



EIGHTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY

DEBATES

(HANSARD)

(UNREVISED)

FIRST SESSION

TUESDAY 24 MARCH 2026

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(Formed by Dr. the Hon. Navinchandra Ramgoolam)

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

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

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MAURITIUS

Eighth National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 02 of 2026

Sitting of Tuesday 24 March 2026

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

The National Anthem was played

(Madam Speaker in the Chair)

PAPERS LAID

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

A. Prime Minister's Office

Ministry of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications

Ministry of Finance

Ministry for Rodrigues and Outer Islands

Certificate of Urgency in respect of the following Bills (In Original):

- (i) The Certificate of Character Bill (No. II of 2026); and
- (ii) The Anti-Money Laundering, Combatting the Financing of Terrorism and Countering Proliferation Financing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill (No. III of 2026).

B. Ministry of Local Government

The Amended Annual Report and Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the District Council of Pamplemousses for the year ended 30 June 2024.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT – MAURITIANS’ PURCHASING POWER – IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr G. Lesjongard) (*by Private Notice*) asked the Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection whether, in regard to the ongoing conflict in the Middle East, he will –

- (a) state if any study has been carried out on the impact thereof on the purchasing power of the citizens of Mauritius and, if so, indicate the findings thereof and the measures his Ministry proposes to take in relation thereto, and
- (b) for the benefit of the House, obtain from the State Trading Corporation, information as to the –
 - (i) current state of the Price Stabilisation Account of Mogas and Gas Oil and the projected expenditure thereof over the next six months, and
 - (ii) amount disbursed from the Price Stabilisation Fund to date, indicating how same has been disbursed and how the remaining balance will be spent over the next three months.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Minister!

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: Madam Speaker, the present conflict in the Middle East has significantly heightened geopolitical risks in global markets and introduced a sustained layer of uncertainty in both energy and trade dynamics. The region remains central to the global energy system, with a substantial share of crude oil and refined petroleum products transiting through strategic chokepoints such as the Strait of Hormuz. In such a context, even the perception of disruption has led to the rapid incorporation of a geopolitical premium into international oil prices, alongside increased freight and insurance costs and heightened volatility across commodity markets.

Beyond energy markets, the conflict is also exerting pressure on global trade flows and supply chains more broadly. Disruptions to shipping routes, longer transit times, and higher logistical costs are affecting the movement of goods worldwide. At the same time, heightened global uncertainty has contributed to a strengthening of the US dollar, thereby increasing the cost of imports for many countries, including Mauritius. These developments are interconnected and reinforcing, creating a complex and evolving external environment.

Madam Speaker, as a small, open and highly import-dependent economy, Mauritius is particularly exposed to such global developments. The transmission of these external shocks to our domestic economy occurs through several interrelated channels.

Firstly, higher international petroleum prices directly impact transport costs, electricity generation and production costs across the economy. Given the central role of energy in all economic activities, increases in petroleum prices have a cascading effect across sectors, including manufacturing, distribution and services.

Secondly, the increase in global prices of food commodities and agricultural inputs is exerting sustained pressure on the cost of imported food. This is compounded by higher fertiliser prices and input costs in producing countries, which ultimately feed into global food prices. This situation is being closely monitored by my Ministry in consultation with key stakeholders, including the Mauritius Chamber of Commerce and Industry. At present, the full impact of these increases has not yet been transmitted to the local market, as consignments reflecting higher international prices are still in the pipeline. However, should current conditions persist, upward pressure on retail prices is expected in the coming weeks.

Thirdly, exchanged rate movements are amplifying imported inflation. The strengthening of the US dollar increases the domestic cost of imports denominated in foreign currency, thereby further increasing the cost of essential goods.

Fourthly, logistical constraints, such as tighter freight availability, higher shipping costs, longer lead times and sourcing challenges from certain regions, are contributing to additional cost pressures and operational difficulties for importers. In addition, disruptions in air freight capacity are affecting high-value and time-sensitive imports.

Furthermore, constraints in foreign exchange availability and tighter payment timelines imposed by suppliers are placing additional pressure on importers' cash flows, thereby influencing pricing dynamics and the timing of imports.

Taken together, these factors constitute a broad-based external shock affecting both the cost structure of the economy and the purchasing power of households.

Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Ministry of Finance that the Macroeconomic Coordination Committee, which comprises representatives of the Prime Minister's Office, the Ministry of Finance, the Bank of Mauritius, Statistics Mauritius and the Economic

Development Board, has worked out different scenarios of the impact of the conflict on the economy.

The Committee has taken into account the fact that as a small, open and net energy and food-importing economy, Mauritius is primarily affected by the adverse impacts of the conflict through –

- (a) an increase in our fuel and food import bill;
- (b) higher freight and insurance costs on our imports, and
- (c) possible effects on foreign direct investment and the tourism sector.

The Committee has estimated the likely impact of the conflict on the GDP growth rate, the tourism sector, the balance of payments and public finances.

The Committee has also considered the likely impact of the conflict on the inflation rate. I am informed that the inflation rate was initially estimated to be between 3.6% and 4% on average in 2026. It is now estimated that the inflation rate could go up to 6%, depending on the trend in global prices of oil and other commodities.

Against this backdrop and in order to ensure a coordinated and proactive response, a high-level committee, chaired by the Financial Secretary and bringing together Business Mauritius and key public bodies, has been set up to take stock of the latest developments, assess the likely implications of the conflict on our economy and come up with appropriate policy measures.

A sub-committee has also been set up to specifically look into the impact of the conflict on SMEs and the most vulnerable, and to come up with appropriate measures to support them. My Ministry is a member of the sub-committee. The sub-committee met yesterday and is closely monitoring the likely impact of the conflict. The sub-committee will look into possible measures that may be considered.

Madam Speaker, Members of the House will recall that Government has adopted a comprehensive and coordinated approach aimed at both supporting purchasing power and mitigating the impact of rising global prices.

Government has taken measures to directly reduce cost pressures, including the reduction in the retail price of diesel by Rs5 per litre and Mogas by Rs7.75 per litre, as well

as the removal of VAT on a number of basic items, including frozen and canned vegetables, infant nutrition products and baby food.

These measures are complemented by a robust and well-established price control framework administered by the Price and Monitoring Division of my Ministry, which currently regulates more than 25,000 products across Mauritius and Rodrigues.

Madam Speaker, this framework operates through three distinct pricing mechanisms.

Firstly, under the maximum mark-up regime, a fixed margin is applied on the import cost, comprising supplier price, freight and insurance, to determine the maximum retail price. This regime currently covers around 30 essential commodities in Mauritius, including milk powder, edible oil, infant food, rice, canned products, frozen vegetables, butter and margarine, and has been progressively expanded in response to rising international prices. In Rodrigues, a similar regime applies to a broad range of essential commodities to ensure price parity and affordability.

Secondly, under the maximum fixed price regime, the wholesale and retail prices of key strategic products are determined on the basis of a controlled cost structure. These include essential items such as scheduled bread, LPG, Mogas, Gas Oil, flour, ration rice, edible oil, and milk powder supplied through the State Trading Corporation. This mechanism ensures price stability for the products of direct importance to the cost of living.

Thirdly, pharmaceutical products are regulated under a Regressive Maximum Mark-Up mechanism, whereby the applicable mark-up decreases as the import price increases. This mechanism applies to critical classes of medicines, including anti-diabetic, anti-hypertensive and cardiovascular products, thereby ensuring that essential treatments remain accessible and affordable, particularly for vulnerable groups.

Madam Speaker, this price control framework is not static and has been continuously reinforced.

In parallel, my Ministry operates a Price Observatory, which conducts continuous monitoring and analysis of retail prices across a basket of widely consumed products covering several hundred brands and retail outlets. This system enables the timely identification of price trends and supports evidence-based policy interventions.

Madam Speaker, a central pillar of Government's intervention is the implementation of a Price Stabilisation Fund, with a framework of Rs10 billion over five years and an initial allocation of Rs2 billion.

Under this mechanism, a fixed-quantum subsidy scheme was introduced as from 26 August 2025 on essential commodities such as milk powder, edible oil, infant milk, baby diapers and processed cheese. These subsidies have been applied directly to retail prices, resulting in immediate reductions which have been maintained over time.

As at date, a total of approximately Rs628 million has been disbursed to eligible operators with Rs110 million paid in the last three months only. This includes the fixed subsidy refund on essential products covered by the funds.

Overall, total disbursements under the Price Stabilisation Fund, including subsidies on essential commodities, are expected to reach Rs1.6 billion by the end of the financial year, that is, for a period of 10 months.

Madam Speaker, building on the effectiveness of these measures, Government has already expanded the subsidy framework to a wider basket of essential commodities. This includes subsidies on canned fish, pulses and adult diapers, as well as targeted pharmaceutical support.

In particular, a subsidy is being implemented on anti-hypertensive, cardiovascular and anti-diabetic medicines, recognising their high prevalence and significant impact on household expenditure.

Madam Speaker, this integrated pricing and monitoring framework ensures that the price increases remain controlled, that unjustified price movements are identified and addressed promptly, and that the consumers are effectively protected in a context of international price volatility.

My Ministry has also reinforced its inspection and enforcement activities to prevent unjustified price increases and to ensure full compliance with pricing regulations across the market.

Madam Speaker, Government is also actively addressing supply-side risks. The State Trading Corporation has been mandated to review and reinforce its procurement and sourcing strategies, including diversification of supply sources, strengthening engagement with

international suppliers, and the exploration of Government-to-Government procurement arrangements. The State Trading Corporation is also actively looking into the possibility of extending the range of essential commodities it puts on the market at competitive prices.

Furthermore, close monitoring of stock level is being undertaken to ensure the maintenance of adequate buffer stocks for essential commodities, including food items and petroleum products. At the same time, Government is engaging with stakeholders to address freight limitations, facilitate sourcing from alternative markets and ensure continuity of supply.

Madam Speaker, with regard to the Price Stabilisation Account for Mogas and Gas Oil, I am informed that, as at 23 March 2026, the PSA reflects a surplus of approximately Rs400 million for Mogas and a deficit of around Rs2.3 billion for Gas Oil, resulting in a net deficit of about Rs1.9 billion.

The PSA remains a central instrument within the petroleum pricing framework. It is designed to absorb and smooth out fluctuations in international petroleum prices over time by accumulating surpluses during periods of lower prices and drawing down on these balances during periods of higher prices.

In the current context of heightened volatility in international oil markets, this mechanism is playing a critical stabilising role. It enables Government to moderate the impact of sharp movements in global prices and to adopt a measured and calibrated approach in the determination of retail prices, in accordance with the applicable regulations.

This ensures that while the pricing framework remains aligned with international market conditions, undue and abrupt increases are mitigated, thereby protecting consumers and maintaining economic stability.

Madam Speaker, Government's response is, therefore, anchored on a comprehensive and coordinated framework combining direct price intervention through targeted subsidies, a robust and enforced price control regime, and a proactive management of supply chains.

This integrated approach ensures that both the immediate impact of rising global prices and underlying risks to supply are effectively addressed, thereby limiting the transmission of external shocks to domestic consumers.

The situation remains fluid, with continued volatility in international oil markets, freight costs and exchange rates. Government is, therefore, maintaining close and continuous monitoring of developments and stands ready to calibrate its intervention as necessarily.

Madam Speaker, Government remains fully committed to safeguarding the purchasing power of the population, particularly the most vulnerable, and to ensuring, at all times, the continued availability, accessibility and affordability of essential commodities across the country.

Government will not hesitate to take any further measures required to protect consumers in the face of these external pressures.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Thank you, hon. Minister.

In view of the fact that – you had no choice, but – it took you 19 minutes, so I will extend the time for supplementary questions.

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: No problem!

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

Mr Lesjongard: Yes, thank you, Madam Speaker. The hon. Minister stated in his reply that, with regard to prices that have increased in the world market, these prices have not been transmitted on the local market. But may I ask him whether he is aware that prices are already on the rise in our supermarkets?

Madam Speaker: Straightforward!

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: In fact, we are monitoring the situation almost every day. When prices normally go up, we have about 25,000 products which are controlled products. It is my Ministry which gives the Maximum Mark Up of each product for these quantified basic products. I believe that the hon. Leader of the Opposition is not aware of this.

Mr Lesjongard: I am aware.

Madam Speaker: Next question!

Mr Lesjongard: My question is whether the hon. Minister is aware.

Madam Speaker: He just said that he is aware.

Mr Lesjongard: It is a very simple question.

Madam Speaker: His Ministry is aware.

Mr Lesjongard: Madam Speaker, we are aware that in this difficult time, some traders may exploit crisis conditions to inflate margins. Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether, a compilation of prices has been made since the beginning of the war by his Ministry and will he undertake to make the list of prices public?

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Minister. Straightforward!

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: In fact, we are working on a framework to have all the prices live, that is, anyone around the world can go on the internet and can see the prices around the supermarkets.

Madam Speaker: As they should be!

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: Yes.

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

Mr Lesjongard: Again, Madam Speaker, my question is precise – whether his Ministry has carried out a compilation of the prices of commodities on the local market before the beginning of the war? It is just yes or no.

Madam Speaker: Your answer was regarding the local market?

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: Yes.

Madam Speaker: Yes. I thought that was clear.

Mr Lesjongard: No, it's not. I put it again.

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: Madam Speaker, let me add something.

Madam Speaker: Yes.

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: Presently, we have a website. It is pfu.govmu.org. Anybody can go on the website and can see the different prices on the internet, but we want to do it in a more user-friendly system which is coming very soon.

Madam Speaker: Okay.

Mr Lesjongard: My question is because local consumers need to be able to compare prices when they go to the supermarket and buy those commodities.

(Interruptions)

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: There is a website, Madam Speaker. They can compare right now and it will be more user-friendly in the near future.

Madam Speaker: Yes, and we believe ... I also go to the supermarket as you know; we meet there.

(Interruptions)

It so happens; we meet there. A very nice place to be – supermarkets. What maybe we want to say is that newspapers and radios have to ...

Mr Lesjongard: Yes.

Madam Speaker: Because everybody does not go on a website, hon. Minister. Maybe that's the point. We make an appeal so that it's widely spread; more than on the web. Is that alright?

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: It will be done.

Madam Speaker: Good!

Mr Lesjongard: Merci. Sinon on aurait eu l'impression qu'il veut protéger...

Madam Speaker: Don't waste time!

Mr Lesjongard: ... les opérateurs aux dépens des consommateurs, Madame la présidente.

Now, the hon. Minister, in his reply, stated that there is a committee chaired by the FS and that committee is looking into possible measures that may be considered with regard to mitigating the rising international freight rate, insurance premiums and energy cost on essential consumer goods. Because the situation is actually difficult for consumers, can we have an indication of what measures they are looking into so that the public may know?

Madam Speaker: I give you more time.

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: Madam Speaker, we will cross the bridge when we will reach there.

Mr Lesjongard: There might not be any bridge at some point in time, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, the hon. Prime Minister indicated last week that petroleum products are secured through May 2026. May I ask the hon. Minister whether his Ministry has

elaborated a contingency plan should any scheduled shipment fail to materialise due to conflict-related disruptions?

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Minister.

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: We have plan A, plan B, plan C and plan D. This is what we did.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker, I have not finished.

Mr Lesjongard: Yes, what are those plans? He can go until plan Z!

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: I have not finished. Please listen!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, I can't hear. Yes!

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: There was an issue for fuel oil and we launched the plan B. The plan B was to launch a new tender for 48 hours, which we did, and in the meantime, the supplier launched his plan B. Supply is coming from Singapore; this is the plan B. It is coming very soon.

Madam Speaker: When?

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: On 02 April.

Madam Speaker: Good!

Mr Lesjongard: With regard to that consignment he mentioned, – because we understand that that oil will be used by the Central Electricity Board – will the hon. Minister inform the House which company has been allocated the consignment and will he table a copy of the contract between the STC and the company for the sake of transparency?

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: The supplier is Sahara Energy and I don't mind to table the contract.

Madam Speaker: Yes, good.

Mr Lesjongard: So, we understand he will table...

Madam Speaker: I have got lots of people waiting. Do you have a few more questions?

(Interruptions)

Chut !

Mr Lesjongard: Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether we already have a deal between Indian Oil Corporation Ltd and the STC for the supply of Gas Oil, Mogas, and heavy fuel oil?

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: We are almost finalising the MoU. It will be signed very soon. We will let you know.

Madam Speaker: Good!

Mr Lesjongard: Also, may I ask him to confirm whether we are signing an agreement with them for heavy fuel oil also?

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: We are still working on it. Don't worry! We will let the nation know. We are unlike the previous government. Before we had a G-to-G with India, with MRPL, the contract which they stopped.

And we are going to redo the G-to-G and this time, the Indian government has chosen the Indian Oil so as to discard all the commission paid to some bodies.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Don't! Let's try and be... We know – we have heard this last week.

(Interruptions)

Let's just... I have got a time problem.

(Interruptions)

Members! Members! Chief Whip!

(Interruptions)

Let's do our best because I have a time problem and lots of people are asking for questions.

Yes, hon. Leader of Opposition!

Mr Lesjongard: Madam Speaker, with regard to the price of Mogas and Gas Oil – I had put that question to the hon. Prime Minister last week but his reply was very vague – may I ask the same question to the hon. Minister of Commerce whether, Government will consider reviewing the tax structure on Mogas and Gas Oil, and here, I am referring to excise duty and VAT on those products?

An hon. Member: *Kifer zot pa ti review zot!*

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: Madam Speaker, we could have done it. However, the previous government put this economy in a mess, including the Price Stabilisation Account, which was Rs5.2 billion at a time and today, it is at Rs1.9 billion.

(Interruptions)

I have not finished! We need to pay all these debts and then we will review, if need be. We will go to Cabinet, of course!

Madam Speaker: Yes! Okay. How many more questions? Don't ...

Mr Lesjongard: Madame la présidente, c'est eux qui avaient fait la promesse de baisser les prix de ces produits-là.

Now, with regard to crude oil and its importance in the production of energy, can the hon. Minister reassure the House that there will be no rise on the electricity bill for the citizens of this country?

(Interruptions)

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: Madam Speaker, I believe he should question the substantive minister.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Yes!

(Interruptions)

Next question! Next question!

Mr Lesjongard: Yes, but the substantive Minister is hiding, Madam Speaker! He has said to the whole nation and to the hon. Prime Minister: '*Donn mwa sa post-la; dan 3 mwa mo baisse électricité !*'

Mr Assirvaden: *Lerla ki monn al trouve ki tonn fer! Lerla ki monn al trouve ki tonn fer!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Lesjongard: Menteur !

Now, concerning energy importation, which impacts on price and the supply of commodities, Mogas, Gas Oil and LPG... Let me give you an example. Right now, in India...

Madam Speaker: No, no! No statement!

Mr Lesjongard: There is...

(Interruptions)

Let me...

Madam Speaker: No statement!

Mr Lesjongard: This is important, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: But no, no, no!

Mr Lesjongard: There is a...

Madam Speaker: I will not...

Mr Lesjongard: There is control on the sales of LPG.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition!

Mr Lesjongard: Can the hon. Minister inform the House...

Madam Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition, I am not going to allow you to make statements! And this applies to everyone! No statements! Questions!

Mr Assirvaden: *Adrien pe riy twa!*

Madam Speaker: Come with your question!

Mr Lesjongard: This is my question!

(Interruptions)

With regard to...

(Interruptions)

Mr A. Duval: *Mo dan enn bon mood la! Akoz sa!*

Madam Speaker: *Chut ! Chut !*

Mr Mohamed: ... *Paul pou vinn kot twa...*

Mr Lesjongard: With regard to LPG, is Government envisaging some form of control...

(Interruptions)

Mr A. Duval: *Mo pe sof so plas la!*

Mr Lesjongard: ... on LPG gas?

And in the same vein, may I ask the hon. Minister to inform the population about a smart card – he made an announcement during Budget time – to control the sales of LPG? We are nearly nine months down and still, we have not heard of that smart card!

Madam Speaker: Hon. Minister!

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: Madam Speaker, I will tell him: ‘Do not worry. We will do it!’

It is in the pipeline. We are working closely with the Ministry of IT. It is coming very soon.

During the last ten years, they did not do anything!

Ms Anquetil: Bravo!

An hon. Member: Anything smart.

Madam Speaker: You have finished?

Mr Lesjongard: No, not yet.

Madam Speaker: No? I already have three people waiting.

So, you will have to wait. You are the fourth, if we have time.

Mr Lesjongard: Madam Speaker, currently, only seven consumer products and three pharmaceutical categories benefit from the fixed quantum subsidies under the Government Subsidy on Essential Goods Scheme (GSOG). Will the hon. Minister consider an immediate expansion of this subsidised list to at least 50 essential items, giving priority to proteins and staples?

Madam Speaker: Yes!

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: Madam Speaker, in fact, the State Trading Corporation will import a lot of basic commodities. On 06 March 2026, STC has launched an open international bidding exercise for the supply of selected pulses such as –

- Lima beans;
- White kidney beans;
- Yellow split beans;
- Round lentils.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Minister, if I may? His question was on medicine.

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: Non.

Madam Speaker: This question.

Hon. Members: Non! Non!

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: *Non, non.* On food products.

