Okay.

Mr Beechook: Therefore, I would request your ruling on this issue. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Okay. Yes, I have heard the word ‘liar’, but it was in a context. The hon. Minister came to see me and I could not see him. Unfortunately, I was busy with those I was consulting. What I propose to do is the issue which happened before the hon. Prime Minister spoke is an issue, and I have decided that we will deal with that on Tuesday. By that time...

(Interruptions)

Hon. Minister, please. I am giving a ruling.

Yes, by that time, I have asked for you to let me have the document that you were citing and I have also informed the hon. Member that I will consider, after looking at all this, whether I will allow a point of explanation, but I will also consider your request for removing that point. Let us keep today for the Budget and the Financial Bills. Please!

Mr Mohamed: Madam Speaker, I have listened to you very carefully and I am not in any way contesting your ruling, because I do not think it was one. What I am saying right now is that I understand the process that you have chosen with regard to the Minutes, and I am saying that I will submit the documents I have as from Monday as you requested me to do so. It refers to two meetings that took place on 10 and 12 June 2025, chaired by the Ag. Prime Minister then.

Madam Speaker: Yes, do not repeat!

Mr Mohamed: Fair enough. I am not repeating. I am just giving you details. However, what I do not agree with is that you cannot say that I was called 'liar' in a context. It is unparliamentary and that is, full stop. So, I insist, at this stage, that it be withdrawn. Now, it is unparliamentary and there is no context issue. No Standing Order says a context allows it.

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: Now!

Mr P. Bérenger: Ki now?

Ms J. Bérenger: Girouette c'est okay?

Madam Speaker: *No, no*! Voilà où on en est là ! On ne va jamais finir sur ce plan-là. Vous avez contesté mon *ruling* là, en fait.

(Interruptions)

Oui, vous avez contesté et tout à l'heure, l'honorable membre a beaucoup insisté pour faire son *point of explanation*. J'ai dit non. J'espère que vous…

Mr Mohamed: These are two separate issues!

Madam Speaker: Mais peu importe ! Peu importe ! Il y a eu…

(Interruptions)

Non. Je pense qu'il faut attendre mardi pour régler ce type de problème.

(Interruptions)

Bon, mais je m'en vais alors. Dans ce cas-là, je m'en vais.

(Interruptions)

Non, mais dans ce cas-là, je m'en vais.

Mr Mohamed: Although today I am a liar!

Madam Speaker: Je n'ai pas dit cela !

Ms J. Bérenger: Et nous on est des girouettes !

Mr Mohamed: I am ready to withdraw that, but you are not ready to withdraw yours. Are you?

Ms J. Bérenger: On ne m'a pas demandé !

(Interruptions)

At 9.15 p.m., the Sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 9.35 p.m. with Madam Speaker in the Chair.

Madam Speaker: Thank you. You may be seated.

Mr Lesjongard: Madam Speaker, may I take a point of order?

Madam Speaker: No, because I want to announce something first…

Mr Lesjongard: Okay.

Madam Speaker: …and then you can take your point of order.

Mr Lesjongard: Yes, of course, thank you.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, I regret that we have come to this time and to this problem. I think, to get some peace in the House, which is not a luxury, by the way, nowadays. Peace is a very important point, including in this House. This is a temple of democracy.

So, I will ask both Members, in order to get peace, to, please, withdraw, each one of you, one the word "*girouette*" and the other one, the word "liar". If you will, please.

Mr Mohamed: Since I said it first, I stand up and I withdraw what I said against the hon. Member.

Madam Speaker: Okay. Yes!

Ms J. Bérenger: I withdraw.

Madam Speaker: Thank you very much.

Now, let us get back to business. Point of order!

Mr Lesjongard: Madam Speaker, during your absence, I perused the section 51 (1) and section 51 (2), and I strongly believe...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Oh!