Madam Speaker: The original question.

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: On food products.

Madam Speaker: Food, okay.

Mr Jhummun: Essential products.

Madam Speaker: Okay.

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: On 09 March 2026, STC launched an international bidding exercise for supply of canned sardines, canned pilchards, canned mackerel and canned tomatoes. These products will definitely increase more competition for these products.

Madam Speaker: You have finished? Yes!

Mr Lesjongard: One last question.

Madam Speaker: Last, okay. Then, you!

Mr Lesjongard: With regard to the Rs10 billion that was promised under the Price Stabilisation Fund...

Mr Etwareea: It was not a promise.

Mr Lesjongard: ... we understand from the hon. Minister; he said that the MRA has already disbursed some Rs628 million. Can he confirm that? And may I ask him also how he reconciles that in order for taxpayers to pay less, we are using taxpayers' money to pay suppliers of commodities?

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: Madam Speaker, we are not paying suppliers as he is saying. We are giving a subsidy.

And he has just asked me whether we are going to increase the number of products to be subsidised. You know, you must know what to say; whether to go for it or not to go for it!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Chief Whip, your question!

Ms Anquetil: Je vous remercie, Madame la présidente. Dans le passé, lors de la Covid-19 et du conflit en Ukraine, la population a été témoin de l'attribution des contrats controversés...

Mr A. Duval: Madam Speaker!

(Interruptions)

Ms Anquetil: ...aux quincailleries et bijouteries. Le ministre peut-il rassurer la Chambre qu'au regard de la situation actuelle au Moyen-Orient...

(Interruptions)

Mr A. Duval: ...statement!

Madam Speaker, I have a point of order.

You have interrupted the hon. Leader of the Opposition; you stood on your feet...

Ms Anquetil: I did not! It is not a statement; it is a fact!

Mr A. Duval: It is a statement! You should apply the same rules to everyone!

Madam Speaker: It is true! It is true!

Ms Anquetil: It is not a statement, Madam Speaker!

Madam Speaker: You did...

(Interruptions)

Mr A. Duval: It is a statement!

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: *Laiss li poz so kestion!*

Madam Speaker: Do not make me decide to raise/suspend the Sitting!

You did make a statement before you put your question! And I had told you in the past! I do not want every time that Members of the Opposition will tell me that I am looking on one side only. Put your question!

I say it again; I have said it last Tuesday; questions must relate to the original question. Do not make a statement! Do not make any statement!

Ms Anquetil: Je vous remercie, Madame la présidente. Le ministre peut-il rassurer la Chambre...

Mr Etwareea: Voilà!

Madam Speaker: Do not interrupt!

Ms Anquetil: ...que dans le passé, il y a eu l'attribution des contrats controversés aux quincailleries, aux bijouteries, etc... ; qu'au regard de la situation actuelle...

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

(Interruptions)

Ms Anquetil: Ça fait mal !

(Interruptions)

Mr Lesjongard: ...

Ms Anquetil: Mais c'est une question *straightforward* !

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: Ça fait mal !

Ms Anquetil: C'est une question !

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: The question just...

Ms Anquetil: Je comprends le leader de l'opposition !

Mr Mohamed: Et sa position !

Ms Anquetil: Oui ! Oui !

(Interruptions)

Non, je comprends l'embarras du leader de l'opposition.

(Interruptions)

Son ami d'enfance !

(Interruptions)

Je comprends !

Le ministre peut-il rassurer la Chambre : dans le passé, il y a eu l'attribution des contrats controversés aux quincailleries et bijouteries, etc., qu'au regard de la situation actuelle au Moyen-Orient, que de telles dérives et exagérations ne se reproduiront pas ?
Merci !

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, I have two more minutes left, okay?

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: Madam Speaker, I reassure the House and the population that we will follow all procedures, unlike the previous government.

Madam Speaker: Okay.

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: For petroleum products, for example, we signed with OQ Trading, and we did a savings of Rs1 billion only on premium.

Mr Jhummun: *Ar nou pena...*

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: And on LPG gas, we saved Rs400 million only on premium!

Ms Anquetil: Well done, Minister!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Juman!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Juman!

(Interruptions)

Do not make any statements, please!

Mr Juman: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Given the current situation, can the hon. Minister say whether fuel, petroleum products and gas prices are expected to rise? If yes, Madam Speaker,...

Madam Speaker: No, no, let him answer first! Not two questions!

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: Madam Speaker, when we are looking at what is happening around the world, we should expect it at any time. But let me give you some examples. In Australia, we already have 12.5% increase in Gas Oil. In Estonia, we can see 15% on Mogas and 19% on Gas Oil.

Mr Etwareea: Maldives: 26%.

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: In New Zealand, 8.4% increase in Mogas and 20.5 % in Gas Oil. In Poland, 10% on Mogas and 22% on Gas Oil.

In Mauritius, so far, zero percent increase for Mogas and zero percent increase on Gas Oil!

Ms Anquetil: Bravo ! Bravo !

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: We will let the PPC monitor the situation.

Madam Speaker: Okay.

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: And when the time comes, we will announce an increase, if need be.

Madam Speaker: I have two Members, hon. François and hon. A. Duval. Yes!

Mr François: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

May I ask the hon. Minister, should the inflation rate increase to 6% whether, in relation thereof and of the existing high freight rate between Mauritius and Rodrigues, Government is or will consider to control more basic commodities or to review for a reduced freight rate or to increase subsidy to relieve the high cost of living in Rodrigues *pou soulaz la popilasyon dan Rodrig? Merci.*

Madam Speaker: Okay, special...

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: We will take it in the subcommittee and we will consider if need be.

Madam Speaker: Okay!

Hon. A. Duval! Last question!

Mr A. Duval: Madam Speaker, the hon. Minister has tried to be reassuring. Can I ask the hon. Minister whether he has projections that have been made with regard to his plan A to B to C to D to E; how there will be an impact on the prices of Mogas, petrol, etc... ; whether

it is from the special procurement contracts that are being awarded for Singapore; whether if the situation worsens, we never know, it is a fluid one, if he has, therefore, projections, and if so, can he make those projections public because thousands of Mauritians are depending on a stability of these prices?

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Minister! You will make it public?

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: Madam Speaker, this is a volatile situation and I am monitoring the situation almost every day and I am also communicating to the press almost every day. I cannot do more than this.

Madam Speaker: Okay! Time is up! Time is up! Thank you. That was a very important question.

Now, we go to PMQT.

Hon. Members, the Table has been advised that PQ B/118 and PQ B/132 will be replied by the hon. Prime Minister, time permitting. Also, PQ B/84, addressed to the hon. Prime Minister, will now be replied by the hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade.

I now call on hon. Jhummun.

FCC – ASSETS SEIZURES – FIU & MRA RESPONSIBILITIES

(No. B/76) Mr R. Jhummun (The Second Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the recent seizures of assets by the Financial Crimes Commission, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the respective responsibilities of the Financial Intelligence Unit and the Mauritius Revenue Authority in the identification, analysis and reporting of suspicious financial activities, including cases of unexplained wealth in relation thereto.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, Sections 56 and 113 of the Financial Crimes Commission Act provide that where in the discharge of their functions, the Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) and the Mauritius Revenue Authority (MRA), amongst others, have reasonable grounds to suspect an illicit source of income, they shall refer the matter for investigation to the Financial Crimes Commission (FCC), which has been empowered to seize assets, pursuant to section 61 of the Financial Crimes Commission Act.

Madam Speaker, the FIU is responsible for receiving, analysing, and disseminating financial intelligence. It analyses Suspicious Transaction Reports received from regulated financial institutions and, where indicators of financial crimes are identified, refers cases along with supporting evidence, that is, the intelligence reports, to the FCC for investigation and enforcement.

Madam Speaker, in so far as the MRA is concerned, it is responsible for the administration and enforcement of revenue laws, including the collection of taxes, duties, contributions and levies. MRA plays a key role in combating tax evasion and related financial offences.

In cases where there are reasonable grounds again to suspect the commission of a money laundering offence or the existence of unexplained wealth, the MRA refers such matters to the FCC for enquiry, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Income Tax Act and the Financial Crimes Commission Act.

Madam Speaker, it is opportune to highlight that in accordance with Section 132 of the Financial Crimes Commission Act, there is provision for the setting up of a National Coordination Committee under the chair of the Director-General of the Financial Crimes Commission for combating financial crimes which consists among others, the Director of the Financial Intelligence Unit and the Director-General of the Mauritius Revenue Authority.

Madam Speaker, in view of the fact that these institutions operate in a totally independent manner, so, it would not be in order to provide the information requested by the hon. Member.

Madam Speaker: Thank you, hon. Prime Minister.

Yes!

Mr A. Duval: Madam Speaker, may I ask the hon. Prime Minister, there have been many, many seizures in the last few months, which is a very good thing, but it highlights a major problem. There are tens of millions of assets being bought in car dealerships by persons who are being prosecuted at the moment for money laundering.

The question is whether the hon. Prime Minister has received information for the need to severely strengthen and toughen KYC legislations and requirements on car dealers whether brand-new cars or second-hand cars because it is not normal that there are – if you look at yesterday's seizures, nearly Rs100 million of cars...

Madam Speaker: Just question!

Mr A. Duval: ... bought at one dealer whether he finds it normal and whether he does not find the need now to come with severe and stronger legislations?

Madam Speaker: Be short and direct, please!

Yes!

The Prime Minister: No, I do not find it normal and we hope that we will catch all these people but the law is very, very strong already on this. It is very pertinent to look at the law and to see what are the penalties that are being given. So, there is no need to again go and consolidate a law that is already very severe.

Mr A. Duval: Madam Speaker, if I may ask a second question? May I ask the hon. Prime Minister, if the law is sufficiently strong at the moment, why is it then that persons who were involved in drug trafficking – suspected – are allowed to go and to buy a car for Rs20 million and goes 3 or 4 cars at one dealer? How is the law now working in that sense? May hon. Prime Minister say whether any prosecutions have been laid against any of those persons who have facilitated those transactions of money-laundering by selling such high value assets to people who are clearly using tainted proceeds?

The Prime Minister: That is clear as you said. They are in possession of the cars. There is no evidence that they have actually bought the cars.

Madam Speaker: Okay! Alright, hon. Jhummun, you did not have anything else? Hon. Beejan!

SCEs, PS, DPS, AS – POSTING & RESHUFFLING – POLICY, PROTOCOL & CRITERIA

(No. B/77) Mr N. Beejan (Second Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the Senior Chief Executives, Permanent Secretaries, Deputy Permanent Secretaries and Assistant Permanent Secretaries, he will state the policy, protocol or criteria governing the posting and reshuffling thereof, indicating the –

- (a) duration of a posting in a given institution/department or Ministry, and

- (b) whether there are currently instances of officers remaining posted in any one posting for more than five years and, if so, table the list thereof, indicating the duration in each case.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, the grades of Senior Chief Executive, Permanent Secretary, Deputy Permanent Secretary and Assistant Secretary (formerly known as Assistant Permanent Secretary) form part of the Administrative Cadre of the public service. The Administrative Cadre is involved in the formulation, coordination and implementation of Government policies, goals and objectives and providing administrative support to the machinery of Government.

The officers of the Administrative Cadre are also called upon to give advice and support to Ministers on the current Government business including their parliamentary duties, drafting and administration of legislation, initiating and implementing programmes which aim at enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of any department of Government where they are posted.

Madam Speaker, pursuant to Section 89(4) of the Constitution, Supervising Officers including Senior Chief Executives and Permanent Secretaries, amongst others, are appointed by the Public Service Commission subject to the concurrence of the Prime Minister.

As regard, Deputy Permanent Secretaries and Assistant Secretaries, they are appointed by the Public Service Commission and their postings fall within the ambit of the responsibilities of the Secretary to Cabinet and Head of the Civil Service.

While posting these officers, the Secretary to Cabinet and Head of the Civil Service ensures that they get the opportunity to acquire appropriate experience and exposure in the management of the whole administrative machinery of government. However, the duration of their posting is subject to the exigencies of the service.

In regard to part (b) of the question, Madam Speaker, I am tabling the list of officers.

Madam Speaker: Thank you.

Yes, Dr. hon. Aumeer!

POLICE OFFICERS – ASSAULTS & MOLESTATION – REPORTED CASES

(No. B/78) Dr. F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port-Louis South & Port-Louis Central) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in

regard to assaults on and molesting of Police Officers on duty, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of reported cases thereof over the past two years, indicating the –

- (a) number of arrests effected in connection therewith as at to date, indicating the number of convictions secured, if any, and
- (b) measures taken to prevent occurrences thereof.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I wish to state very clearly that I strongly condemn any acts of assault, intimidation or molestation against Police Officers and other public officers who are carrying out their duties. Government will not condone any such behaviour and will continue to ensure that firm action is taken against all such offenders.

These men and women are in the front line, ensuring public security. Any violence against them is not only an attack on individuals, but it is also an attack on the very fabric of our society.

In fact, under Section 159 of the Criminal Code the offence of “Assault upon agent of civil or military authorities”, including Police Officers, acting in the discharge of their duties, is liable to a fine not exceeding Rs25,000 and imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years. Under the Public Officers’ Protection Act, any person who resists, opposes, molests or obstructs a public officer in the performance of his duty, commits an offence and is liable, upon conviction, to a fine not exceeding Rs200,000 and imprisonment for a term not exceeding five years.

As regards part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that for the period 01 January 2024 to 19 March 2026, a total of 247 persons have been arrested for the offence of “Assault upon agent of civil or military authorities”. Out of these, 27 persons have been convicted as at date. With regard to cases of molesting Police Officers, for the same period, I am informed that 144 persons have been charged, out of whom, 12 have been convicted as at date.

As regards part (b) of the question, I am informed that several measures to address and prevent assaults on and molesting of Police Officers in the discharge of their duties have been put in place by the Police and they are as follows –

- (i) Police Officers are provided with continuous training in safety and self-defence, including the use of appropriate restraint techniques and equipment, so as to

enable them to respond effectively to potentially violent situations while minimising risks to themselves and to the public;

- (ii) Police interventions, particularly in identified hot spots and during large public gatherings, are carried out with the support of specialised units, including the Emergency Response Service and the Divisional Support Unit, to ensure adequate backup and rapid response capability;
- (iii) the Police are also making enhanced use of technology, including the Safe City camera system, for a more effective operation planning and action;
- (iv) community sensitisation initiatives are conducted through the Crime Prevention Unit and Community Policing programmes to raise awareness on the role of the Police but more importantly, on the legal consequences of assaulting or obstructing Police Officers.

Madam Speaker, as I have already informed the House, Police will use body-worn cameras by the end of March and will introduce the use of tasers. These measures will contribute to deter acts of aggression against Police Officers.

Madam Speaker, I have to make it very clear that we cannot and will not tolerate any assault on any Police Officer. People must learn to respect the uniform. In view of this, my Government intends to review the penalties, higher in the Police and Criminal Justice Bill which we will be bringing to Parliament shortly.

Ms Anquetil: Bravo, PM!

Madam Speaker: Yes, Dr. Aumeer?

Dr. Aumeer: Thank you, hon. Prime Minister. Thank you, Madam Speaker. In an attempt for severe deterrent action, when we look at the number of cases – 247 and 144, will the hon. Prime Minister consider in the setup of the Police Criminal Bill which is coming further, that the harshest deterrent factor would be not to allow bail to any of those causing physical abuse or molesting, as evidenced in Safe City cameras or body-worn cameras, which will come in effect at the end of March? These people should not have bail. They should not be on our streets.

The Prime Minister: Unfortunately, I cannot say that because it will depend on the court. The court will look at the case individually, each case on its own merit and then decide whether bail should be given or not.

Madam Speaker: *Séparation des pouvoirs.* Yes, Mr Beechhook?

Mr Beechhook: *Merci, Madame la présidente.* Considering the prominence of social media, will the hon. Prime Minister also consider to tighten the rules and also punish those who record and broadcast those videos of verbal and physical aggression towards our Police Officers, which have unfortunately, contributed to trivialise violence against our Police Officers?

The Prime Minister: I totally agree with the hon. Member and we are, in fact, in the process of having a Government-to-Government Agreement with the Government of India, in fact, to look at all these things that are happening here. We have recently seen cases and we will tighten the law on this.

Madam Speaker: Okay, yes, hon. A. Duval.

Mr A. Duval: May I ask the hon. Prime Minister, in fact, I am reiterating...

Madam Speaker: You have asked before, yes.

Mr A. Duval: ...a question that whether he will consider to have specialised units like the SSU etc., in present with normal Police Officers who conduct road blocks, stopping of vehicles and contraventions etc., because we have seen – yesterday I think or the day before – there was an incident in Port Louis where a Police Officer was taken to task by a group of persons after having booked someone? So, whether he will consider giving instructions to the Commissioner of Police...

Madam Speaker: Do not repeat! Do not repeat! Yes?

Mr A. Duval: ...so that Police Officers conducting road blocks have enough support with those specialised units?

Madam Speaker: Specialised.

The Prime Minister: I will pass on the information to the Commissioner of Police. I cannot direct him how to operate his Police Force but I can give him that information.

Madam Speaker: Good! Next question, Mr Beechhook. Yes!

MAURITIAN ECONOMY – MOODY’S RATING – COMPREHENSIVE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

(No. B/79) Mr R. Beechhook (Second Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister

of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the Mauritian economy, he will state whether a comprehensive impact assessment thereon has been carried out should Moody's downgrade the sovereign credit rating thereof to junk status for some reasons or the other and, if so, give details thereof.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, as I have stated on several occasions, the economic mismanagement and irresponsible fiscal stewardship of the previous Government have driven our sovereign credit rating by Moody's perilously close to junk status.

The House will recall that, in June 2012, when we were in office, Moody's upgraded our credit rating from Baa2 to Baa1 with a stable outlook. I should doubt that before the 2014 election, because we had managed the economy with prudence, public debt was 59.5% of GDP, in other words, lower than 60%, as it is in the European Union. This rating remained unchanged until April 2020, when the deterioration in macroeconomic management by the previous Government, began to raise serious concerns.

There was a marked departure from prudent fiscal management that was eroding confidence in the sustainability of our public finances. Consequently, Mauritius was downgraded by Moody's, not on one occasion, not on two occasions but on four occasions –

- (a) in April 2020, the outlook was changed from positive to negative;
- (b) in March 2021, the rating was downgraded from Baa1 to Baa2 with a negative outlook;
- (c) in July 2022, the rating was further downgraded to Baa3 with stable outlook, and
- (d) finally in January 2025, the outlook changed from stable to negative, that is, the lowest investment grade rating.

Madam Speaker, simply on the quantitative aspects of the scorecard of Moody's, we should have been downgraded to the junk status. Against this backdrop, I sent a high-level delegation to London to discuss with the top management of Moody's to explain our economic and fiscal consolidation plan and our commitments for structural reforms. That included the pension reform which had become unsustainable as the IMF and the World Bank had been saying since the previous Government was in office but they turned a blind eye, of course to that. We avoided the downgrade with our intervention and bold fiscal consolidation measures were implemented.

Madam Speaker, the consequences of a downgrade to junk status would have had incalculable and far-reaching effects such as –

- (a) lower investor confidence could slow down the FDI inflows or trigger capital outflows as foreign investors try to reduce their risk exposure;
- (b) reduced investor confidence and capital outflows would lead to a depreciation of the rupee, which would in turn, increase import costs and inflationary pressures. That is why I am surprised when the Leader of the Opposition says what he says. He does not seem to realise what they have done; the economic crime they have committed against this country;
- (c) reduced investments, higher costs and depreciation of the rupee would lead to lower economic growth;
- (d) a downgrading of the credit rating of our commercial banks would reflect the sovereign credit rating which will make our international business difficult and more costly;
- (e) in view of the increased risk perception, Government, banks and businesses in Mauritius would inevitably face higher interest rates and new debt borrowing will become even more expensive, if you get the loan.

Madam Speaker, let me remind the House that these consequences would have had ripple effects on the population at large. A large proportion of the non-resident deposits in the banking system are very sensitive to the investment grade. A downgrade could trigger a significant capital outflow which will destabilise the forex market, that remains under pressure in spite of the improvement of our external balance and the regular interventions of the Bank of Mauritius. This would put additional pressure on the value of the rupee, which would in turn increase prices significantly, affecting the purchasing power and living standard of the population.

The Macroeconomic Coordination Committee, which comprises representatives of the Prime Minister's Office, the Ministry of Finance, the Bank of Mauritius, Statistics Mauritius and the Economic Development Board, is closely monitoring developments related to our sovereign credit rating. The Committee has also undertaken various scenario analysis and stress testing to assess potential risks and policy responses.

Mauritius remains under the close scrutiny of Moody's. The Government is doing everything within its powers to prevent a further downgrade to junk status.

Madam Speaker, allow me to make a point regarding Standard and Poor's (S&P), which is another grading agency. In February 2023, the previous Minister of Finance had requested the Bank of Mauritius to enter directly into a contract with S&P to carry out a second sovereign credit rating for Mauritius. The file was being handled by the very special adviser at the level of the Bank of Mauritius. There are no official records at the Ministry of Finance for such a request.

As a matter of principle, Madam Speaker, the sovereign credit rating is the responsibility of Government through the Ministry of Finance. The contract was not renewed in March of this year due to the fact that there are no immediate plans for the Government to tap the international debt markets. You did two sovereign credit ratings for tapping the international debt markets.

The House may wish to note that S&P published its first sovereign credit rating for Mauritius on 21 July 2023, and the most recent one was published on 27 October 2025 with a rating of BBB negative, stable outlook. The BBB negative rating is the lowest rating at investment grade. This was not as some people are trying say, especially from the MSM. We know who they are. They are trying to say it is a pre-emptive strike to avoid scrutiny, contrary to the false narrative that is being peddled. It is not at all the case, as I have explained, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I must say something else. We have embarked on a difficult, yet necessary, fiscal consolidation with last year's budget, strengthened governance of key institutions and upgraded our data dissemination standards to the IMF's SDDS Plus. We are the first country in Africa to attain that level.

The IMF has highlighted in its communiqué, and let me quote, Madam Speaker –

“By adhering to the SDDS Plus, Mauritius meets the most rigorous standards for the dissemination of essential macroeconomic and [fiscal] data on the state of the economy and its financial linkages, as established in the IMF's Data Standards Initiatives. This achievement underscores the country's [that is, Mauritius] strong commitment to data transparency vis-à-vis the public, markets, and the international community.”

In addition, the Government has sought and received technical assistance, earlier this year, from the IMF on fiscal responsibility frameworks. All these actions signal the Government's strong commitment to anchoring fiscal discipline in cementing the reputation of Mauritius as a credible investment grade jurisdiction for international visitors.

Madam Speaker, to end, I should also add that given the situation as it is, we will continue to monitor and implement our fiscal consolidation programme to gradually bring down the budget deficit and public debt to sustainable levels.

We need to rebuild the economy first in order to firmly place it on a higher growth path while ensuring that the benefits are shared across the whole of the population.

Madam Speaker: Okay. Yes, you are alright?

Now, hon. Lobine!

MASCARENE PLATEAU REGION – EXTENDED CONTINENTAL SHELF – JOINT MANAGEMENT AREA

(No. B/80) Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the Extended Continental Shelf in the Mascarene Plateau Region, he will state whether, during the recent State Visit of His Excellency the President of the Republic of Seychelles to Mauritius –

- (a) the progress of the Joint Management Area (JMA) framework was discussed;
- (b) new agreements or Memoranda of Understanding were signed to further explore and exploit the natural resources within the JMA, and
- (c) the exploration for potential petroleum and the conduct of seismic surveys were discussed.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, let me first inform the House that after the 2010 General Elections, I was made aware of a dispute between Mauritius and Seychelles over 396,000 square kilometres of Extended Continental Shelf in the Mascarene Plateau Region. The Governments of Mauritius and Seychelles were in disagreement, and therefore, we were going to the United Nations for the resolution of the dispute.

I then decided to call the then President of Seychelles, Mr James Michel, and impressed upon him that Mauritius and Seychelles being two neighbouring and friendly countries should make an effort to avoid having recourse to the United Nations for the resolution of the dispute which could have taken about ten years to be resolved.

The then President of Seychelles immediately agreed with me, and he decided that we can make a joint submission, that is, by both Mauritius and Seychelles, to the United Nations Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf. I must say, Madam Speaker, this initiative was highly commended by the then Secretary-General of the United Nations. In fact, I think it was unique that two countries decided not to go to the United Nations to resolve the dispute, but to come to an agreement between ourselves.

In March 2011, the United Nations Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf conferred upon both Mauritius and Seychelles joint jurisdiction over an area of 396,000 square kilometres of Extended Continental Shelf in the Mascarene Plateau Region. The area is now referred to as the Joint Management Area.

In March 2012, Mauritius and Seychelles signed a treaty to jointly manage the Joint Management Area. They also agreed to exercise sovereign rights jointly for the purpose of exploring the Joint Management Area and exploiting its natural resources.

The joint management of Mauritius and Seychelles of the Extended Continental Shelf remains a shining example of constructive international cooperation.

Madam Speaker, with regard to part (a) of the question, the progress of the Joint Management Area was indeed addressed during the recent State Visit of His Excellency Dr. Patrick Herminie, President of the Republic of Seychelles to Mauritius. Both Mauritius and Seychelles reiterated their commitment to the sustainable development and sound governance of the Joint Management Area, in line with the principles of shared stewardship and mutual benefit.

With regard to part (b) of the question, during the recent State visit of the President of Seychelles, we both made a solemn Joint Declaration concerning the sustainable development of the Joint Management Area in the Mascarene Plateau Region. The Declaration, Madam Speaker, reflects a deliberate political choice by both Mauritius and Seychelles, in that the

sovereignty over maritime resources must be exercised responsibly, sustainably and in full respect of international law.

The Declaration operationalises the 2012 Treaty on the Joint Management of the Continental Shelf in the Mascarene Plateau Region. It embeds environmental safeguards into every aspect of resource exploration and exploitation in the Joint Management Area. It affirms our commitment to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, the Nairobi Convention, and the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly SDG 14.

This Declaration further consolidates the legal and institutional framework which the Joint Commission of the Joint Management Area has established for its effective joint management. These comprise a series of legal codes which have been elaborated further to the signature of the Treaty –

- (i) The Environmental Code of Practice;
- (ii) The Model Petroleum Agreement;
- (iii) The Offshore Petroleum Safety Code;
- (iv) The Joint Fiscal and Taxation Code, and
- (v) The Marine Scientific Research Code.

In addition, Madam Speaker, progress in the following areas has been noted during the last meeting of the Joint Commission of the Joint Management Area –

- (i) the conduct of a Sustainable Exploratory Fisheries for sea cucumber;
- (ii) potential for Carbon Credit projects;
- (iii) Joint Management Area Information System;
- (iv) Oil Spill Contingency Plan and Monitoring, Control and Surveillance;
- (v) Geotechnical/Seismic Survey;
- (vi) Monaco Indian Ocean Explorations, 2022;
- (vii) Domestication of Joint Management Area Codes, and

(viii) Progress on Strategic Plan 2023-2027.

With regard to part (c) of the question, this Government wishes to underline our readiness to pursue further technical discussions on the conduct of geotechnical surveys in the Joint Management Area, which are essential to improve scientific understanding of the seabed and its resources. The two coastal States are presently finalising the agreement for the conduct of geotechnical surveys with the Company CGG/Veridien, based in UK. These prospective activities will, however, be undertaken strictly within established environmental safeguards and in full adherence to national and international obligations, thus ensuring that the ecological integrity of the marine environment of the Mascarene Plateau is preserved while ensuring that conservation considerations remain paramount.

Madam Speaker, the Joint Management Area remains a strategic partnership between Mauritius and Seychelles. It is a symbol of our shared responsibility to manage the resources of the Mascarene Plateau wisely, balancing economic opportunity with ecological stewardship. The recent State Visit has, in fact, reinforced this partnership and charted the course for deeper collaboration in the years ahead.

Madam Speaker: Thank you. Yes, briefly because I am short of time.

Mr Lobine: May I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he can enlighten the House whether there is existence of hydrocarbons within this Joint Management Area? Is there any preliminary report further to the agreement reached in 2014 to have a preliminary report with regard to presence of hydrocarbons within the JMA? Do we have any preliminary report for that?

The Prime Minister: We know that Seychelles had already started doing this, even before we looked at the matter. There are, apparently. There are indications that there might be. We are still exploring.

Madam Speaker: Okay, Dr. Ms Daureeawo, last question!

MAURITIAN DIASPORA SCHEME – SKILLED PROFESSIONALS RETURN

(No. B/81) Dr. Ms R. Daureeawo (Third Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the Mauritian diaspora, he will state –

- (a) whether consideration is being given for the strengthening of the scheme therefor, and
- (b) the measures being taken to facilitate the return of highly skilled professionals thereof to Mauritius.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Economic Development Board that the Mauritian Diaspora Scheme, which was established in 2015, has attracted some 614 members of the Mauritian diaspora to return to the country.

In addition, I am informed that there have been instances of abuse in the availing of the benefits under the Scheme.

As announced in the 2025-2026 Budget Speech, we are reviewing the scheme to enhance its effectiveness and making it less restrictive in facilitating the return of our valuable Mauritian diaspora members, including highly skilled professionals, while at the same time addressing the loopholes which have allowed the abuses of the scheme.

The Economic Development Board is in the process of finalising the new Scheme which will be implemented shortly.

I must remind the House, Madam Speaker, that we have announced in our Government Programme of 2025-2029 the formulation of a Diaspora Policy to better engage our diaspora in the development of our country. There are encouraging signs that highly qualified members of our diaspora are coming back to serve the country. I explained, I think I did say on a few occasions that we now have members of the diaspora serving as the Governor of the Bank of Mauritius, as the CEO of the Mauritius Telecom, at the State Bank of Mauritius and also recently, at the Forensic Science Laboratory.

It is important that we strengthen our engagement with them and put in place the right framework to make the most of their contributions, especially in areas such as investment, skills and knowledge, remittances as well as cultural and social ties.

In this context, with the assistance of the International Organisation for Migration, the services of a consultant have been enlisted for the development of a National Diaspora Policy and Action Plan. The consultant has already submitted a first Report. A draft National Diaspora Policy, with a governance structure for the Diaspora and Global Advisory Council,

has also been prepared. The report of the consultant is being validated by the International Organisation for Migration in consultation with all stakeholders.

Our objective, Madam Speaker, is not only to encourage the Mauritian diaspora to return to the country but also to participate in the national development regardless of location or distance from Mauritius.

Madam Speaker: Very interesting! Yes, good!

Now, the Table has been advised that several PQs have been withdrawn: B/82, B/85, B/88, B/90, B/93, B/94, B/95, and B/97.

Thank you.

I think we can stop here and we will start in one and a half hour with questions addressed to hon. Ministers. Is that alright?

Thank you.

At 12.51 p.m., the Sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 2.30 p.m., with Madam Speaker in the Chair.

Madam Speaker: You may be seated.

Hon. Members, we now have questions addressed to hon. Ministers. We have two hours to go.

The Table has been advised that PQ B/141 will be replied by the hon. Minister of National Infrastructure. He is not here for the moment.

Hon. Third Member for Port-Louis South and Port-Louis Central.

PUBLIC HEALTH INSTITUTIONS – STAFF SHORTAGE – RECRUITMENT & NEW INCENTIVES

(No. B/98) Dr F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port-Louis South & Port-Louis Central) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the public health institutions, he will state the total number of nurses and doctors required on a daily basis to cope with the workload thereat, indicating the –

- (a) additional recruitment needs thereof;
- (b) measures taken to retain experienced nursing staff, and

(c) new incentives being envisaged to attract school leavers to the nursing profession.

Mr Bachoo: Madam Speaker, I am informed that my Ministry is currently undertaking a comprehensive human resources for health assessment with regard to the medical and nursing cadre with a view to determining present and projected staffing requirements, identifying critical gaps and informing evidence-based workforce planning and policy decisions for the health sector.

As per statistics available, the total number of nurses and doctors required on a daily basis to cope with the workload in public health institutions varies according to the services. Hence, the number will differ on weekdays and weekends. I am informed that on average 1417 doctors including medical and health officers and specialists and 1715 nurses are required on a daily basis.

Madam Speaker, upon my assumption of office, I took cognizance that there was a critical shortage of doctors and nurses at the level of all public health institutions, resulting in significant overtime work, bank sessions and extra session of all grades and this situation was also resulting in increasing absenteeism and burnout.

In view thereof, the Budget 2025-2026 provided for the recruitment of additional nurses and doctors namely, the recruitment of 1000 trainee nurses over the next three years since 2025. In addition, provision was also made for recruitment of 50 medical and health officers and 30 specialists among others to reinforce the staffing of my Ministry in these critical grades.

Madam Speaker, with regard to part(a) of the question, I am informed that there is a total of 1236 medical and health officers and 1965 nursing officers in post. My Ministry has recruited a total of 101 medical and health officers and 12 specialists. 14 more medical and health officers are expected to assume duty in the coming months. The recruitment of 46 specialists is in progress. Furthermore, my Ministry is amending the scheme of service of the grade medical and health officer to ease the recruitment of doctors.

Madam Speaker, the House may also wish to note that there are 123 medical and health officers who are on leave, either for studies or other purposes. In order to palliate for their absence, my Ministry has recruited 43 medical and health officers on contract. In view of the non-availability of registered doctors on the local market, it is not possible to fill all the vacant positions.

Madam Speaker, as regard nursing staff, I am informed that each year, approximately 60 nursing officers retire on reaching the age of 65. In addition, a significant number of nursing officers leave the public service for various reasons, further exacerbating the shortage.

Madam Speaker, 223 trainee nurses were enlisted on 22 September 2025 following a vacancy advertisement and are undergoing a 3-year course at the Central School of Nursing. In addition, 138 trainee nurses who joined the training 3 years ago, will complete their training by August 2026.

Madam Speaker, I am informed that the recruitment of nurse educators is currently underway as part of a strategic initiative to transcend training capacity with the health care system and ensure the continuity of training. This measure is intended to enhance the quality and output of nursing education, support the expansion of training programmes and ensure a sustainable number of qualified nursing officers who are available to meet present and future service delivery needs.

Madam Speaker, my Ministry has expanded the range of services to respond to evolving needs in patient care including diabetic footcare, renal transplant, cardiac services and geriatric services among others which necessitate the deployment of additional doctors and nursing staff for the effective operationalisation.

However, in view of the prevailing shortage of medical and nursing personnel across public health institutions, further introduction and full implementation of certain new services cannot be envisaged at this stage.

Madam Speaker, to address the significant shortage of staff in nursing cadre, the following measures have been taken by my Ministry to address the shortfall –

- 67 nursing officers are currently employed on a month-to-month basis;
- 45 retired nursing officers are presently employed on a sessional basis on the bank scheme;
- Approval was obtained for recruitment of 126 nurses on sessional basis. However, only 35 nurses assumed duty following offer made to 41 eligible candidates, and
- Employment of 15 nursing officers on contractual basis for a period of one year is underway.

Madam Speaker, I am also informed that the scheme of service for the post of nursing officer has been amended in November 2025 to provide opportunities for candidates who have successfully completed recognised nursing programme other than the central school of nursing such as Polytechnics Mauritius Ltd and other universities to be recruited in the government service.

Madam Speaker, with regard to parts (b) and (c) of the question, I am informed that the recommendations of the Pay Research Bureau 2026 provide both retention mechanism for serving nursing officers and incentives to enhance attractiveness of profession for school leavers. I am informed that officers of nursing officer cadre are allowed to accumulate vacation leave beyond the authorised ceiling with the option to work during the excess accumulated leave period and received payment in lieu at the time of retirement.

Provision is also made for the refund of unutilised casual leave. These measures contribute to improve conditions of service and serve as an incentive for retention.

Madam Speaker, in addition nursing officers are granted release to follow Continuous Professional Development courses as they are required by law to obtain a minimum of 10 CPD credit points annually for registration with the nursing school.

This facilitation of continuous training and professional development not only support the retention of experienced staff, but also enhances the overall appeal of the nursing profession to prospective entrance, including school leavers.

Madam Speaker, in line with the budgetary measures in financial year 2025-2026, my Ministry will pursue further recruitment of 700 trainee nurses in the two subsequent years. But in view of the shortage of qualified candidates locally, it is unlikely that such recruitment exercise will yield positive outcome.

In view of the circumstances, a proposal to recruit 200 nursing officers from abroad is under consideration by my Ministry, subject to all necessary approvals are being obtained. This measure is intended to compliment ongoing local training and recruitment initiative for the short term.

Madam Speaker, my Ministry remains firmly committed to strengthening the healthcare workforce, which is crucial to ensure the continued delivery of quality service in public health institutions.

Madam Speaker: Thank you. Yes, Dr. Aumeer!

Dr. Aumeer: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Obviously, we do have an ongoing shortage of nursing personnel in this country. May I ask the hon. Minister whether he will consider the setting up of a foundation programme run by the Mauritius Institute of Health that can be used as a template for those who, unfortunately, do not meet the criteria to enter the Central Nursing School of the Polytechnics. This will boost the number of school leavers or those who are lesser achievers to get into a career of nursing? Thank you.

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

Mr Bachoo: Madam Speaker, we have already revived the scheme of service. We have brought it slightly down so as those who are getting training in the universities, those who have university degrees, and those who are diploma holders from the universities and Polytechnics, they will be authorised and they will be allowed to compete. They will be allowed to take part in the selection exercise.

Unfortunately, though we have done that, there has not been any good return. There has not been too much of interest into it. I have no objection if tomorrow we could start a crash course or an important course by the Mauritius Institute of Health. We can do it. Our main problem is: I do not know what is the mentality of our youth these days. They are not willing to come towards the health sector.

But I will try, if such is the suggestion, I am going to look into it. But I can tell that actually, there are many who have already undergone training at the Polytechnics and in the universities. Unfortunately, they are not willing to join the service. Although, according to the PRB report, they have been given a lot of incentives. But I will try, if this is an advice.

Madam Speaker: Okay. Hon. Dr. Prayag!

Dr. Prayag: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Maybe the hon. Minister could consider to get new recruits to sign bonds so that they work for at least a few years before they go to other sectors or the private sector?

Mr Bachoo: Madam Speaker, they will take to their heels once I take this decision. It is impossible!

Madam Speaker: I did not understand, I am sorry. I did not understand your reply.

Mr Bachoo: My reply is simple: If in case I am going to introduce it, all of them will run away!

Madam Speaker: Okay.

Mr Bachoo: I will not have anyone to serve in the hospitals.

Madam Speaker: Okay. Yes, hon. Rookny!

Mr Rookny: Madam Speaker, could the hon. Minister advise whether his main reply as regards to the recruitment of nursing trainers – as we need more—does it not contradict with the actions of the Polytechnics in not renewing the contracts of some twenty nursing trainers?

Mr Bachoo: The Polytechnics does not fall under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Health. But I am told they were contractual workers. Here, in our case, the Mauritius Institute of Health was a very flourishing organisation – a very important organisation internationally recognised.

Unfortunately, during the last ten years, they have destroyed everything. That is the reason why we have to recreate it now, and we have to recruit trainee nurses so that the new recruits can get the best form of training. That is the only reason.

Madam Speaker: Okay. Yes, Dr. Prayag!

Dr. Prayag: Thank you, Madam Speaker. But what if the Ministry of Health in collaboration with the Ministry of Education sponsor education for nursing students and then get them to sign bonds so that they stay in the service?

Mr Bachoo: You know, to start with, they are not interested. Our problem is we had advertised; they are not interested in coming. If they are not interested in coming, how can you ask them to sign a bond? We have to create an atmosphere where they will take an interest to serve. So, the aspect of service is not there. That is the problem.

Madam Speaker: Okay. You will have time to brood upon on it, all of you. It sounds like a very important issue.

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

EDUCATIONAL SECTOR – PROPOSED REFORM

(No. B/99) Mr R. Jhummun (Second Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resource whether in regard to the proposed reform of the educational sector, he will state where matters stand.

Dr. Gungapersad: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. Member for this PQ which will allow me to inform the House where matters stand regarding the proposed reform in the educational sector. There are a series of changes which have already been undertaken.

Today, with the Foundation Programme which has replaced the Extended Programme, we are already giving nearly 2,500 students the opportunity to follow an academic pathway which suits them. We are also giving nearly 4,000 students with three and four credits the opportunity to their HSC instead of heartlessly kicking them out of the system, like the previous regime. Obviously, this decision may impact on the quality of HSC results next year.

Madam Speaker, while the former Minister of Education did not believe in participative or collaborative strategic policy development framework, I opted to act differently. That is why my Ministry undertook extensive consultations during the *Assises de l'Éducation* held during April and May 2025 in both Mauritius and Rodrigues to obtain stakeholders views on priority areas for reform in the education sector.

Subsequently, a technical committee was set up to incorporate the feedback and recommendations into the blueprint for education intended to serve as the strategic policy framework for educational sector transformation.

Madam Speaker, on 14 November 2025, the Government examined the first draft of the blueprint, and an inter-ministerial committee was constituted to further deepen the analysis of the specific recommendations made in the blueprint.

Meetings of the inter-ministerial committee were convened on 18, 21 and 24 November 2025, respectively, and a report was submitted to Government on 28 November 2025. We know that the public at large, parents and stakeholders in general are not always at ease with abrupt changes in the educational system. We know that any major change in the education system will have far-reaching impact on the lives and future of Mauritians.

Given that this Government believes in dialogue and consultations, it was agreed to hold further public consultations regarding proposals Options A and B as follows –

- Option A – Admission to Grade 7 in national and regional secondary schools based on the PSAC assessment together with the abolition of the NCE examination.
- Option B – admission to Grade 10 in national secondary schools following a review of the existing mode of NCE assessments.

Madam Speaker, on 05 December 2025, Government was further informed that a communiqué would be issued on the same day, inviting public comments on the options

proposed. These consultations were held from 08 December to 20 January 2026. The later date was subsequently extended to 13 February 2026.

Madam Speaker, these public consultations were conducted through an online survey which was carried to seek the views of the public at large on the proposed options which includes –

- Proposals for admission in secondary schools;
- Grading system at PSAC, and
- Gender model for secondary schools.