Mr Lesjongard: …and I strongly believe, Madam Speaker, that we have not followed the procedures as per those clauses in the Standing Orders, *et qu'il y a eu vice de procédure*.

Madam Speaker: *Non*! Okay, I know, but I do not want to read the Standing Orders. If need be, I can read it. Okay, it is long.

Mr Lesjongard: Yes, but read it.

Madam Speaker: Okay. I will give you my best English.

"51. (1) Save as otherwise provided in these Orders, all questions proposed for decision in the Assembly shall be determined by a majority of the votes of the Members present and voting by the following method –

(a) the question shall be put by the Speaker [*je coupe à chaque fois qu'ils dissent:* "or the Chairperson"] (…) and the vote shall be taken by voices, Ayes and Noes, and the result shall be declared by the Speaker (…). If the opinion of the Speaker or the Chairperson (…) on the question is challenged by any Member, the division bells [rings]."

There was no challenge whatsoever. There was just a question which asked me for the division of votes. They did not challenge my ruling. I have already stated, the Ayes have it. So, we are going to proceed, but you will still get chances to deal with this. I have consulted and I have read it over and over again.

Let us proceed. Let us proceed. You will get your chance.

COMMITTEE STAGE

(Madam Speaker in the Chair)

THE FINANCE BILL (NO. XII OF 2026)

The Chairperson: You have to follow if anything happens. I am not going to go too quickly, but I am not going to slow down because look at the time. Okay?

Clauses 1 to 11 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 12 (National Pensions Act amended)

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

The Prime Minister: Madam Chairperson, I move for the following amendment in clause 12 –

"(a) in paragraph (b), in the proposed section 3, in subsections (2) and (3), by deleting the words "subsection (10)" and replacing them by the words "section 10";

(b) in paragraph (c), by deleting the proposed new section 3C and replacing it by the following section –

3C. Increase in State Age Pension

Any person referred to in section 3A or 3B who reaches the age of 65, 75, 90 or 100 shall, in accordance with the Twelfth Schedule, be eligible to an increase in his State Age Pension, to be applicable immediately after his election under section 3A or 3B, and be eligible, including a person referred to in section 3, to an increase as from January in the next calendar year, and in every calendar year thereafter, by such rate as may be prescribed, taking into consideration the cost of living of the previous year."

Mr Lesjongard: No, Madam Speaker. I raise for a challenge, Madam Speaker…

The Chairperson: Okay.

Mr Lesjongard: …with regard to this clause 12, and I move for a division of vote.

The Chairperson: Okay. Hon. Leader of the Opposition, you tell me on what you are not agreeable. Yes, tell me what the challenge is and then the Prime Minister will have to reply. We are on clause 12.

Mr Lesjongard: That is what I said earlier, Madam Speaker, that it is the beginning of the dismantling of the Welfare State with regard to amendments that we are…

The Chairperson: No, this is a general debate.

Mr Lesjongard: Yes, but then…

(Interruptions)

Then what?

(Interruptions)

The Chairperson: One moment!

You say clearly, for the record also, exactly what you are challenging. Say it clearly.

Mr Lesjongard: This clause, Madam Speaker, because it refers to the dismantling of the welfare state of this country. And I want the population to know who among us are for and who are against, Madam Speaker, by giving us the right to vote.

The Chairperson: Prime Minister, do you want to reply? Yes, do you want to reply?

The Prime Minister: It is absolutely untrue that we are dismantling the Welfare State. Absolutely untrue!

The Chairperson: So, you are asking for a division of votes on that.

Mr Lesjongard: Yes, because you said, 'The ayes have it.'

The Chairperson: I haven't said yet. I said, 'Those in favour say 'Aye', those against say 'No'. Then you raised, which is good.

Okay, so we will ask for you to ring the bell. Yes!

(Division Bells were rung)

The Chairperson: It is two minutes. Do not worry, we need two minutes.