A consultative meeting was also be convened on the subject on 15 January 2026 with Ministers, Junior ministers and Members of the National Assembly and Members of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly.

Madam Speaker, in month of February 2026, further consultations were held with other relevant stakeholders including Service Diocésain de L'Éducation Catholique, the Private Secondary Education Authority, the Mauritius Examination Syndicate, the MIE, the Special Education Needs Authority as well as the unions of the primary and secondary education sub sectors.

Furthermore, on 05 February 2026, my Ministry engaged in a consultative meeting with students and parents on options mentioned above. On 11 February 2026, further consultations were held in Rodrigues, again, with students and parents.

In light of all these additional consultations, my Ministry convened a meeting of the Interministerial Committee on 23 March 2025 to review the findings and formulate recommendations with regard to the preferred option for admission to secondary schools, the grading system for PSAC and the proposed gender model for schools.

Madam Speaker, although we are no longer in the consultation phase, innovative ideas and new concepts continue to emerge. We care deeply for children. Under the current zonal system, for example, for admission in regional schools, a child may be required to travel from Grand Gaube to La Tour Koeing or from Beau Bassin to eastern part of the country simply to attend school. This is unfair. We are therefore seriously considering reviewing the zonal system.

Moreover, certain decisions taken by the previous government adversely affected the curriculum for lower secondary. In practice, because students from the extended stream and mainstream were required to sit for the same National Certificate of Examinations, the curriculum was adapted to accommodate the extended stream. Unfortunately, this did not adequately serve those students preparing for Cambridge Examinations. The result as we all know speak for themselves.

Madam Speaker, we have initiated serious discussions with Cambridge University regarding a new curriculum for lower secondary that is for grade 7 to grade 9 so that our students are adequately prepared to take the School Certificate Examinations in the future.

Soon, the recommendations will be presented to the Cabinet and to the public.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Thank you.

Yes, hon. Jhummun!

Mr Jhummun: Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether there is a timeline as to when all these changes will be implemented?

Dr. Gungapersad: I wish to inform the hon. Member, with your permission Madam Speaker, that certain decisions which we propose to bring, we have already started but there are certain decisions that we will have to respect, the legal timeframe before implementing them.

We need to give sufficient time for stakeholders before implementing these measures, depending which...

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Ramkalawon!

Mr Ramkalawon: Apart from academic reforms, is the hon. Minister catering for any measure to tackle the severe problem of indiscipline amongst youngsters in schools?

Dr. Gungapersad: Definitely, Madam Speaker, for the past 10 years, I will say, much was not done regarding – you are mentioning indiscipline – regarding proliferation of drugs, bullying, other forms of indiscipline. Last year, hon. Member, we conducted a workshop for nearly 10,000 members of the public, students, parents and so on, to sensitise them on bullying. This year we have already started sensitisation campaign on cyber bullying with the support of the hon. Minister of Information Technology – we have already

undertaken it. We have sought the help of the police force in order to educate, sensitise, train our staff and students regarding the problem of drugs and what are the measures that have to be taken.

Another important measure, Madam Speaker, is the emotional well-being of our kids. What are the factors that have to be taken so that we are not only focused on the academic side but the total development of our kids and especially at a time – let it be mentioned – when many kids come from broken homes, where there is domestic violence and so many toxic activities taking place. How do we look after our kids amidst that situation; all these are being taken care of by different members of my Ministry and other stakeholders, other ministries which are helping the Ministry of Education.

Madam Speaker: Okay!

Yes, hon. Jhummun!

Mr Jhummun: Thank you, Madam Speaker. One of the major reforms is the replacement of Extended Programme by the Foundation Programme. So, can the hon. Minister inform the House whether we are on the right track concerning the Foundation Programme?

Dr. Gungapersad: Thank you very much for that question, hon. Member. I think it was yesterday that you accompanied me along with hon. Dr. Ms. Daureeawo to secondary school in the South, if I am not mistaken, and we saw *de visu*, the good work of our kids.

For example, I wish, with your permission, to inform the House, we saw our girls, Foundation Programme Girls, grade 8 who were doing plumbing and they presented their work. Also, given that we are talking about our import of food of 80% nearly, – hon. Minister Minister of Agro-Industry, Food Security, Blue Economy and Fisheries in Mauritius, will take note of that – how our kids foundation, they are coming with hydroponics and how they are going for horizontal and vertical smart farming.

So, it is on the right track and I wish to inform the hon. Member that for the Foundation Programme, soon we are going to recruit around 14 to 16 coordinators to look, to oversee the work that is being done by the Foundation Programme because we are giving opportunities, Madam Speaker, to students. If we were not in power, if this Government were not here, we would have kicked nearly 2500 students in the street by giving them a curriculum not adapted to their needs but, we, we are empowering these kids and gradually this may help at the

various levels: food security. But also, we are empowering these kids so that their skills can help in proper human resource management in the short and long term.

Madam Speaker: Thank you.

We are going to stick with that question, as usual very interesting. Okay then, after that.

Mr Jhummun: Thank you, Madam Speaker. As the hon. Minister is saying that opportunities are being given to students, will these students be given the opportunity to do Oriental languages and KM at the same time?

Madam Speaker: Oh my God! No, hon. Minister, we had that question last week.

So, we are not going to go into that. We already had the question. Hon. Beechook, I think asked the question. He replied – it is like we repeating every Tuesday.

Mr Jhummun: Madam, you have a sharp memory.

Madam Speaker: Of course, I am interested in the subject.

Yes, Mr Etwareea!

Mr Etwareea: Merci, Madam Speaker, this question is not a joke, it is a philosophical one. While we are talking about reforms, can we imagine that someday we organise all the examinations, not just Cambridge but we have it done here in Mauritius?

Madam Speaker: Oh, wow! Fantastic!

Dr. Gungapersad: We need to reflect, okay! We cannot throw an answer like that, all right? And, there are some papers at least, hon. Member will take note, there are some papers which are marked, prepared by Mauritians. Alright!

Madam Speaker: Oriental languages?

Dr. Gungapersad: ... and other subjects also.

Madam Speaker: Okay with that question. Next question is First Member for Port-Louis Maritime and Port Louis East, hon. Juman!

ANJALAY COOPEN STADIUM – OPERATIONALITY

(No. B/100) Mr E. Juman (First Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the Anjalay Coopen Stadium, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Sports Council, information as to the date of coming into full operation thereof.

Mr Nagalingum: Madam Speaker, in my written reply PQ B/1098 of the Sitting of 25 November 2025, I have provided the reason why the Anjalay Coopen Stadium is not fully operational.

I would like to highlight once again the deplorable state of sports infrastructures that this government inherited from the previous regime. My Ministry has already initiated urgent and corrective actions to address the issues.

The main reason why the Anjalay Coopen Stadium is not fully operational are as follows –

- (i) heavy water leakage on the Grand stand;
- (ii) absence of fire certificate due to faulty fire alarm system;
- (iii) defective fire hose reels and firefighting equipment;
- (iv) damaged bucket seats and unusable changing rooms;
- (v) broken tiles and damaged false ceilings;
- (vi) flaking and cracking paints, and
- (vii) pigeon infestation.

Madam Speaker, for the current financial year, an amount of Rs15 million has been provided to my Ministry for upgrading works at Anjalay Coopen Stadium.

As at date, these funds have already been fully committed as follows –

- (a) A contract amounting to Rs13 million had been awarded for upgrading works. The work comprised removal and replacement of damaged tiles in corridors and changing rooms, repairs to spalled concrete, internal and external painting works to the front stadium block, application of floor dressing, paint where required, replacement of damaged false ceiling, and removal of wooden ducting. These works have been successfully completed last week.
- (b) A second contract amounting to some Rs3.2 million has been awarded to the supply and installation of bird netting and other accessories such as eagle bird eyes and propellers at the stadium.

The works are ongoing and are expected to be completed in April 2026.

Bids for supply for the installation of a new fire alarm system at the stadium are currently at evaluation stage. Thus, as a result of the works undertaken at the Anjalay Coopen

Stadium, no funds remain available under the current financial year for additional upgrading works that are required to render the latter fully operational. The outstanding works that need to be undertaken thereat are as follows –

- general electrical wiring and flooding repairs;
- major civil and piping works;
- waterproofing works;
- replacement of bucket seats;
- upgrading and synthetic track;
- installation of a scoreboard, and
- general painting work.

Madam Speaker, in view of the extent and nature of the works required at the stadium, substantial investment will be necessary to restore it to the required standard. My Ministry has already worked out a comprehensive scope of works for the rehabilitation of the whole stadium and a financial proposal will be made in the forthcoming Budget 2026-27 to the Ministry of Finance. Hence, at this stage, it would be premature to state a specific date for the reopening of the stadium.

However, Madam Speaker, I wish to highlight that presently, other sections of the stadium are being put at the disposal of a sports club and organisation for sports and non-sport activities.

Madam Speaker: Yes, Mr Juman!

Mr Juman: Madam Speaker, from what we heard from the hon. Minister, it is clear that it is not going to open in the next 12 or 18 months. Despite the stadium being closed, are you aware that we are spending around Rs1 million monthly as fixed cost and is this not a blatant case of spending public funds unjustly?

Mr Nagalingum: Like I said, there are some activities that are ongoing, some sport activities like sport football matches, the parking is being used for some rallies that we are organising for the function and there are also some activities that are going on. So, we cannot stop that. We have curtailed a lot of expenses but we have to do with what we have.

Madam Speaker: Yes, Mr Juman!

Mr Juman: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Can I know from the hon. Minister when is the last time a football match was played there?

Mr Nagalingum: Like I said, the stadium, what we inherited...

Madam Speaker: Minister!

Mr Nagalingum: What we inherited...

Madam Speaker: Minister! Minister! He asked a specific question. When?

Mr Nagalingum: I do not have the exact answer but I am...

Madam Speaker: You do not have?

Mr Nagalingum: But I am saying...

Madam Speaker: The answer is you do not know.

Mr Nagalingum: No, I am saying that we did not have a real match in the stadium because it was not homologated.

Mr Juman: You just said there was a football match recently.

Madam Speaker: Yes, last supplementary!

Mr Juman: Though we spent around Rs13 million and we have a survey done by the CAF, can you lay the report of the survey to the National Assembly?

Mr Nagalingum: Following a close collaboration with the Mauritius Football Association (MFA), inspection of the stadium, Anjalay Coopen, was carried out by Confédération Africaine de Football (CAF) Stadium Inspector during his mission in June 2025. As per the reports submitted to the latter, the two stadiums – Anjalay Coopen and George V Stadium – currently do not meet the minimum CAF Stadium Requirement, that you just asked, to host international matches. So, there is no homologation for these matches but the CAF Inspector highlighted that the Anjalay Coopen Stadium required major upgrading works that we are actually doing and what we have to do in the future.

Madam Speaker: Can you lay on the Table, the CAF – I am not quite good at this one – Report? The CAF Report, is that what you want, hon. Juman? Yes, the CAF Report, can you?

Mr Nagalingum: I can table the report.

Madam Speaker: Yes, *facile*. That's it. Next question, hon. Seeburn!

**ELECTRIC & PLUG-IN HYBRID VEHICLES – REGISTERED NUMBER –
ISLAND-WIDE CHARGING FACILITIES**

(No. B/101) Mr M. Seeburn (Second Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle) asked the Minister of Land Transport whether, in regard to electric and plug-in hybrid electric vehicles, he will –

- (a) for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Land Transport Authority, information as to the number thereof currently registered therewith, and
- (b) state the measures being contemplated to increase the number of public Electric Vehicle Services, including the introduction of mandatory provision thereof at petrol stations island-wide.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the National Land Transport Authority that under the present registration system, both non-plug-in hybrid and plug-in hybrid vehicles are recorded under the same hybrid category.

With regard to part (a) of the question, I am further informed that as per recourse of the NLTA, as at end of February 2026, there were –

- (a) 11,319 fully electric vehicles, including 4,820 autocycles, 15 motorcycles, 6,262 motorcars and 56 buses, 88 goods vehicles, 75 double cab pickups and 3 dual purpose vehicles, and
- (b) 2,209 hybrid vehicles comprising 2,208 motorcars and one dual purpose vehicle which as mentioned above, includes plug-in hybrid vehicles.

In view of the increasing number of electric and hybrid vehicles, the NLTA has been requested to refine its data on vehicle registration so as to allow for a clear distinction between plug-in vehicles and conventional hybrid vehicles henceforth.

Madam Speaker, with regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that as at date there are 56 electric buses registered at the NLTA and which are already in operation. Most of them are from the NTC. This number is expected to increase further with the addition of 60 more electric buses over and above the 40 already operating, donated by the Government of India to the Government of Mauritius for use by the NTC, and further five electric buses already received from the People's Republic of China for the use by the same company, that is, the NTC, and for which we are thankful.

So, from almost zero electric buses, we will have 116 buses, out of which, 105 will be for the NTC on our roads before the end of this year. So, quite a quantum leap in terms of addition to our roads. You will surely appreciate that.

Furthermore, under the Bus Modernisation Programme, a financial subsidy of up to a maximum of Rs3.5 million per bus is provided to bus operators to encourage the acquisition of cleaner and more energy efficient buses, and this will go a long way towards encouraging the electrification of the bus fleet. Support is also being mobilised under the international programmes such as the Global Environment Facility which aims at promoting low carbon transport. The project will run up to September 2028 and with GEF funding, about USD5.6 million, approximately Rs260 million and my Ministry has made a request for the obtention of financial support for the procurement of charging facilities through photovoltaic panels so as to mitigate the carbon footprint in the land transport, a sizeable contributor to national emission of CO₂.

Madam Speaker, the measures that I have just mentioned above underline strongly the will of the Government to pursue a policy of electrification in the public transport sector with emphasis on renewable energy. This policy will further consolidate our transition towards a cleaner public transport.

Furthermore, I am informed by the NLTA that electric vehicle charging facilities, which is part of the question, are currently available at 16 filling stations across the island. However, it is necessary to underline that a significant number of electric vehicles currently in use, including electric and plug-in hybrid vehicles, are charged mostly at the owners' home overnight due to the time it normally takes for a battery to be fully charged.

Besides availability at filling stations, charging facilities are also provided at major shopping malls, at some restaurants and at hotel premises for the convenience of owners of electric or plug-in hybrid vehicles. Excluding the 16 filling stations, about 60 such facilities are already in operation around the island.

Madam Speaker, my Ministry is fully conscious of the need for a wider network of charging facilities to cater for the growing number of vehicles propelled fully or partly by electrical energy. Any extension of such facilities will have to be carefully considered, taking into account safety requirements at dispensing points, electricity grid capacity, space

constraints at filling stations, investment implications and costs charged to vehicles per kilometre hour consumed.

Another factor which may have to be considered is the constant improvement in electric vehicle technology. Madam Speaker, the range of operation of electric vehicles has almost doubled in the recent years from about an autonomy of 300 km to 500-600 km for a fully charged battery. This improvement reduces considerably the requirement for a top-up at public charging facility, particularly with daily kilometres, because we are a small island. We are 46 km in width and 65 km in length.

To end, Madam Speaker, nevertheless, the NLTA will hold consultations with the Ministry of Public Utilities, the petrol supplying companies and other relevant stakeholders in order to gage the necessity for the increase in the number of charging facilities, and for coming up with a regulatory framework which will address issues of concern in my reply. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Yes, you are okay?

Mr Seeburn: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Can the hon. Minister inform the House as to whether it is possible for him to impose a timeframe on the petrol stations, which are already providing the service to the public service vehicles and the hybrid vehicles, so as to facilitate those services?

Mr Osman Mahomed: I believe the petrol stations which are offering these facilities have problems to get customers because under the Electricity Act, no one is allowed to sell electricity without a permit. So, the filling stations charge it on time. When you do the calculations, Madam Speaker, it is as double as what you will be charging if you are doing it at home. So, that is why there are not so much of uptakes at filling stations. But then, the regulatory framework that I mentioned in my substantive reply will address this issue.

Madam Speaker: Okay. It was good! So, we have finished.

Hon. Seeburn, you have another question!

ELVs – REMEDIAL MEASURES & RECYCLING FACILITIES

(No. B/102) Mr M. Seeburn (Second Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle) asked the Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change whether, in regard to old and abandoned vehicles, he will state the measures being taken to address the issue at the level of his Ministry, indicating whether consideration will be given for the setting up of vehicle recycling facilities to encourage environmentally sustainable disposal.

Mr Bhagwan: Madam Speaker, I wish to inform the House that the Solid Waste Management Division of my Ministry had commissioned a feasibility study on the setting up and operation of an end-of-life vehicle (ELV) recycling facility in Mauritius for the depollution, dismantling and recycling of ELVs in June 2021 with the assistance of EU Africa Rise operating under the European Union.

The main findings of the feasibility study are, amongst others, as follows –

- (a) The operation of the ELV recycling facility is feasible and sustainable.
- (b) There is a need to review the Road Traffic Act to enable the enforcement of payment of penalty fines by the polluter.
- (c) The need for new regulations to cater for both total loss and abandoned vehicles.
- (d) The need for relevant stakeholders, namely the Police Department, the *Police de l'Environnement*, the Ministry of Land Transport, and the National Land Transport Authority to review processes regarding the management of total loss vehicles and verification such vehicles by qualified persons.

The House may further wish to note that currently there is no official management system or treatment facility for the recycling of these ELVs at the level of my Ministry. It is, therefore, imperative that we come up with a sustainable solution thereto in order to protect our population and our environment. My Ministry is working on that scope.

Madam Speaker, following the feasibility study submitted in April 2023, multisectoral meetings were held with relevant stakeholders to discuss on the way forward. The following proposals were made, *inter alia* –

- (i) the preparation of regulations by the Solid Waste Management Division of my Ministry for the use of license for the setting up and operation of recycling facility for the depollution and recycling of ELVs;
- (ii) invitation by the Solid Waste Management Division to potential promoters to set up and operate licensed recycling facilities for ELVs, and
- (iii) amendment to existing regulations by the Ministry of Land Transport and preparation of regulation to channel the ELVs towards the licensed recycling facilities.

The House may wish to note that with a view to encouraging environmentally sustainable management of ELVs, several actions have already been initiated by my Ministry and relevant stakeholders. The Solid Waste Management Division has prepared draft regulations for the licensing of a recycling facility for the depollution and recycling, treatment of ELVs. On the other hand, the Ministry of Land Transport has prepared a draft regulation to channel the ELVs to recycling treatment facilities.

The Ministry of Land Transport has informed that they are working actively on the draft Road Traffic (Disposal of Abandoned and Salvaged Motor Vehicles) Regulations 2026 in consultation with my Ministry. The proposed legislation aims to establish a comprehensive framework for the identification, management and disposal of abandoned vehicles as well as vehicles classified as total loss.

Abandoned vehicles are not only an eyesore, but represent a threat to the environment in view of the nuisances and pollution they can cause. As at to date, around 58 abandoned vehicles have been moved to Fort George, 108 to the La Laura Transfer Station by the Police Department, with the assistance of the *Police de l'Environnement*. It is expected that the forthcoming regulatory framework will lay the groundwork for more structured and environmentally sound material recovery practices, facilitating the development of appropriate vehicle dispensing and recycling mechanisms in line with national sustainability objectives.

Madam Speaker: Thank you. First, hon. Seeburn. Then, you.

Mr Seeburn: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I thank the hon. Minister. Can the hon. Minister also consider the possibility of providing financial incentives to the owners who want to dispose their vehicles in an environmentally friendly manner once the setting up of the recycling vehicle facility is put in place?

Mr Bhagwan: Thank you, Madam Speaker. We are working in that direction with all the parties concerned.

Madam Speaker: Okay. Hon. Lobine!

Mr Lobine: Thank you, Madam Speaker. May I ask the hon. Minister whether there is a comprehensive study with regard to the number of end-of-life vehicles that we have around the island as at now? It is scattered all around the island, but we do not have a specific survey for that.

Mr Bhagwan: The survey is in process. I can assure the hon. Member. This is a real problem. It is an eyesore. So, we are working, not only by ourselves, but along with the local authorities.

Madam Speaker: I am just laughing because we know where to find these vehicles in Rose Hill. Yes!

Dr. Aumeer: Thank you, Madam Speaker. May I ask the hon. Minister, until the setting up of a recycling unit which will obviously take time, will his Ministry consider having a dedicated compound in certain areas of the country? Because these abandoned and old cars are eyesores, now being used as little drug dens and sometimes for cheap prostitution.

Mr Bhagwan: I do agree with my good friend. It is a real problem. We are working with the Police. We have been using the La Laura Centre and also a site at Fort George with the help of the Police. This is a real problem and I think that any suggestion from any hon. Member is most welcomed.

Madam Speaker: Okay! Let's hope that the eyesores will go. Gradually, we will get rid of these eyesores.

Mr Beechook, yes! You want to share the joke?

Mr Beehook: No, sorry Madam. B/103, please!

TOURIST ENTERPRISE LICENSE – NIGHTCLUBS’ OPERATION

(No. B/103) Mr R. Beehook (Second Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil) asked the Minister of Tourism whether, in regard to the Tourist Enterprise License, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Tourism Authority, information as to whether it is in presence of representations to the effect that some holders thereof are operating as nightclubs and, if so, indicate whether appropriate actions will be taken in relation thereto.

The Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection (Mr M. Yeung Sik Yuen): Madam Speaker, with your permission, I shall reply to this PQ.

I am informed by the Tourism Authority that following inspections carried out by its Monitoring and Compliance Unit from January to March 2026 –

- (a) 25 contraventions have been issued for non-compliance to conditions of licenses namely –
 - (i) Operation hours;
 - (ii) Permitted noise level, and
 - (iii) Maximum number of persons at a time, amongst others.
- (b) 1 entity SC Company Ltd based in Ebene which holds a valid license to operate as a pub was carrying out night club activities without having the appropriate Tourist Enterprise License, was booked on 14 March 2026;
- (c) Another company BPE Ltd based in Quatre Bornes which was advertising and operating as pub without holding the appropriate Tourist Enterprise License was booked on 14 March 2026, and
- (d) Another restaurant, B Ltd at Grand Baie, was operating as pub, night club without appropriate license, was booked on 22 March 2026.

Madam Speaker, I am informed that severe actions have been taken by the Tourism Authority against these three companies. On 23 March 2026, BPE Ltd was issued with a provisional closing down order and the other two were instructed to show cause as to why their respective licenses should not be suspended. Actions are being contemplated against other operators to ensure that activities are undertaken in a sustainable manner. In line with

the legislation and according to guidelines and conditions to license while assuring safety and security for both tourists and Mauritians.

The Tourism Authority will continue to carry out regular inspections together with the Mauritius Police Force and other relevant Authorities to ensure strict compliance with licensing conditions and public safety regulations are adhered to.

I must point out, Madam Speaker, that the inspections carried out by the Monitoring and Compliance Unit of the Tourism Authority are done jointly with representatives of other institutions, including the *Police du Tourisme*, the *Police de l'Environnement*, the Emergency Response Service, *La Brigade des Mineurs*, the National Coastguard, the Sanitary Health Inspection Division of the Ministry of Health and Wellness, and the Beach Authority.

Madam Speaker, I wish to assure the hon. Member that the Ministry of Tourism and the Tourism Authority are doing their utmost to reinforce enforcement mechanism so as to ensure that public order and our tourism sector are safeguarded.

Madam Speaker: Thank you. Yes, Mr Beechook!

Mr Beechook: Yes, Madam Speaker, I thank the Acting hon. Minister of Tourism for this comprehensive reply.

However, is the hon. Minister aware that pubs are not allowed to run dance floors and run concerts with amplified equipment? Is the hon. Minister aware that it is currently the practice that pubs run as night clubs outside permitted hours generating all sorts of hazards which are: high level of alcohol, traffic issues and noise pollution?

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: I am not aware but I will ask the Tourism Authority to take appropriate actions.

Madam Speaker: Thank you, hon. Minister. Yes, he won't be aware!

Mr Beechook: Will the hon. Minister agree that very often the fines that are imposed to these pubs that operate as night club are, maybe hundred or thousand times lesser than the amount of revenue that they generate on one particular day and doesn't act as a deterrent with regard to those illegal activities?

Madam Speaker: You know hon. Minister?

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: As I am not the substantive Minister, I will talk to the substantive Minister on it.

Madam Speaker: Yes, logically what you want is for the law...

Mr Beechook: Last question! Is the hon. Minister ready to meet with the stakeholders of this industry *pour mettre de l'ordre* in this bazaar that is operating in this sector?

Madam Speaker: Il va passer le message.

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: I am ready to meet them if necessary.

Madam Speaker: Yes, alright! I think the message has gone.

Okay, now I am calling on the Third Member for Pamplemousses and Triolet, Mr Rookny!

WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT – ADEQUATE CAPTURE, STORAGE & DISTRIBUTION – KEY PROJECTS & TOTAL INVESTMENT

(No. B/104) Mr K. Rookny (Third Member for Pamplemousses & Triolet) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the country's water resources management, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Water Resources Unit, information as to whether a comprehensive roadmap has been established to ensure the adequate capture, storage and distribution of water for both potable and irrigation purposes and, if so –

- (a) give details thereof, including timelines and key projects to be implemented, and
- (b) indicate the total investment required to implement same and the sources of funding identified.

Mr Assirvaden: Madame la présidente, mon ministère dispose d'un plan directeur pour la gestion intégrée des ressources en eau à Maurice. Le plan directeur définit la feuille de route pour la mobilisation, le stockage et la distribution de l'eau à l'horizon de 2050. Il présente la planification stratégique des projets, tels que la construction de nouveaux barrages, la réhabilitation ou l'agrandissement des barrages existants, la construction de prises d'eau directes dans les rivières ou en réservoirs, et le forage des puits. Ces projets sont mis en œuvre en fonction des priorités et des financements disponibles.

Madame la présidente, face à la sécheresse sans précédent que connaît le pays depuis 2024 en particulier, mon ministère a élaboré un plan Marshall, approuvé par le Cabinet en octobre 2025, l'année dernière. Ce plan définit la stratégie du ministère pour mobiliser des ressources en eau supplémentaires court et à moyen terme. Le plan Marshall repose sur six piliers stratégiques –

Le premier, le développement actif des eaux souterraines. Le plan prévoit en priorité le forage d'une vingtaine de puits supplémentaires au cours des trois prochaines années. Il est à noter que depuis novembre 2025, donc l'année dernière, huit nouveaux puits ont été forés, permettant d'injecter 24,800 m³ par jour d'eau supplémentaire dans le réseau. Le coût, ça va couler autour de R263 millions étalé sur plusieurs années.

Pilier deux - Expansion des eaux de surface. Le déploiement des systèmes de traitement décentralisés, les CPF, qu'on met dans les rivières pour pomper l'eau, permettant la purification de l'eau sur les sites et approvisionnement en eau réparti et résilient, constitue un autre volet du plan Marshall. Depuis octobre 2025, donc l'année dernière, la CWA a installé 7 CPF et prélève environ 15,500 m³ d'eau supplémentaires chaque jour pour alimenter plusieurs régions de l'île.

La CWA a lancé un appel d'offres, l'année dernière, pour l'installation de 15 CPF supplémentaires à proximité de cours d'eau, donc des rivières et des lacs. La procédure d'acquisition est en cours auprès du CPB. Le projet, financé par le gouvernement, est estimé à R 310 millions sur plusieurs années encore une fois.

Troisième pilier – le plan Marshall préconise l'utilisation de l'eau hydroélectrique, l'eau que le CEB utilise pour produire l'électricité. Donc nous allons encore pomper cette eau là pour remettre sur le réseau. Pour augmenter l'approvisionnement en eau, il est prévu de prélever et traiter 4,000 m³ par jour d'eau du barrage de Sans Souci. Cela va couler autour de R 40 millions.

Quatrième pilier – le plan propose également l'utilisation des eaux usées (l'eau de Waste water) pour l'irrigation des cultures de la canne à sucre.

L'Association des usagers du canal Magenta, en collaboration avec la Chambre d'agriculture, a déjà manifesté son intention d'utiliser quotidiennement environ 30,000 m³ d'eaux usées traitées de la station de Saint-Martin. Nous utilisons déjà l'eau traité pour Mon Choisy, dans la région du nord pour l'irrigation.

Cinquième pilier, Madame la présidente, le dessalement. Nous étudions actuellement un projet de dessalement à moyen et court terme des usines de dessalement. Ainsi, l'appel à manifestation ; *Expression of Interest*, pour la réalisation d'une étude de faisabilité en vue de la mise en place d'une usine de dessalement de 50 000 m³ / jour dans le nord – que pour le nord.

Donc, cela a été lancé le 5 septembre de l'année dernière, de 2025, à l'échelle internationale par mon ministère. La date limite de dépôt des candidatures a été fixée au 14 novembre de l'année dernière. 14 candidatures ont été reçues et évaluées. À l'issue de cette procédure, un appel d'offres sera lancé d'ici la fin de ce mois pour une étude de faisabilité.

J'ai discuté aussi je peux dire avec les responsables du gouvernement marocain concernant le dessalement. Ils sont extrêmement avancés dans ce secteur. Donc, pour un projet de dessalement de 50 000 m³ / par jour. J'ai aussi l'intention d'aller voir à Rodrigues le projet de dessalement – je crois que c'est à Pointe Coton, qui est en construction.

Sixième pilier six, Madame la présidente, on veut aussi dévier l'eau des rivières qui se perdent à la mer. Le plan propose l'étude et la construction éventuelle afin de retenir les eaux de surface en amont qui, autrement, se déversaient dans la mer. Dans un premier temps, il est prévu de détourner l'eau de la rivière Eau Bleue vers le réservoir de Midlands.

Par ailleurs, afin d'améliorer, il n'y a pas que construire pour le stockage mais il faudra aussi réparer les fuites, les pertes que nous avons dans le réseau parce que plus de 60% de l'eau que nous mettons sur le réseau, se perde. Vous réalisez !

Donc, par ailleurs, afin d'améliorer la gestion des pertes, le gouvernement a obtenu un prêt de R2,9 milliards du gouvernement indienne, destiné au remplacement de quelques 114 km des tuyaux pour 13 régions du pays.

Enfin, Madame la présidente, pour remédier durablement au pénurie d'eau chronique dans le sud – pas chez vous monsieur l'honorable membre – mais dans le sud du pays, la construction du barrage de Rivière des Anguilles a été lancée. Donc, la construction va commencer en Novembre/Décembre de cette année-ci.

Donc, cela va aider énormément la région du sud mais cela va permettre aussi à la CWA, à la *Water Resources Commission* de se servir de l'eau que nous distribuons actuellement dans le sud de servir pour d'autres régions. Donc, cela aura un double effet.

Merci, Madame la présidente.

Mr Rookny: Madame la présidente, malgré l'ingestion de l'additionnelle 24,000 m³ d'eaux dans nos réseaux, ma circonscription – la circonscription numéro 5 et la circonscription numéro 6 ont fait face à un manque d'eau sans précédent, même pire que les 10 années précédentes – que ce soit pour l'eau potable ou l'eau qu'on utilise pour l'irrigation. Quelle en a été la cause et pourquoi est-ce que certaines régions continuent à faire un tel manque ?

Mr Assirvaden : Je dois préciser, Madame la présidente, qu'il n'y a pas que la circonscription de l'honorable membre. Le nord en particulier a été affecté et je dirai que le réservoir de la Nicolière, c'est le réservoir qui alimente la région du nord et qui est utilisé du côté domestique et agricole.

Ce que nous faisons bien souvent, Madame la présidente, c'est que nous distribuons l'eau par la gravité. Donc, il faudra remplir les réservoirs pour que l'eau descende chez certaines personnes.

Deuxième chose, c'est que nous faisons face à une sécheresse. Le mois de février a été le mois le plus sec depuis 104 ans, vous réalisez ! Donc, il nous faut prendre de l'eau de Midlands pour remplir le réservoir de la Nicolière qui desservit le nord. Une chose.

Deuxièmement, nous avons un problème de pression sur le réseau. Vous savez, les tuyaux que nous avons datent de 50-60 ans, une chose. Autre chose c'est que quand nous avons dépensé le R70 millions de *Pipe Replacement Programme* dans le temps, nous n'avons rien reçu en termes de *improvement* sur les pertes. Si nous mettons trop de pression sur les réseaux – les réseaux s'explorent. Si nous ne mettons pas suffisamment de pression sur les réseaux – les gens n'arrivent pas à avoir l'eaux – certaines personnes qui vivent en hauteur.

Je peux dire que le dessalement va aider. C'est pour cette raison que nous avons décidé de commencer avec une station de dessalement dans le nord parce que dans le nord, nous avons principalement à satisfaire les clients domestiques mais aussi l'agriculture. Si vous donnez trop aux résidentiels, le secteur agricole se plaint – on n'a pas arrêté l'irrigation des légumes malgré la sécheresse.

Je peux comprendre et je suis d'accord avec l'honorable membre que dans le nord, nous faisons face actuellement à ce souci. C'est pour cette raison que dans le plan Marshall, nous avons donné plus de priorité au nord en termes de forage, en termes de CPF pour augmenter la capacité de distribution.

Madam Speaker: Yes, Mr Rookny.

Mr Rookny: Madame la présidente, je remercie l'honorable ministre et le Cabinet en général pour l'effort consenti pour résoudre ce problème-là. Je voudrais savoir dans combien de temps les consommateurs vont ressentir un *improvement* ?

Mr Assirvaden : C'est difficile de dire. Malheureusement, celui qui avait promis de l'eau 24/7 n'est pas là, vous réalisez. Donc, je peux dire que nous avons un plan Marshall à court, moyen et long terme. L'honorable membre doit sûrement savoir que je parle ici des projets de plusieurs milliard de roupies. Le projet de dessalement, je me bats pour qu'on puisse avoir un G-to-G ; entre gouvernement et gouvernement pour financer ce genre de projet.

Je vais être franc. Du jour au lendemain, on ne pourra pas dire que le nord va être satisfait de la distribution mais nous faisons le maximum possible pour augmenter la capacité. On fait tous en termes de CPF, en termes de pompage dans les rivières, en termes de forage, en termes de dessalement mais il faudra malheureusement ...

Là le plan Marshall va permettre de mobiliser 150,000 m³ dans les années à venir – 150,000 m³ supplémentaire en ajoutant le Riviere des Anguilles Dam. Donc, pour vous dire que ce n'est pas quelque chose que du jour au lendemain, on pourra satisfaire. Il nous faut impérativement renouveler les tuyaux que nous avons parce que vous réalisez que 100 m³ d'eaux que nous mettons sur le réseau, 62 m³ part et que 40 m³ arrive chez vous. Donc, il faudra mettre le double pour que vous puissiez satisfaire les régions.

Madam Speaker: Bonne chance! Yes, Mr Lobine.

Mr Lobine: May I ask the hon. Minister with regard to this Marshall plan being put in place, will the hon. Minister consider the already comprehensive plan prepared by the Singaporean government, a G-to-G done way back in 2013, for the establishment of a water authority but also, there was a clear roadmap that unfortunately the previous government didn't adhere to? Will he consider this comprehensive document that is still there at the Ministry?

Mr Assirvaden: Je dois dire que mon ministère discute actuellement avec les responsables de Singapour. Ils étaient à Maurice il y a quelques temps de cela et on a eu pas mal de rencontres. Je peux dire que le plan Marshall a été élaboré en collaboration avec les Singapouriens.

Madam Speaker: Très bien. Mr A. Duval.

Mr A. Duval: Puis-je demander à l'honorable ministre qu'en est-il des projets immobiliers dans la région du nord qui ont dû opter pour ne pas être connectés au réseau d'eau pour pouvoir avoir leurs permis de construction ? Y- a-t-il un plan pour eux pour les reconnecter dans la durée ?

A ma connaissance, il y a pas mal de projets immobiliers qui sont complètement en dehors du réseau de la CWA et qui doivent s'approvisionner en privé et on parle des biens immobiliers qui sont vendus à des millions des dollars, d'euros, etc...Quel est le plan pour eux ?

Mr Assirvaden: Je dois dire que l'honorable Dr. Ms Thannoo n'est pas là. Elle m'avait fait visiter dans la circonscription numéro 8, je me rappelle, un morcellement qui était malheureusement en dehors du réseau et on essaye de faire le nécessaire. Je dois dire qu'il y des réseaux qui sont éloignés. Par exemple, je ne sais pas de quel morcellement que l'honorable membre parle aujourd'hui...

Mr A. Duval : Plusieurs.

Mr Assirvaden : Plusieurs. Vous savez le problème c'est que la CWA n'a plus un sou. Il faut bien le dire. La CWA n'a plus un sou. Je l'ai dit à plusieurs reprises, je ne vais pas me répéter ici mais nous avons un plan d'ensemble pour essayer de raccorder.

Vous savez, bien souvent, les réservoirs que nous avons suffisent pour alimenter une région. Mais quand la région se développe avec des dizaines et d'autres développements aux alentours, il nous faut impérativement *upgrade* nos réservoirs et notre réseau.

C'est la même chose. Un tuyau de cette grosseur peut alimenter dix maisons, mais si vous avez vingt maisons, il faudra redoubler. Donc, changer les tuyaux. Donc, nous avons aussi un projet pour essayer de raccorder. Mais bien souvent, certains morcellements sont vendus alors que, de par la loi, ils sont obligés de mettre le réseau électrique et le réseau d'eau. Mais malheureusement, certains promoteurs ne font pas le cas.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Ramkalawon!

Mr Ramkalawon: Yes. Can the hon. Minister state whether his Ministry is encouraging firms producing drinking water from air, that is, atmospheric water generation?

Mr Assirvaden: Toutes les propositions sont les bienvenues. Si l'honorable membre a des propositions, c'est le bienvenu au sein du ministère.

Madam Speaker: Très bien! Good?

Now, hon. Third Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière!

***FÉDÉRATION MAURICIENNE DE JUDO – CLUBS AFFILIATION – SPORTS
ARBITRATION TRIBUNAL RULING***

(No. B/105) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether in regard to the eighteen clubs seeking affiliation to the Federation Mauricienne de Judo, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to where matters stand, indicating –

- (a) the ruling of the Sports Arbitration Tribunal in relation thereto, and
- (b) whether any decision has been taken pertaining to the recognition thereof and, if not, why not.

Mr Nagalingum: Madam Speaker, I would like to refer the House to my reply to PQ B/220 at our Sitting on 25 March 2025 wherein I had stated that while I am fully prepared to report on matters pertaining to sport federation in relation to the obligations under the Sports Act 2016, it will not be appropriate to report on the internal affairs.

It is to be highlighted that the National Sports Federations are autonomous bodies. As such, affiliation of sports clubs thereto is an internal matter of the respective federation. As such, any queries regarding such matters should normally be addressed to the federation concerned.

Madam Speaker, I can, however, inform the House on actions taken at the level of my Ministry to find a lasting solution to this long-standing dispute between the federation and some clubs seeking affiliation with it. Since January 2025, three reconciliation meetings have been held between the contesting parties and the federation without success.

After proactive discussion, in September 2025, the federation finally agreed to the finalisation and formalisation of the affiliation criteria following which, a process was initiated.

I am informed by the federation that 13 – and not 18 clubs – had applied for affiliation with the *Fédération Mauricienne de Judo*. Out of these 13, six clubs had obtained official recognition from the federation. I am given to understand that the affiliation process is ongoing since the federation has informed that one of the clubs that has not been retained for affiliation has not fulfilled the criteria. The status will be considered at the forthcoming annual general meeting scheduled for 21st of this month.

I wish to underline that this partial resolution represents a positive development. The only pending cases is that of the Cassis Fraternel Judo Club. I understand that it is the general assembly of the federation that has refused the affiliation of the said club on various grounds. I am further informed that while Cassis Fraternel Judo Club had previously brought a case before the Sports Arbitration Tribunal regarding affiliation matters, it has withdrawn the case itself on 31 July 2025.

Madam Speaker, I wish to inform the House that my Ministry, keeping in mind the autonomous stages of the sport federation, remains fully attentive to the situation the best interests of all Judokas, and has advised the federation to continue guiding the non-affiliated clubs in addressing any identified shortcomings so that they may fulfil the required criteria for future affiliation.

Madam Speaker: Yes!

Mr Quirin: Merci, Madame la présidente. L'honorable ministre sera, je pense, d'accord que cette situation dure depuis des années. Il a parlé dans sa réponse, Madame la présidente, de six clubs qui ont récemment été affiliés. D'après mes informations, ces six clubs ne font pas partie des clubs qui ont été pénalisés durant ces dernières années.

Madam Speaker: No statement!

Mr Quirin: Je viens à ma question. Peut-on savoir, dans le cas du judo – on sait très bien que l'honorable ministre a appliqué la guillotine en ce qui concerne le badminton –, pourquoi, en ce qui concerne cette fédération, une situation qui perdure depuis des années, qui pénalise nos judokas et judokates depuis des années – il parle d'autonomie, oui–, mais pourquoi dans le cas de cette fédération, il n'a pas appliqué la guillotine qui aurait dû être appliquée depuis pas mal de temps ? Pour permettre justement à cette fédération de se rendre compte qu'on ne peut pas continuellement, pour je ne sais quelle raison, conflit ou autre, pénaliser des athlètes alors qu'ils font de leur mieux pour faire flotter le quadricolore. Pourquoi a-t-on attendu tout ce temps ?

Madam Speaker: Hon. Minister!

Mr Nagalingum: Madam Speaker, the hon. Member will surely know that Section 9 (9) in the Sports Act is not what we can use here for judo. We have applied it for another federation because they do not meet the criteria. They did not respect the Sports Act. But here I ask the hon. Member: give me one point where I can apply what you said '*guillotine*' for that federation. I am willing to do it if you give the reason.

Madam Speaker: Okay! Why do you not deal with this nicely afterwards? You want to?

(Interruptions)

I do not...

Hon. Members: Hmmm!

Mr Quirin: Je ne vais pas polémiquer. Je vais simplement dire à l'honorable ministre que le monde sportif mauricien attend avec impatience que...

Madam Speaker: Vous faites des déclarations !

Mr Quirin: ...ce problème soit réglé.

Madam Speaker: On a entendu! On vous a entendu !

Mr Quirin: Voilà !

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Simplement, on ne peut pas...