Now, Hon. Members, when your names are going to be called, remember, maybe you remember, you will say "Aye" or "No" or "Abstention". Okay? Each one will be called. We have done this already. Yes.

Qu'est-ce qui se passe encore ? Okay, we just call!

AYES

1. Hon. Ms A. Savabaddy
2. Dr. the hon. R. Saumtally
3. Hon. K. Rookny
4. Hon. C. Ramkalawon
5. Hon. A. Ramdass
6. Dr. the hon. S. Prayag

7. Hon. C. Lukeeram
8. Hon. S. Jugurnauth
9. Hon. R. Jhummun
10. Hon. Ms D. Henriette-Manan
11. Hon. F. François
12. Hon. R. Etwareea
13. Hon. J. Edouard
14. Dr. the hon. Ms R. Daureeawo
15. Hon. Ms M. R. Collet
16. Hon. L. Caserne
17. Hon. N. Beejan
18. Hon. R. Beechook
19. Hon. B. Babajee
20. Dr. the hon. F. Aumeer
21. Hon. T. Apollon
22. Hon. P. Venkatasami
23. Hon. E. Juman
24. Hon. Ms V. Leu-Govind
25. Hon. K. Parapen
26. Hon. H. Narsinghen
27. Hon. Ms A. Babooram
28. Hon. F. Allymun
29. Hon. Ms K. Foo Kune-Bacha
30. Hon. F. David
31. Hon. D. Damry
32. Hon. S. Anquetil
33. Hon. M. Gondeea
34. Hon. R. Woochit
35. Hon. L. Pentiah
36. Dr. the hon. A. Ramtohul
37. Dr. the hon. M. Gungapersad
38. Hon. A. Ameer Meea
39. Dr. the hon. K. Sukon
40. Hon. M. Yeung Sik Yuen

41. Hon. Osman Mahomed
42. Hon. R. Uteem
43. Hon. D. Nagalingum
44. Hon. D. Ramful
45. Hon. P. Assirvaden
46. Dr. the hon. Ms J. Jeetun
47. Hon. A. Subron
48. Hon. R. Duval
49. Hon. A. Bachoo
50. Hon. A. Gunness
51. Dr. the hon. A. Boolell
52. Hon. R. Bhagwan
53. Hon. S. Mohamed
54. Deputy Prime Minister
55. Dr. the hon. Prime Minister

NOES

1. Hon. F. Quirin
2. Hon. P. Bérenger
3. Hon. Ms J. Bérenger
4. Hon. C. Baboolall
5. Hon. S. Pierre
6. Hon. G. Lesjongard

ABSENT

1. Hon. M. Seeburn
2. Dr. the hon. Ms B. Thannoo
3. Hon. K. Lobine
4. Hon. A. Duval
5. Hon. V. Baloomoody

The Chairperson: Hon. Members, the results of the Division are as follows –

Ayes: 55 Noes: 6 Abstention: 0 Absent: 5

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 12, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 13 to 28 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

The Schedules ordered to stand part of the Bill.

The title and enacting clause were agreed to.

The Bill, as amended, was agreed to.

COMMITTEE STAGE

(Madam Speaker in the Chair)

THE ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL MEASURES

(MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS) BILL

(NO. XIII OF 2026)

Clauses 1 to 60 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 61 (Commencement)

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

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

"In clause 61 –

(a) in subclause (2), by deleting the words "and 60" and replacing them by the words ", 59(d) and (e) and 60";

(b) in subclause (7), by deleting the words "Sections 24(g) and 59" and replacing them by the words "Section 24(g)".

Amendment agreed to.

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

The Schedules ordered to stand part of the Bill.

The title and enacting clause were agreed to.

The Bill, as amended, was agreed to.

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

Third Reading

On motion made and seconded, the following Bills were read the third time and passed –

(a) The Finance Bill (No. XII of 2026)

(b) The Economic and Financial Measures (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill (No. XIII of 2026).

ADJOURNMENT

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Tuesday 04 August 2026 at 11.30 a.m.

The Deputy Prime Minister rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Madam Speaker: The House stands adjourned! Yes?

MATTERS RAISED

(10.05 p.m.)

SUGAR INDUSTRY WORKERS – TRANSITIONAL UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFIT – WORKFARE PROGRAMME

Ms J. Bérenger (First Member for Vacoas & Floréal): Je vous remercie.

Ma requête s'adresse au ministre du Travail et concerne la situation de plusieurs centaines de travailleurs saisonniers de l'industrie sucrière. Depuis la création du *Workfare Programme*, ces travailleurs bénéficient, pendant la période hors campagne, du *Transitional Unemployment Benefit*. Ils travaillent chaque année pendant la campagne sucrière de juin à décembre environ, puis reprennent leur emploi auprès du même employeur lors de la campagne suivante. Cette aide est devenue, depuis près de 20 ans, une nécessité et une réalité annuelle pour eux, mais depuis décembre 2025, ils n'ont reçu aucun paiement et surtout aucune explication claire ne leur a été donnée. Beaucoup sont âgés, peu qualifiés et dépendent de ce revenu pour vivre durant l'intersaison. En tenant compte du fait que tous les travailleurs contribuent dans le *Workfare Programme* à travers le 1 % dans le NSF, je demanderais au ministre de clarifier la situation et les raisons de l'interruption de ces paiements depuis décembre 2025. S'ils ne sont plus éligibles au *Transition Unemployment Benefit*, il faudrait expliquer pourquoi la politique a changé, mais surtout quelles mesures le gouvernement va prendre pour soutenir ces travailleurs et leurs familles. Je vous remercie.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Minister?

The Minister of Labour and Industrial Relations (Mr R. Uteem): Madam Speaker, we have received legal advice from the Attorney General's office that these workers are on a fixed term contract and therefore, not eligible for the Transition Unemployment Benefit.

Madam Speaker: Okay. Yes, next question!

(10.06 p.m.)

PUBLIC SECTOR DOCTORS – FOREIGN SPECIALISATION – LEAVE WITHOUT PAY

Mr C. Baboolall (First Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE): My question is addressed to the Minister of Health. Can the hon. Minister enlighten the House as to why doctors in the public sector are not being granted Leave Without Pay to pursue their specialisation abroad? Now they have to resign and go to study.

Madam Speaker: Did you understand the question? Yes?

The Minister of Health and Wellness (Mr A. Bachoo): I am not answering a question, but rather I am making a statement. It is a fact because we already have 140 doctors approximately who have taken leave, and if we are going to allow other doctors to also go this year, then all hospitals will be having lack of doctors. It will be very difficult for us to perform. That is the reason why we have taken a temporary measure not to allow doctors to go on leave.

Madam Speaker: Okay. Yes, Mr Beechook!

(10.07 p.m.)

CONSTITUENCY NO. 9 – PIPE LAYING & PIPE REPAIRS – RAINS – DANGEROUS PITS

Mr R. Beechook (Second Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil): Yes, thank you, Madam Speaker. My request is addressed to the hon. Minister of Public Utilities. Following pipe laying and pipe repair works in Constituency No. 9, the CWA contractor has not reinstated and with the recent rains, the crushed gravels have been washed away and creating dangerous pits along classified roads and even District Council roads and generating accidents. Therefore, I humbly request the hon. Minister to please urge the contractor to complete the works. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Thank you.

The Minister of Energy and Public Utilities (Mr P. Assirvaden): Je vais voir avec la CWA, mais la pluie ne tombe plus. Je ne sais pas comment la pluie est tombée chez vous, mais il n’y a plus de pluie.

Madam Speaker: Il *faudrait chanter*. Good! Thank you everybody. Enjoy your evening, what is left of it.

At 10.04 p.m. the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Tuesday 04 August 2026 at 11.30 a.m.