Mr Nagalingum: Hon. Member, I fully agree with you on that issue. I am the person who is going to be very fair and honest if the Cassis Fraternel got the affiliation.

Mr Quirin: All of them!

Madam Speaker: Je n'arrive pas à bien suivre.

Your next question! This one is on badminton.

ASSOCIATION MAURICIENNE DE BADMINTON – MANAGING COMMITTEE DISSOLUTION

(No. B/106) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the Managing Committee of the Association Mauricienne de Badminton, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to why his Ministry dissolved same on 10 March 2026.

Mr Nagalingum: Madam Speaker, being given that this question requires a long answer, I am tabling, with your permission, the chronology of events that have led to the decision to dissolve the managing committee of the Mauritius Badminton Association (MBA) on 10 March 2026.

It was the culmination of a prolonged period of instability in governance, failures, and repeated complaints from athletes, parents and former members of the MBA. The decision taken by my Ministry – it has acted in the broader public interests and in line with its responsibility to ensure that the National Sports Federation operates in accordance with the principles of good governance, transparency, accountability and the proper protection of athletes.

In accordance with Section 9(9)(c)(ii) of the Sports Act 2016, my Ministry has initiated consultations with the Mauritius Olympic Committee with a view to appointing a temporary committee. My Ministry considered this intervention to be essential in order to protect the integrity of the sport and safeguard the interests of all affiliated clubs, athletes and stakeholders within the badminton community.

Madam Speaker, I wish to inform the House that I had a meeting with the president of the MOC on Wednesday 18 March 2026. In a correspondence dated 18 March 2026, he has informed my Ministry that he had an urgent executive committee meeting to discuss the matter.

We were further informed that the MOC had referred the matter to the legal department of the International Olympic Committee for advice.

Madam Speaker, I wish also to inform the House that communication has also been established with the Badminton World Federation, governing body for the sports of badminton through its legal and governance department. The MBA is a member of the Badminton World Federation. The latter has requested the Ministry to share with them the detailed ground for the dissolution of the Managing Committee.

The BWF informed that in principle its constitution protects member association against government interference, that it does understand that such intervention is sometimes necessary to put the association back on the right track.

Madam Speaker, my Ministry remains committed to working with all relevant parties to ensure a smooth transition and to restore stability, transparency and good governance within the sport of badminton in Mauritius.

Madam Speaker : Yes.

Mr Quirin: Merci, Madame la présidente. Je dois faire ressortir que le badminton est une discipline qui régulièrement fait honneur au pays et cela ne date pas d'aujourd'hui. Donc,

l'honorable ministre peut-il confirmer si son ministère a eu des consultations préalables avec l'Association mauricienne de badminton, pas le Comité olympique mauricien, avant la dissolution de son comité directeur et, si tel est le cas, de bien vouloir nous donner les dates ?

Mr Nagalingum: No, I had no such meeting with the Federation of Badminton but the charges I have stated in my reply are enough to take the necessary actions. So, there was no meeting.

Madam Speaker: It is not the federation, it is association.

Mr Quirin: C'est une fédération.

Mr Nagalingum: C'est une fédération.

Madam Speaker : On n'appelle pas cela fédération, d'accord !

Mr Quirin: Madame la présidente, je peux bien comprendre la réponse de l'honorable ministre mais je crois que la moindre des choses avant d'appliquer la sanction suprême, parce que comme il l'a dit dans sa réponse à ma question précédente, la section 9(9)(c), on l'applique en dernier recours, effectivement. Et là, ma question est pourquoi n'y a-t-il pas, je ne suis pas en train de défendre la fédération, je ne suis pas en train de remettre en question les...

Madam Speaker : Question ! Ne vous expliquez pas, posez-lui la question !

Mr Quirin: ... les reproches qui sont adressés à cette fédération, je demande simplement pourquoi l'honorable ministre et son ministère n'ont pas jugé bon de rencontrer, de les mettre devant les faits, par rapport à tout ce qui est reproché, il a fait sortir un communiqué récemment, il l'a dit. Pourquoi, quand il parle d'autonomie, pourquoi n'a-t-il pas jugé bon de rencontrer ces personnes ?

Madam Speaker: Short and sweet. *Très simple.*

Mr Nagalingum: I have already replied to that question, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker : Il ne va pas répondre plus que cela. Oui, vous ne pouvez pas l'obliger.

Mr Quirin: Je ne l'oblige pas mais on prend connaissance de ce qu'il dit. Merci.

Madam Speaker: *On note.* Okay! Next question. We have finished with badminton.

Now, hon. First Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue!

YOUTHS – CYBER INCIDENTS – NEW LEGISLATION

(No. B/107) Ms A. Savabaddy (First Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation whether, in regard to the protection of the youth from cyberbullying, cyberviolence, online suicide and sextorsions, he will state if consideration is being given for the introduction of new legislation in relation thereto and, if so, indicate where matters stand.

Dr. Ramtohul: Madam Speaker, I would like to, first, thank the hon. Member for this question. As I had already indicated in my reply PQ B/135 on 02 December 2025, there has been a sharp increase in online harms over recent years particularly affecting youths.

With your permission, Madam Speaker, I would like to provide a very quick update on the numbers. Shall I?

Madam Speaker: Yes.

Dr. Ramtohul: So, based on incidents reported by the public through the MAUCORS (Mauritian Cybercrime Online Reporting System) between January 26 to date, there have been 1727 cyber incidents which implies an average of 21 cases per day out of which 275 cases referred to cyber bullying and 523 to online harassment.

What is important to note here is that 78 of those victims are aged between 11 and 18 and most of them are females. This reflects an increase compared to previous years and the numbers were given in my response of December 2025.

Madam Speaker, there are 3 legislations that are directly concerned with this issue. It is the Children's Act 2020, the Cybersecurity and Cybercrime Act 2021 and the ICT Act as well.

The Children's Act 2020 explicitly criminalises bullying including through digital means and provides for severe penalties where harm is caused to child under 18.

The Cybersecurity and Cybercrime Act 2021 provides for offences relating to cyber bullying, online harassment, exploitation and other forms of cyber abuse, with stringent actions, penalties for all ages.

However, crimes are still on the increase. This implies that there are fundamental challenges either with the law or with its implementation or with both.

However, we are exploring all avenues. So, with regard to the law, it has not followed the technological evolution. For example, with AI coming into the digital landscape, it has worsened matters and, lately, generative AI has also been used in causing harm and bullying to people and to children as well mainly through fake profiles.

While our legislations, the ICT Act and the Cybersecurity and Cybercrime Act, allow for anonymous accounts but it allows for those that are used without causing harm, but most of them have been created and they are tainted orange and they create harm and we all know who they are.

However, there has to be a scientific way of establishing what are the identities of those people and we are working with the Government of India to actually seek help to establish a scientific way of identifying those perpetrators.

Now, the element of AI is merely one dimension but amendments also need to be brought to the Children's Act 2020 because there are new online harms that have come into the picture.

Amendments will also need to consider, as we said, the new online harms but very importantly shifting the onus of the lawfulness of the contents to the platform providers and my Office is in touch with Attorney General's Office in order to now engage the platform providers, those companies, and we can mention those companies because it is public knowledge, it is META and it is Google, as well.

Now, with regard to the implementation dimension, the lack of verified identities is hindering the process of identifying the perpetrators of cybercrimes. Therefore, consideration is being given not only to amend existing legislations, as I mentioned, but also to forecast or foresee implementation challenges.

The Internet amendments will address verification of identities and also authentication or authenticity of sensitive AI generated materials. We see a lot of AI videos that are causing harm.

Today, we do not have the means to assess whether the AI generated objects are genuine or they are actually AI generated and there also need to be obligations on the author to specify that this content is AI generated.

Now, these are some provisions that are being considered in the amendments that we are bringing to the law. As the hon. Prime Minister mentioned this morning, we are working

with the Central Government of India to leverage their expertise in establishing the process and technologies as well that will help identify the perpetrators and bring them to justice.

In May 2025, the Cabinet gave approval for the aforesaid amendments and we are already actively working with the State Office Law Office to finalise the draft at hand.

Madam Speaker, I would like to mention, and I will finish my answer with this, that the initiative of my Ministry generated the Child Online Protection Scheme or measure which was implemented by the mobile network operators.

So far, we have had a decent uptake and adoption of child online protection but our work is mainly on mobile phone, for accessing social media. The phase two is in preparation and it will be applicable to Wi-Fi and routers at home so that parents will have better control over the contents that are being accessed by their children.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Thank you very much, hon. Minister. Yes?

Ms Savabaddy: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I have two supplementaries. Will the hon. Minister agree with me with the urgency of the matter and is he following international trends from modern and democratic countries around the world on this very issue, same as Australia and France in delaying access to social media for youth under a certain age?

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Minister?

Dr. Ramtohum: Thank you, hon. Member for this supplementary and Madam Speaker, as a responsible Government, we care for our children and we also understand that they represent the future. I am also a father. So, we understand the challenges that parents are facing. We have also seen the types of incidents that our children have faced, in some cases there have been loss of lives as well. So, yes indeed, we are considering all options and we will very soon reach out to the Cabinet for a decision on the way forward.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Yes, second!

Ms Savabaddy: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Can the hon. Minister indicate whether consideration is being given to the deployment of technical filtering mechanisms, similar to those currently used in certain jurisdictions to combat child sexual abuse material in order to limit or block access to online content that has been formally reported and verified as

cyberbullying, harassment or abusive material targeting individuals, particularly minors and young persons? Thank you.

Dr. Ramtohul: Thank you, hon. Member. I believe that the measures that we need to apply do not have to be only technical. Why? Because a child can always have access to the parent's phone. A child can always declare his or her age as being above 18 as compared to being below 16 or 13 because today, children below 13 are not actually accepted on social media platforms, on most of them but they are still doing it. Therefore, the measures, yes, on the one hand they need to be technical and we will not leave any stones unturned to consider the technical measures within the respect of the Constitution and we will also address measures such as sensitisation of parents in order to clean up the digital space. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: I am sorry, I did not get you. I should not get too involved but I would like to know more about the Constitution. I think nobody understood really. Which respect do you mean? Tell me, I do not want to tell you this...

Dr. Ramtohul: It is the privacy of correspondents, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Yes?

Dr. Ramtohul: Yes. So, when we talk about filtering, this implies that we will need to read the data ahead of the actual correspondent reading the data and reading the data between two correspondents compromises the privacy of that correspondence, and the Constitution guarantees the right to privacy of correspondence. So, whatever we will do, we will do within the respect of the Constitution.

Madam Speaker: Including for children?

Dr. Ramtohul: Including for children.

Madam Speaker: Yes, okay.

Mr A. Duval: Thank you, Madam Speaker. May I ask the hon. Minister, in order to combat fake profiles which bring with them all the associated evils that we know, is the Government prepared to consider first of all, mandatory ID verification for those who are 18 and above, and as well parental ID verification for those who are aged under 18 and if there will be an age limit for the use of social media in Mauritius like is being done in the EU and in all the developed countries in the world there is this *mouvance*?

Madam Speaker: Question has already been put, I think. Yes, part of that question has already been answered.

Dr. Ramtohul: Yes, thank you hon. Member. Yes, in my response I did indicate that the lack of verified identities is hindering the process of bringing those people to justice. We will implement the verification of identities and parents should also assume their responsibilities so that they do not actually allow their children who are under a certain age, as per their own policies that they implement at home – because everybody has his or her own policies – but the Government will have its own set of policies as well which parents will need to implement.

Mr A. Duval: Madam Speaker, just to clarify.

Madam Speaker: Okay.

Mr A. Duval: For the sake of clarity, hon. Minister, when you say that we will be moving for identity verification, do we understand that the mainstream social medias like Facebook and others will take down all profiles that do not meet the identity verification criteria?

Dr. Ramtohul: Well, I am not really sure what you are pointing at because on the one hand, you are stating that we should do it, on the other, you are raising a problem that could actually result out of this action.

Mr A. Duval: I am not against it. I am telling you it should happen. We should take down all the unverified accounts.

Dr. Ramtohul: Yes, the aim is for us to have profiles that are verified. So, in the process of implementing that, if it implies that all existing profiles will need to be verified and those that are fake profiles will need to be taken down, so be it.

Madam Speaker: Yes, okay.

Ms Savabaddy: Thank you so much. Can I ask the hon. Minister if he can provide the number of convictions and imprisonment terms secured, imposed against offenders in the last five years or so? Thank you.

Dr. Ramtohul: Thank you, hon. Member. I would not have the numbers with me at the moment but I surely will table it for you.

Madam Speaker: Okay. Next one is hon. Beejan!

NATIONAL FRAMEWORK – SPORTS FACILITIES INTEGRATION – JOINT ACTION PLAN

(No. B/108) Mr N. Beejan (Second Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d' Or) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the collaboration between his Ministry and local district councils for integrating sports facilities into a national framework, he will state the specific mechanisms and outcomes thereof, including any joint action plan or memorandum of understanding established, and the number of tournaments, particularly football, volleyball and basketball, organized in Constituency No. 6 since January 2025 to date.

Mr Nagalingum: Madam Speaker, I wish to highlight that despite the fact that there is no established Memorandum of Understanding or codified joint action plan between my Ministry and District Councils, my Ministry provides the necessary assistance and support whenever there is any request from the District Councils. These assistance and support are as follows –

- Technical support and supervision by officers for the organisation of sport activities;
- Provision of equipment, logistics and operational assistance, including marking of grounds and supply of sport materials;
- Joint planning and coordination mechanism including technical meetings with the committees involving my Ministry, District Council and other stakeholders, and
- Financial and in-kind contribution to large scale events, including collaboration with national sport federations and the Mauritius Sports Council.

This collaborative approach has delivered tangible and measurable outcomes at both regional and community levels. Some examples are *les Jeux de l'Ouest 2025* organised by the Black River District Council in collaboration with other stakeholders including my Ministry, mobilised approximatively 1,500 participants across 13 villages, covering multiple disciplines and age groups. This large-scale initiative clearly demonstrates the capacity of such partnership to deliver inclusive multisport events that foster community engagement and participation. More broadly, this collaboration has contributed to increase grassroots participation, improve utilisation of sport facilities and strengthen linkages between communities, schools and sport institutions.

Since January 2025 to date, the following sporting activities have been organised in Constituency No. 6 –

- One major intervillage football tournament organised by the District Council of Rivière du Rempart. Access to the Grand Baie and Petit Raffray football ground was provided to the District Council.
- Four ministry-led tournaments under national programmes, namely: *deux écoles de foot* tournaments; two grassroot football tournaments and through the programme *Anou Transform Nou Landrwa*, a multisport communiqué outreach event held at Cap Malheureux which integrated physical activities with social wellness.
- In addition, several community level football matches and activities have continuously been held on Petit Raffray and Grand Baie football grounds.

Madam Speaker, regarding volleyball and basketball, I wish to inform the House that while local teams remain actively engaged in regular training and practice sessions within the Constituency, no formal competitive tournaments have been staged for these specific disciplines since January 2025. The responsibility to organise events at the competitive level rests with national sports federations, regional sports committees and sports clubs.

Madam Speaker, my Ministry remains committed to further strengthening this collaboration, including exploring more structured frameworks to enhance coordination, planning and long-term sustainability in that prospect. I also wish to inform the House that a specific section will be included in the new Sports Bill to define the clear responsibilities of local authorities related to the promotion and development of sports in the region.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Beejan, okay? There is another one.

CONSTITUENCIES NO. 6 & 7 – ROAD WORKS – FUNDS ALLOCATED (2015-2024)

(No. B/109) Mr N. Beejan (Second Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to funds allocated between 2015 and 2024, for road works, including the construction of new roads, resurfacing of existing roads, or any other related road works, in each constituency falling under the jurisdiction of the Rivière du Rempart District Council, he will for the benefit of the House, obtain –

- (a) information as to the total amount thereof disbursed, and
- (b) the list thereof and table same, giving details as to the specific nature thereof and costs incurred in each case.

Mr Woochit: Madam Speaker, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the District Council of Rivière du Rempart that a total sum of Rs215,097,613 was disbursed for road works in Constituencies No. 6 and 7 during the period 2015 and 2024, comprising Rs111.6 million for construction of roads and Rs103.5 million for resurfacing works.

Madam Speaker, with regard to part (b) of the question, as requested by the hon. Member, I am tabling the detailed list of all the road projects carried out, indicating the nature, associated costs, source of fund, total surface area and exact location for both constituencies.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Beejan, question!

Mr Beejan: Thank you, Madam Speaker. In view of the substantial investment made in road works over the period 2015 till 2024, can the hon. Minister inform the House as to what measures are being taken by the District Council of Rivière du Rempart to ensure proper maintenance and sustainability of these roads? Thank you.

Mr Woochit: Madam Speaker, all councils normally have an established regular maintenance programme which include routine inspection and periodic resurfacing and the prompt intervention where defects are identified. All the works are being undertaken by the Works Department in the district council, in the presence of all the councillors. Also, all the contractors remain bound by the defect liability provision to ensure durability and long-term sustainability of the road works and resurfacing of the roads.

Madam Speaker: Next question! Hon. Ms Anquetil!

PAVILLON SWIMMING POOL – MAINTENANCE & TECHNICAL WORKS

(No. B/110) Ms S. Anquetil (Second Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the swimming pool at Pavillon, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Sports Council, information as to whether the maintenance and technical works have been completed and, if so, indicate when same will become operational and, if not, where matters stand.

Mr Nagalingum: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Mauritius Sports Council that leakages were detected in the silica sand filter of the Pavillon Swimming Pool and the problem could pose a risk to the filtration system. Consequently, it was decided to temporarily close the facility as from 14 November 2025 to enable necessary repair works.

However, during the repair works, additional issues were detected and warranted immediate attention. Consequently, additional equipment had to be procured in order to resolve the main problem. Given the complexity of the repair works, a site meeting was held in February 2026 whereby the matter was discussed between officers of the Mauritius Sports Council and the contractor to determine the best way forward to avoid any further delay in the completion of the works.

I am further informed that as at date, the repair works are still ongoing. It would be premature to state a specific date for the reopening of the swimming pool.

Madam Speaker, I wish to assure the hon. Member that my Ministry is aligned with her concerns. We are closely monitoring the situation and ensuring the timely completion of the works, taking into consideration that the swimming pool is more than 20 years old.

Madam Speaker: Only questions! Please!

Ms Anquetil: Okay.

Madam Speaker: Only questions! No statements!

Ms Anquetil: Yes, yes, of course! As usual!

Je vous remercie, Madame la présidente. Le ministre peut-il expliquer à la Chambre comment une piscine, ayant fait l'objet d'une rénovation récente au début de 2025, a dû fermer de nouveau le 14 novembre pour des travaux supplémentaires ? Peut-il également préciser l'identité du prestataire ayant réalisé cette rénovation et indiquer si c'est le même prestataire qui est actuellement chargé des travaux en cours ? Je vous remercie, Madame la présidente.

Mr Nagalingum: Madam Speaker, this is indeed a very good question that the hon. Member is addressing to me. The bid was awarded to the lowest bidder, namely Espace Commercial Ltée, for a total amount of Rs726,000, including VAT. The works started, like you said, in 2024. We have to deal with the contractor. So, we have a meeting with him this week – I am not sure about the date – and we are going to settle the matter. I know that the swimming pool of Pavillon is very demanding. Both the Minister, Dr. Boolell, and yourself...

Ms Anquetil: And Veda.

Mr Nagalingum: ...and Veda Baloomoody as well have already asked me about the date of reopening. We are going to see what we can do.

Madam Speaker: Your utmost best.

Mr Nagalingum: And find a solution.

Madam Speaker: Your utmost best! Yes, your second question.

Ms Anquetil: Je vous remercie, Madame la présidente.

Can the Minister inform the House on the monthly fixed costs associated with the closed swimming pool? Thank you.

Mr Nagalingum: I do not have the details with me.

Madam Speaker: Communicate it.

Mr Nagalingum: I can table the answer.

Madam Speaker: One moment! Yes!

Ms Anquetil: A last one. A very short one. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Will the Minister state whether additional public funds will be required to complete the outstanding works? Thank you.

Mr Nagalingum: I think there is a guarantee; the retention money that we have. So, we are going to have the meeting this week, and we are going to find a solution.

Madam Speaker: Okay, yes!

Mr Quirin: Peut-on savoir de l'honorable ministre s'il y a eu des arrangements qui ont été faits afin de permettre aux nageurs et nageuses, qui généralement utilisent cette piscine, de continuer à s'entraîner ?

Madam Speaker: Ailleurs?

Mr Quirin: Ailleurs, bien sûr ! Voilà!

Mr Nagalingum: We have done this, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Where? In Beau Bassin?

Mr Quirin: Qu'est-ce qui a été fait ?

Madam Speaker: Yes, where?

Mr Quirin: Ils s'entraînent où ?

Mr Nagalingum: Il y a plusieurs places. Par exemple, à Serge Alfred. Il y a plusieurs places où on a *relocate the athletes for swimming*.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Ce n'est pas pareil !

Okay, we have finished with Ms Anquetil.

Hon. Members, PQ B/111 has been withdrawn.

LAND TRANSPORT APPEAL COMMITTEE – APPEALS RECEIVED (JAN 2024-MAR 2026)

(No. B/111) Mr S. Jugurnauth (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Land Transport whether, in regard to the Appeal Committee of his Ministry, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the number of appeals received thereat since January 2024 to date, indicating the number thereof disposed of.

(Withdrawn)

Madam Speaker: So, the next question is for Mr Edouard!

QUEEN ELIZABETH HOSPITAL, RODRIGUES – CT SCAN APPARATUS – PROPOSED REPLACEMENT

(No. B/112) Mr J. Edouard (Fourth Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the proposed replacement of the CT Scan at Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Rodrigues Island, he will state where matters stand.

Mr Bachoo: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Commission of Health, Rodrigues that the existing CT scanner apparatus is out of order since the end of November 2023. The

initial attempts to get it repaired were unsuccessful. Consequently, a final attempt for repair is in the pipeline.

Amongst the recommendations between the two parties, the Commission has asked for guarantee from the supplier that the CT scan machine will be in good working condition after repair. The supplier, FTM Ltd, on the other hand, has asked for 50% of repair cost prior to intervention, of which, both recommendations have been complied with.

I am further informed that the Commission for Health, in parallel, has undertaken necessary steps for the procurement of a new CT scanner apparatus. In this context, a draft bidding document was submitted to the Central Procurement Board in April 2025 and May 2025. The latter requested to review the technical specifications with the assistance of a biomedical engineer from my Ministry and an electrical engineer from ESD. Necessary amendments from my Ministry have already been provided.

However, the inputs on the ESD are awaited by Commission for Health. I am made to understand that the two Electrical Engineers from ESD were to proceed to Rodrigues on 25 February 2026 to conduct a survey in order to submit the recommendation. The Ministry of National Infrastructure has been requested to look into the matter. Once the amended specifications would be provided to the Central Procurement Board, the latter will proceed with the invitation of bids.

Madam Speaker: Thank you. Yes, Mr François!

Mr François: Madam Speaker, following the recurring technical issues leading to non-operationalisation of a CT scan and other medical equipment in Rodrigues, may I ask the hon. Minister whether his Ministry and RRA are considering the posting of a Biomedical Engineer thereat?

Mr Bachoo: Madam Speaker, in fact in Mauritius we have got a lack of Biomedical Engineers. We don't have Engineers but time and again when the need is felt, we will send them to Rodrigues. But as far as all other details and technicalities are concerned, that entirely rest upon the Rodrigues Regional Assembly. We are here to support and to give all assistance wherever it is required but the request that you have made, I will try to look into it.

Mr François: Madam Speaker, a second one! May I ask the hon. Minister whether his Ministry is in the presence of a detailed, comprehensive evaluation report of the non-functionality of the existing CT scan in Rodrigues?

Mr Bachoo: I have to look into this.

Madam Speaker: Okay good!

Mr Beejan!

**WORK PERMIT – JUNE 2025 TO MARCH 2026 – PENDING APPLICATIONS
– REASONS**

(No. B/113) Mr N. Beejan (Second Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of Labour and Industrial Relations whether, in regard to work permit, he will state the number of pending applications therefor since June 2025 to date, indicating the reasons therefor and table the list thereof sector-wise.

Mr Uteem: Madam Speaker, over the last few years, there has been a substantial increase in the number of applications received for permits at my Ministry from 36,129 in 2023 to 50,274 in 2025, representing an increase of about 36%. The main types of permits issued by the Employment Division of my Ministry are –

- Work permits;
- Certificate of Exemption, and
- Employment Permits.

Madam Speaker, for the period June 2025 to March 2026, a total of 41,833 applications were received by my Ministry, out of which 33,100 have already been completed and 8,733 are pending. I need to point out that 6,383 of those pending applications were received over the period January to March 2026.

Madam Speaker, following the implementation of the recommendation of the Interministerial Committee on work permits issues, the procedure to apply for a work permit for foreign worker has been simplified considerably. We have replaced the former quota system with the requirement to show the inability to recruit locally and we have extended the recruitment of foreign labour to all sectors of the economy, including domestic workers.

As a result, the number of applications received for foreign workers has substantially increased. However, the number of staff that has to deal with those applications have not been increased and this is the main cause of delay in processing the applications.

Madam Speaker, there are other reasons also for the delay in processing pending applications and these include –

1. Submission of incomplete or incorrect application by employers. There have been cases where more than ten times the application has gone back forth to the employers due to missing documents.
2. Some companies have not regularised the situation of their workers working without a permit so they need to regularise the situation. In that respect, some 3,000 cases of illegal employment have been regularised.
3. Whenever complains are registered against employers at the Special Migrant Unit of my Ministry, my Ministry has to ensure that the dispute is satisfactory resolved before they allow the employer to apply for new foreign workers.
4. There are also delays in obtaining clearances from relevant authorities. Some of these delays are due to the country of origin of the foreign worker. For example, workers from Madagascar require special clearance from the Embassy of Madagascar. With regard to Bangladeshi workers, there are additional security clearances at the level of the Prime Minister's Office which result in delay in processing work permit application.
5. Some applications are kept in abeyance due to breach by the employer of the provisions of the Non-Citizens (Employment Restriction) Act by employers.
6. There are also delays in obtaining recommendations from concerned Ministries and Departments. Presently, almost half of the pending applications relate to the construction sector. These applications require the recommendations of the Ministry of National Infrastructure prior to the grant of permits. Similarly, in the Agricultural Sector, inspections have to be carried out on site before the Ministry of Agro-Industry, Food Security, Blue Economy and Fisheries submits its views on the applications. These requirements imposed by the parent Ministry inevitably leads to a delay in processing of work permit.
7. Finally, one of the main causes of the delay is the non-payment or delay in payment of prescribed fees by employers.

Madam Speaker, I however wish to inform the House that around 78% of applications for work permit have been completed within the prescribed time-frame of 21 days after payment of the processing fees.

In view of the significant increase in the number of applications received, my Ministry has taken several measures to expedite processing. Since 01 September 2025, work permits are being issued electronically with a QR code to employers, thereby eliminating the need for printing of permits and manual signature and companies have to go to the Ministry to collect the permits. To date 17,850 work permits have been issued digitally. There is also enhancement being brought to the National Electronic Licensing System to improve efficiency and applicants have been provided with online payment facility.

My Ministry is in the process of acquiring new computers which are more efficient and can handle large documentation speedily. Lastly, but not least, a request has been made in the forthcoming budget for additional staff for the processing of the application.

Madam Speaker, I am tabling the breakdown of the pending application sector-wise.

Madam Speaker: Yes, Mr Beejan!

Mr Beejan: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Given the numbers the hon. Minister has just stated, employers across various sectors are facing genuine economic distress due to lack of staff, will the hon. Minister table the number of application respective to different countries and also ensure that specific measures are taken, including posting of additional staff from other sections at the Ministry to clear the existing backlog of work permit applications and for the future applications, so that employers are not repeatedly subjected to such delays? Thank you.

Mr Uteem: Madam Speaker, I am tabling the breakdown of work permit issued country-wise as at 28 February 2026. Madam Speaker, as I have mentioned in my reply quite lengthily, we are doing our best at the level of Ministry with a limited resources that we have to process speedily all the applications. But the hon. Member should appreciate that everybody is looking for foreign workers now, foreign domestic workers or the SMEs, all those sectors that previously were not able to recruit foreign workers because of the quota system, they are all now making applications. So, we are, at the level of my Ministry doing our best and as I said, you know if we get the additional funding in the coming budget, we will again be able to clear the backlog. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Okay! Yes, Mr Rookny!

Mr Rookny: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Could the hon. Minister please advise if upon turning down applications for work permits, whether applicants are made aware of the reasons why the applications are turned down?

Mr Uteem: Madam Speaker, all the applications are done electronically on a national platform which is operated by the Economic Development Board and it is through that platform that there is exchange of information. So, as I said, you know, a lot of the reasons why applications may be turned down is sometime missing documents, so the applicant will know why it is turned down.

But otherwise, you know if there are other reasons why the applications are being turned down, again and I have given instruction to my officers to explain to the applicant why the application is turned down and I need to point out that we have gotten rid of the previous system of appeal whereby the Minister was rejecting the application and then the applicant was making an appeal to the Minister himself to overrule his decision.

Madam Speaker: Okay. One, two, three.

Mr Seeburn: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Can the hon. Minister inform the House as to whether, there is any restriction with regard to any specific country or is the application for the recruitment of foreign workers open worldwide?

Mr Uteem: Madam Speaker, there is no restriction on the recruitment of foreign workers country wise. However, there are certain additional security clearances that are required from applicants from certain specific countries.

Madam Speaker: Mr Beehook, yes.

Mr Beehook: Madam Speaker, I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether applications are open to Bangladeshi residents, and if yes, are they open to all the sectors or restricted to specific professions?

Mr Uteem: Cabinet has decided a few months ago, Madam Speaker, to allow the recruitment of Bangladeshi workers in certain designated sectors like printing, textile, bakery and other scarcity areas. Now, what my Ministry understands by other scarcity areas relies on the list provided by HRDC which has a list of scarcity areas. For example, even in

construction, there are certain types of scarce labour which is not available in Mauritius and therefore, a Bangladeshi is eligible to apply for that works.

Madam Speaker: Yes, Mr Ramkalawon.

Mr Ramkalawon: Following the pending applications, can the hon. Minister consider the workers that require specific skills such as driving to go through the EDB, as well?

Mr Uteem: Madam Speaker, in the case of drivers, I have to say that before my Ministry allowed foreign drivers to come, we had consultation with the Ministry of Land Transport but also with the Commissioner of Police and now, we require all foreign drivers to have a valid international driving license and they have to undertake a course given by MITD on *Sécurité Routière* once they are here.

So, for each sector, we stand guided by the parent ministry. The parent ministry will tell us what are the specific requirements which the foreign labour must have, the specific skills that he needs to have in order to be given the work permit.

Madam Speaker: Good.

Hon. Fourth Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue.

***POLICE DE L'ENVIRONNEMENT* – POSTING OF STAFF – BOOKED CONTRAVENTIONS**

(No. B/114) Mr A. Duval (Fourth Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change whether, in regard to the *Police de l'Environnement*, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to –

- (a) district-wise, the number of –
 - (i) officers posted;
 - (ii) patrol vehicles available, and
 - (iii) noise pollution recording devices available thereat, and
- (b) the number of contraventions booked since December 2024 to date for–
 - (i) noise pollution
 - (ii) littering, and
 - (iii) illegal dumping.

Mr Bhagwan: Madam Speaker, I wish to inform the House that the *Police de l'Environnement* is a unit within the Mauritius Police Force and was established in December 2000 with a view to assisting my Ministry for the enforcement of environmental law. The unit is presently under the charge of an Inspector of Police.

With regard to parts (a) (i) and (ii) of the question, the *Police de l'Environnement*, is currently staffed with 36 officers and 8 patrol vehicles are available respectively. Additional vehicles from the fleet of my Ministry are provided wherever necessary. With your permission, Madam Speaker, I am tabling the breakdown on a district-wise basis.

As for part (a) (iii) of the question, the Environment Protection (Control of Noise) Regulations 2022 makes provision for different categories of noise: neighbourhood, industrial power stations and specified permissible sound level limit for each category. The regulations require the use of a sound level metre.

The *Police de l'Environnement* has currently two sound level metres in its custody. My Ministry is in the process of acquiring more sound level metres. I am further informed that action is being initiated at the level of the police department for the procurement of sound level metres for the police force.

Madam Speaker, the House may wish to be informed that, as per legal provisions in relation to noise pollution, contained in the regulation 3(2) of the Environment Protection (Control of Noise) Regulations 2022 –

“[...] the authorised officer or the enforcing agency shall consider –

(a) the intensity of the noise as perceived by the ears;”

and initiate actions against noise nuisances such as loud music, noise from vehicles and premises. Fixed penalties are issued for non-compliance.

These regulations empower the authorised officers to take actions without the use of sound level metres. Besides, fixed penalty booklets have been sent to all police stations across the island for the enforcement at their level.

Madam Speaker, with regard to part (b) of the Parliamentary Question, I am informed that the number of contraventions established since December 2024 up to 19 March 2026 by the *Police de l'Environnement* is as follows –

- Making or causing noise which constitute a nuisance – 161 contraventions;

- Littering – 1,887, and
- Illegal dumping – 95.

Madam Speaker: Yes. Time is up! One last.

Mr A. Duval: Madam Speaker, I am sad to note that the already meagre ...

Madam Speaker: Don't make a statement! Put in a question.

Mr A. Duval: No, the question is – How does the hon. Minister explain after the commitment he took last year, one year ago in this House, that the 37 at the time that was posted one per district per shift police officer de *l'Environnement*, has now reduced to 36, the number of vehicles is the same, the sound level metres is meagre to sound level noise recording devices? How then will the hon. Minister make good on his promise to fight and combat and enforce noise pollution regulations in this country when in fact, the number of staff in this department is going from 37 to 36 for the whole island?

Mr Bhagwan: Madam Speaker, the staffing of the *Police de l'Environnement* is not decided by me; it is decided by the Commissioner of Police. The Commissioner of Police is aware of the situation. The hon. Prime Minister replied to one question recently and the Commissioner of Police has informed that he will be providing us with additional officers but apart from the police officers of the *Police de l'Environnement*, the Commissioner of Police has given directives to all the police officers everywhere. There is no need only for one officer of the *Police de l'Environnement*. Every officer should be a *Police de l'Environnement*. And, there is regular meetings with the ACP and the district commanders at least to involve them in the fight against this very important issue.

With regard to vehicles also, we are providing them. So, we are increasing vehicles. We all know the budgetary constraint; I won't go into the *heritaz* of the past government but we are providing because even in the stations, there are police vehicles and they are acting. I know that this problem of noise pollution is a cause of concern not only to the hon. Member but also to us, all Members of Parliament. We are taking all steps at least to act and also, we need the collaboration of the public.

Mr A. Duval: *To pou al dir mazistra zot zorey ti record ...*

Madam Speaker: Come on!

(Interruptions)

Come on!

Time is up!

Mr Bhagwan: *To problem zis Grand Gaube twa!*

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Time is up! We will soon be breaking for tea.

Time is up now!

I have to inform you ...

(Interruptions)

If you stop talking, maybe I can talk, although I have a big voice, which is not the case of every Minister.

The Table has been advised that the following PQs have been withdrawn: B/115, B/117, B/123, B/124, B/125, B/126, B/129, B/133, B/135, B/138, B/139, B/140, B/141, B/144, B/147, and B/148.

Thank you.

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 seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

PUBLIC BILLS

First Reading

On motion made and seconded, the following Bills were read a first time –

- (a) The Certificate of Character Bill (No. II of 2026)*
- (b) The Anti-Money Laundering, Combatting the Financing of Terrorism and Countering Proliferation Financing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill (No. III of 2026)*

*Second Reading***THE OPTICAL COUNCIL (AMENDMENT) BILL****(NO. I of 2026)**

(4.35 p.m.)

The Minister of Health and Wellness (Mr A. Bachoo): Madam Speaker, I beg to move that the Optical Council (Amendment) Bill (No. I of 2026) be read a second time.

This amendment has become not only urgent, but absolutely necessary. This Bill is not just about amending an existing piece of legislation; it is about correcting a legislative blunder committed by the previous government. A blunder that has compromised the legal integrity of the Optical Council itself, damaged the reputation of our health system, and most disturbingly, inflicted real human harm.

A law that was illegal from the very beginning. Madam Speaker, let us call a spade a spade!

The Optical Council Act 2021, as enacted by the previous administration, is legally flawed. It created a council structure that was unlawful from the very beginning.

The current Act makes provision, amongst others, for three opticians from the public sector to form part of the Optical Council to regulate the professional conduct of opticians and promote their advancement. Yet, surprisingly, unbeknown to the law makers that there are not full-time opticians employed in the public sector. There never were!

In fact, there were four opticians who were working on a sessional basis in our hospitals. My Ministry has consulted the Attorney General's office and had been advised that these four opticians are not deemed to be public officers. This means that the law provided for the composition of a council that could not legally exist.

In other words, the very body tasked with regulating professional standard was itself not properly constituted. This is not a technical error. This institutional illegality resulting from legislative incompetence and left uncorrected for too long.

Madam Speaker, as a result of this flawed legal framework, we have witnessed the emergence of what can only be described as an unwarranted grip on the regulation of the profession of opticians where certain opticians of the private sector in Mauritius.

In fact, a small group of individuals, emboldened by vague and unchecked powers and ignorance of the authority, have taken control of the council and used it, not to uphold standards and promote advancement of the profession, but to protect their own selfish interest, debar competitors and stifle dissent.

The Optical Council even abusively exceeded its legal authority by attempting to influence decision making with regard to optical retail establishments. An area over which it has no mandate.

It went as far as to submit list to another Ministry recommending which optical businesses should be blacklisted from subsidy schemes for spectacles for elderly persons.

This led to the arbitrary exclusion of lawfully operating optical shops – businesses that employ several Mauritians and serve thousands of citizens.

Is this regulation? No, Madam Speaker, this is abuse of power! This is how regulatory capture operates, and this House will not tolerate such unacceptable conduct.

Laws do not exist in a vacuum. They have consequences often on the most vulnerable citizens. Let me share one of the most disturbing outcomes of this flawed legislation, a heritage of the previous regime.

Because of the opaque and unjust practises permitted under the current Act, particularly the lack of transparency and integrity in the registration process, several foreign professionals who were invited to work in Mauritius found themselves caught in an irreversible trap, some were denied registration after passing through flawed and discretionary examinations while others faced endless administrative hurdles.

Worse still, I am told that some of their spouses and children were deported because of primary applicants' registration was blocked or delayed, not on merit, but due to institutional manipulation and conflict of interests. Is how we treat professionals who come to serve our people? This is not just regulatory failure. This is gross injustice! And it has happened under the very legislation we now propose to amend.

This Bill seeks to do what the previous administration failed to do: bring legality, professionalism, fairness and inclusiveness to the regulation of opticians and orthoptist in Mauritius.

We are –

- Rectifying the illegal composition of the council by removing the requirements for the representation of public sector opticians;
- Formally recognising orthoptists, essential vision care professionals and allowing for their registration and representation;
- Clarifying the definition of opticians and introducing a definition for optometrist;
- Ending the pre-registration examination system that is currently riddled with conflict of interests and low transparency, and aligning registration with best practices used by other professional councils such as the Allied Health Professionals Council and Nursing Council. It is also worthy to note that there are no examinations for registration of opticians in France or in India. Let me remind the House that prior to 2021, opticians were regulated by the Optician Registration Board and there were no examinations, there were no problems and certainly no abuse;
- Defining and regulating eye health professionals more clearly by harmonising, updating and broadening the categories of professionals eligible for registration under the council, and finally
- We are drawing a clear legal line: the Optical Council will regulate professionals. They have nothing to do with commercial enterprises. Optical retail outlets will continue to be regulated under other appropriate enactments.

In doing so, we will not only restore legality. We are also creating a more inclusive and more regulatory environment that better reflects the multidisciplinary nature of vision care today.

Madam Speaker, these amendments have not been drafted in a vacuum. They followed three working sessions with the Optical Council in May and November 2025 and they also take onboard the realities faced by professionals in the field of vision care, patients and the Ministry alike.

Madam Speaker, the Optical Council (Amendment) Bill 2026 is more than a set of technical corrections. It is a statement of principle. It is the repudiation of the incompetence of the past and a restoration of legality, decency and order in the regulation of eye care services in Mauritius.

It is a rejection of unilateral control and a promise to both our professionals and our people that integrity and justice will prevail in the governance of health.

It is also a timely step forward in ensuring that the legislation is harmonised with best practices, updated to reflect current needs and inclusive of all qualified professionals in this essential field.

Madam Speaker, let me now deal briefly into the principal provisions of the Bill and their justifications.

Clause 3 provides for the inclusion or definition for orthoptists, foreign orthoptists, visiting orthoptists and optometrists, that is, someone who, *inter alia*, evaluates visual acuity and prescribe, fits and supplies optical appliances as well as clarify the definition on some of the terms.

Clauses 4, 5 and 6 provide for inclusion of orthoptists, foreign orthoptists, visiting opticians and visiting orthoptists to be covered under the Act.

Clause 7 and 8 provide for the new composition for the council by removing representations of public sector opticians, increasing the number of opticians, removing representation from the Optical Association of Mauritius as the latter is not representative of all opticians in the country, including a representative from the Ministry of Finance and the Consultant-in-Charge, Subramania Bharati Eye Hospital, and the replacement in case of vacancy.

Clause 9 provides for the quorum and frequency of meetings of the council. Clause 10 provides for an orthoptist to be eligible to be appointed as registrar in addition to an optician.

Clause 11 provides for amendment to Part IV of the Act pertaining to the registration of optician to include orthoptist, foreign orthoptist and visiting opticians or visiting orthoptist and it will repeal the requirement for examinations to be conducted by the council.

Clause 12, 13, 14 and 15 provide for inclusion of orthoptist and foreign orthoptist, visiting opticians and visiting orthoptist in the annual list of professionals.

Clause 16, 17 and 18 will enable the Optical Council to exercise discipline over the profession of orthoptist. Clause 19, 20, 21, 22 provide for the new membership of the disciplinary tribunal and the manner for the conduct of disciplinary measures.

Clause 23 provides for deregistration of orthoptists and foreign orthoptists. Clause 24 provides for appeal to be made by aggrieved orthoptists and foreign orthoptists against the decision of the Optical Council.

Clause 25 provides for the offences to be levelled against orthoptists and foreign orthoptists.

Clause 26 provides for amended list of pharmaceutical products authorised to be used by optometrists. Clause 27 provides new conditions for the conduct of election of members of Optical Council.

Clause 28 provides for qualifications of the different categories of professionals to be registered with the Council and finally Clause 29 provides that these amendments shall come in operation on a date to be fixed by proclamation.

Madam Speaker. I now commend this Bill to the House not only for the sake of compliance but for the sake of public interest and professional dignity.

Thank you.

Dr. Boolell rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

At 4.46 p.m., the Sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 5.27 p.m., with Madam Speaker on the Chair.

Madam Speaker: Please be seated.

Hon. Leader of the Opposition!

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

Madame la présidente, j'ai écouté avec beaucoup d'attention l'intervention de l'honorable ministre de la Santé sur le projet de loi, c'est-à-dire le *Optical Council (Amendment) Bill* et je suis assez surpris de par ses propos.

Il a énoncé de graves accusations, premièrement, contre l'ancien gouvernement qui avait amené la loi au Parlement en 2021, si je ne me trompe pas, et aussi contre le Conseil.

Madame la présidente, pour le peu de temps que j'ai été au Parlement, j'ai aussi eu l'occasion d'être ministre pendant quelques années. Quand le ministre fait mention de l'illégalité de cette loi qui est en existence pour le moment, je me pose la question, Madame

la présidente, je pense que la plupart de ceux qui ont servi ce pays comme ministre le savent, c'est le bureau de *l'Attorney General* et les officiers de *l'Attorney General's Office* qui travaillent sur les projets de loi et c'est sur les recommandations de ces officiers qu'éventuellement au niveau du Conseil des ministres, on approuve les projets de loi.

Alors, je ne comprends pas trop l'argument énoncé par le ministre. En ce qui concerne la composition du conseil, il a fait référence aux personnes, c'est-à-dire les officiers qui étaient sur ce conseil et qui étaient des officiers du ministère. Il a fait comprendre que c'était des officiers qui n'étaient pas employés à plein temps mais des officiers qui été en un *sessional*, si je ne me trompe pas, voilà ce qu'il avait dit. Mais, Madame présidente, je me suis renseigné et je comprends que *there is no post as such in the Ministry, to be able to recruit an optician whereas, Madam Speaker, they have been there, I understand, those persons, for the past 25 years which means that they may not be Public Officers but they have been providing service to the Ministry for the past 25 years, Madam Speaker.*

Now, having said that, Madam Speaker, I believe the hon. Minister, today, had two possibilities. One, it is confirmed what he has said in this House. The first one was to completely scrap the existing legislation and come up with a new legislation or if as he said, it was illegal – *il y a eu des maldonnes au niveau du conseil*, – he should have made a statement to the police from the very day he was made aware of the situation and not come today, like I said, to this House with an amendment to the Bill and make that gratuitous allegations, Madam Speaker.

Having said that, Madam Speaker, let me say a few things. There are things that I welcome in this piece of legislation, for example, to formally bring orthoptist under the regulatory umbrella of the Optical Council because for too long, Madam Speaker, there has been ambiguity regarding their status and this Bill, Madam Speaker seeks to correct that.

However, Madam Speaker, while the intent of this Bill may be noble, the mechanisms proposed raise serious questions regarding patient's safety, professional autonomy and the governance of the Council itself.

Today, Madam Speaker, what we see in this piece of legislation was what was criticised when that Act was brought into this House in 2021 *et permettez-moi, Madame la présidente, pour étayer ce que je suis en train de dire, de me référer à l'intervention de l'honorable Richard Duval à l'époque, et je cite –*

« Je vois que le ministre va accentuer la présence des fonctionnaires sur ce conseil ».

Et, j'espère, il n'est pas là aujourd'hui, que l'honorable Richard Duval n'y verra pas une entrave à l'indépendance de cette institution quand il avait affirmé à l'époque, je cite –

« Et si on y ajoute à cette liste, (...) le représentant du bureau du PMO et celui de l'Attorney General's Office, le ministre aura sous son control sept membres de ce conseil, ce qui représente presque la moitié de *l'Optical Council* »

De ce fait, la question de l'indépendance de tel conseil se pose et j'y reviendrai un peu plus tard, Madame la présidente, à cet argument qui avait été énoncé à l'époque.

Madam Speaker, let me address certain specific provisions of this Bill and I hope, I will have the full attention of the hon. Minister for what I am going to say. Madam Speaker, as Leader of the Opposition, my duty is to scrutinise these provisions to ensure that the people of this country are not short-changed in the name of administrative conditions and in doing so, Madam Speaker, I have measured this Bill against international best practice, specifically at the regulatory frameworks of the UK and Australia. Both recognised globally for robust health profession regulation. And, Madam Speaker, the comparison reveals significant departures from international standards and I shall address six critical areas of concern.

Firstly, patient safety and the abolition of the preregistration examination. Madam Speaker, let me draw the attention of the House to the Explanatory Memorandum and also to clause 11 of the Bill which both deal with preregistration where it is explicitly stated that the object of this Bill is to abolish the preregistration examination for opticians and this is not a minor administrative trick, Madam Speaker. This is the removal of a critical safeguard. Madam Speaker, under the 2021 Act, practitioners were required to hold an approved qualification and pass a preregistration examination and this served as a final regulatory gatekeeping mechanism. It verified professional competency beyond paper qualification and ensured that graduates, Madam Speaker, met local clinical standards.

Madam Speaker, now this House needs to be informed what safeguards will replace this examination to ensure that practitioners entering the profession meet the required competency standards to protect the Mauritian public. We must also remember that optometry education standards vary significantly across countries. For example, Madam Speaker, how will the Council verify that foreign trained practitioners meet local clinical standards without a preregistration examination? *Et cette nécessité, Madame la présidente, est fondamentale. Moi-même, en tant qu'ingénieur de profession, je suis passé par là. J'ai dû faire deux années*

d'apprentissage et passer des examens avant de pouvoir exercer comme un ingénieur professionnel. Alors là, on est en train d'abolir that preregistration, Madam Speaker.

Now, let us have a look at international practice, Madam Speaker. For example, in Australia, overseas trained optometrists must pass the Competency in Optometry Examination. A very rigorous assessment comprising both written and clinical components, administered by the Optometric Council of Australia and New Zealand before they can be granted a general registration. In the UK, the General Optical Council maintains strict accreditation standards for qualification and may require additional training or assessment for overseas applicants. The WHO, in its 2024 Guidance on Health Practitioner Regulation, explicitly identifies defining minimum levels for competence as a core regulatory function for patient safety. And what are we doing here, in Mauritius? We are being asked to abolish this safeguard without a structured replacement.

Madam Speaker, is the hon. Minister aware that most international regulatory bodies retain mandatory competency assessment prior to registration? Then again, if so, why is Mauritius moving in the opposite direction? And if you will allow me, I will put that question. Does Government have a sinister motive in abolishing the preregistration examination for opticians? Madam Speaker, by removing this examination, we are prioritising the speed of registration over the safety of the patient. This House, Madam Speaker, seeks assurance that alternative, robust competency assessment, whether a supervised internship, a clinical portfolio or a modified examination will be put in place. Otherwise, Madam Speaker, we risk diluting the standards of eyecare in our country.

Madam Speaker, let me now dwell on an important clause of the Bill which I raised earlier and which concerns the governance and independence of the regulator, which to me, is fundamental to this piece of legislation. Madam Speaker, let me refer to clause 7 which restructures the Optical Council. As it is, it is set in the Explanatory Memorandum and the hon. Minister explained to us that this specific clause is to address an anomaly with regard to public sector representation.

Yet, Madam Speaker, the proposed composition under the clause 7(1) shows a fundamental shift in the balance – now, with only six elected members from the profession and seven ex-officio or appointed members, including representatives from the Ministry of Health, the Prime Minister's Office, the Attorney General's Office, the Ministry of Finance and two persons appointed by the hon. Minister. Madam Speaker, may we know from the

hon. Minister as to why the number of professional members from the optical sector is being reduced and how does Government intend to preserve the principle of professional self-regulation? *Et je retourne à ce que l'honorable ministre Richard Duval avait dénoncé avec beaucoup de verbes il y a quelques années de cela, spécifiquement concernant ce conseil, Madame la présidente.*

Now, Madam Speaker, let me compare this with international models and I will make reference again to UK and Australia. In the United Kingdom, Madam Speaker, the General Optical Council comprises six registrant members, that is, optometrists and dispensing opticians who are elected by their peers and six lay members, including an independently appointed Chair. This ensures a professional parity while safeguarding public interest through independent oversight.

In Australia, the Optometry Board operates under the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme with a structured balance of practitioners and community members appointed via a transparent merit-based process. Crucially, Madam Speaker, the Board enjoys statutory independence. Ministerial direction is limited only to broad policy, not individual regulatory decisions. What we see here, under this Bill is that elected professionals are outnumbered. The addition of members appointed directly by the Minister will give executive significant sway over regulatory outcomes. What guarantee, if I may ask the hon. Minister, will he give to this House that these appointment powers will not be used to influence regulatory decisions affecting the optical profession?

Madam Speaker, the WHO guidance on this issue is clear: effective regulation requires assurance of independence and the governance and accountability of professional regulators to maintain public confidence. Again, with regard to that, this piece of legislation goes in the opposite direction.

Now, another issue, Madam Speaker, is that of conflict of interest and the role of ophthalmologists. Madam Speaker, clause 7 (1) grants a permanent seat to the Consultant-in-Charge of the Subramania Bharati Eye Hospital. Now, while we respect expertise of ophthalmologists, how does granting a permanent seat to a consultant ophthalmologist not constitute a conflict of interest, given that ophthalmology and optometry have overlapping scopes of practice? Allowing one professional to directly participate in regulating another raises concern regarding professional independence and bias in disciplinary matters.

Furthermore, is the Minister aware that ophthalmologists in Mauritius may operate optical retail businesses without being registered under the Optical Council? What measures does this Bill, Madam Speaker, introduce to address this regulatory gap and prevent unfair competition?

Will the Government consider introducing, Madam Speaker, clear statutory rules regarding the ownership of optical shops to ensure that dispensing activities are properly supervised by registered professionals? We cannot have a situation where one group is strictly regulated while another operates outside the regulatory framework.

Madam Speaker, I wish to draw the attention of the House to clause 3 which deletes the definition of “practice of optometry” from the principal Act. How will the removal of this statutory definition not create legal ambiguity regarding who is authorised to perform optometric procedures? Legal definitions, Madam Speaker, establish the boundaries of professional practice. Removing this definition will definitely create uncertainty regarding what activities constitute optometry and how enforcement should occur. Without a clear legal definition, Madam Speaker, how does the Government intend to prosecute individuals or companies engaged in the illegal practice of optometry?

Again, I will refer the House to international practice. In the United Kingdom, the Opticians Act of 1989 contains precise statutory definition of regulated activities, that is, sight testing, contact lens fitting, sale of optical appliances. Therefore, enabling clear prosecution of illegal practice. In Australia, the national law provides an explicit framework for defining the practice of the profession, supported by board-endorsed scope of practice statements.

Furthermore, Madam Speaker, merging the definition of “optician” in this Bill risks blurring the distinction between clinical practitioners and retail optical operators, thereby weakening professional enforcement.

This leads me to a broader concern, Madam Speaker. Let me ask the Minister: Has his Ministry conducted an assessment of the number of companies currently operating in Mauritius in breach of the Optical Council Act of 2021? If this is the case, may I ask him to table a report before this House? Can the hon. Minister reassure the House that this amendment bill is not designed directly or indirectly to regularise or protect companies that have been operating illegally in this country?

The timing of this piece of legislation raises legitimate concerns and questions, Madam Speaker. If we are removing competency assessment and blurring professional definitions, who truly benefits? What specific enforcement mechanisms does this Bill introduce to strengthen the Council's ability to prosecute illegal optical practice?

Madam Speaker, in the UK, optical businesses must be enrolled with the General Optical Council and comply with published standards. In Australia, business registration is separate from practitioner registration with clear corporate governance requirements.

Madam Speaker, we cannot support reforms that appear to lower barriers for some while raising burdens for registered and compliant practitioners.

Madam Speaker, given the profound changes proposed, allow me to question the Minister on whether the Optical Council – he said that, but I am saying ‘formally’ – was formally consulted prior to the drafting of this amendment bill? If this is the case, as he said, will he table the Council's written response before the House? Were registered optometrists and dispensing opticians given a formal opportunity to submit representation before finalising this piece of legislation?

Regulatory reform, Madam Speaker, requires trust and collaboration. Is this the case with this piece of legislation? The WHO emphasises that transparent processes for standard setting and appointment are essential for regulatory legitimacy. Rushing this legislation without meaningful engagement, Madam Speaker, is, in my humble opinion, taking risk of creating a regulatory framework that lacks professional buying and public confidence.

Madame la présidente, en guise de conclusion, c'est vrai que quand j'ai regardé le projet de loi, c'est un projet de loi qui va, éventuellement, apporter une certaine dose de clarification à la profession, ce qui est une bonne chose pour les citoyens de ce pays. Mais en contrepartie, il y a beaucoup de questions auxquelles le ministre doit répondre afin de rassurer cette population.

Je vous remercie, Madame la présidente.

Madam Speaker: Merci beaucoup.

Maintenant, j'ai le Dr. Aumeer !

(5.54 p.m.)

Dr. F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central): Thank you, Madam Speaker.

This is the second time that I am getting the opportunity to give my opinion and views on the Optical Bill, which was firstly presented to this House in 2021.

I have listened carefully to the Leader of the Opposition, and I have to tell him that if today the Minister has had to bring certain amendments to the Optical Bill – notwithstanding that we all agree to everything – it is exactly because of the flaws and the perceptions that have been in that Bill when it was enacted, which favoured a few!

Secondly, when he talks about the fact that we do not have any public officers, namely opticians, working on contractual agreement in the public hospitals, he then says that we should not have the Consultant Ophthalmology sitting on the Board. He is contradicting himself! You either want one or not. But I fully support that we do need a specialist in the field of ocular vision, namely ophthalmologists, to sit around with opticians to bring the best eyesight care standard in this country.

Madam Speaker, I have no doubt that the hon. Minister, when he is bringing in amendments to this Bill, his main objectives and concerns are to strengthen the regulation of optical profession, and, at the same time, enhance the quality of eye care services in this country. Obviously, amendments are brought because he had thought and seen that there were gaps and shortcomings in the previous Bill and his aim must now be seen in the amendments that he is bringing as to improving registration, licensing procedures and clarifying the scope of the practice. All changes that are to be brought must be seen to protect the public at large. These are the main people who are concerned, not us law makers or whatever we call ourselves, but it is the public sitting outside, there, should be seen as being protected and as having the best benefits of these amendments. Also, the profession, a profession which will be professionally accountable but also having a forward working optical practice.

Madam Speaker, for discussion's sake, it is extremely important that the House and the public at large, who are listening to us, understand the purview of this Bill and who of those who will be directly involved in the delivery of care of eye sight in this country – talking widely, the optical practice. We are talking about optometrist; we have four categories –

- Optometrist;
- Dispensing optician;
- *Opticien lunetier*, and
- the Orthotist.

For those who, here, maybe find all these terms confusing –

- The optometrist sells glasses, contact lenses, consult you, can specify glasses but cannot prescribe medications. It is very important and this is why I will say to the hon. Leader of the Opposition, we need to have a consultant Ophthalmologist on the Council. They are allowed to prescribe.
- Dispensing opticians only sell glasses and fit contact lenses. They are not supposed to do consultation unless they have acquired bachelor degrees afterwards that allow them to do that.
- *L'opticien lunetier, lui c'est quelqu'un qui est gradué en France et c'est un concept très strict* same as the optometrist but are not allowed to look after those below the age of 16, and
- the orthotist, his main scope of work is to investigate, diagnose those who have broad eye movement disorder, binocular vision, strabismus, like myself – some people always call me *tire cari guet diriz ene kote*. But are not allowed to sell glasses. So, we need good orthotists in this country.

Madam Speaker, having said so, having gone very in depth into the Bill, I will broadly comment on three aspects. However, I have to say that the three aspects on which I am going to comment on does not mean that I am going against the intentions and the concept that have been elucidated in the Bill by the hon. Minister but only to say that my concerns are as they would be and I am sure the hon. Minister during his summing up will be able to reassure us – and knowing him very well, you had a long talk yesterday as well, – I am sure he will make amendments if he deems necessary.

I will comment mainly on the abolition of pre-registration examination for those opticians and orthotists, about deleting the definition of the practice of optometry, and thirdly, if time allows, composition of the Council. I have to say that I had a few meetings with representatives of the Optical Association of this country and the Optical Council. I have listened to their views not saying that all that they said were determinant in what I am going to say but I gave a listening ear to them and I am sure the hon. Minister has done the same as

I did. I will not comment on the abolition of pre-examination, pre-registration exams likewise as I did in 2021.

At the time, the arguments were, we will have selective exemption of certain optician, optometrist or dispenser optician that come from United Kingdom and I was totally against in my speech that we cannot have selective exemption. We either need to have exams for all or we don't do the exams. Unfortunately, or fortunately, the hon. Minister has come and said today in his Bill that he is not favourable that we continue with exams, and is, therefore, abolishing it. So, we have gone from one extreme to the other. My question is: we should not be taking the preregistration exam very lightly because such a system has proven and delivered its promise.

In May 1921, exams were carried by the Optical Council and it showed that the past rate was only 15%. They changed it to have foreign examiners and, subsequently, when the content of the examination papers was produced, the pass rate has improved to 40%. The question that I ask myself, and we should ask ourselves: why abolishing a process that are standard practice in various parts of the world, including United Kingdom, India or other parts in Europe, developing countries? We are reversing a process, and, whether we like it or not, exams have ensured an unbiased evaluation of all concerned in the field of optometry irrespective of whether some like it or not. Exams are objective assessments, it is unbiased, it is objective. For the four categories, I have mentioned, there are different sets of papers for them, they have different pass marks. Also, the questions that have been put in the Optical Council exams are not theoretical, they are all practical.

And, finally, the number of times you can take the exams, even you fail ten times you can still take exams – there is what we call an endless number of attempts. I am of the opinion, Madam Speaker, that we need to have benchmark standards in the practice of eyecare since it is a very delicate practice. If we look here, I just had a count today. 30% of us sitting here wear glasses, this is it. 40% of the population have non-communicable diseases. Out of it, diabetes form nearly 400,000 people, pre-diabetic or diabetic have eye sight issues. This is serious. We are talking of a profession that we should not take lightly, whatever the amendments we will bring.

Knowing quite well that we have optometrists and opticians that come from different parts of the world and institutions, we have to be extremely careful as to whom of those we are going to give a license to practice. Otherwise, because a practice that has acceptable

standards, who are recognised otherwise we will be opening a can of worms and I mean it – we will be opening can of worms because the backdoor entry will just wide open. When it comes to foreign opticians, I fully agree we can't just subject them to examination, we will discourage people to come. We have a way where councils have temporary registrations where they won't need exams.

Some people have said exams are biased. Exams are truly biased, Madam Speaker. You know why they are biased? They are biased against those who do not study. Those who don't come to the scratch. Those who do not have the level of expertise. Those who have not made it fully by attending their courses. Exams are biased against these people. Otherwise, exams have proven that it will show exactly who those who are competent, efficient, highly professional and deliver the best skill service.

Madam Speaker, professional expertise is at the core of any regulation and accreditation. If exams – which I take myself and engage myself personally, which I fully support, – is to be removed, I hope that the hon. Minister of Health must reassure the population at large, and the public, of a system that he would be putting in place, that has –

1. strict educational accreditation validated by the local and foreign authorities;
2. evidence of accredited university training by those who are applying to be registered, where the prospecting optician has been doing his training, and
3. thirdly, licencing must be linked to recognise educational authorities.

In my opinion, Madam Speaker, competency assessment, be it through existing exams or any other mechanism which the hon. Minister may deem fit, and, surely, he has that in mind, must ensure that only those with the highest standards of practice, competency, professional integrity, based on evidenced medical practice, those are the ones who should be recognised by the Council. For example, the developing world also has noted that they need to come with a more valid form of assessment and they came with their OSCE.

This amendment must not be seen as a back door entry for those who knowingly well, cannot take exams in view of their limited competency to have an easy registration pathway to the Council.

I would just complete my arguments and I have noted at section 17, subsection 2(d) where the practitioner will pass such an interview as conducted by the Council. I would have been very comforted by the Bill if there were more details about who would conduct the interview; whether it will be local practitioners, foreign practitioners, whether it will be

members of the Council that will be coopted to have an expertise in optometry or in relation to the field and that will surely be an element of subjective assessment and we have to be extremely careful. Any subjective assessment will bring this element of bias and can be contested by anybody.

Thank you, very much.

Madam Speaker: Thank you, Dr. Aumeer.

Yes, Mr Beechook.

(6.06 p.m.)

Mr R. Beechook (Second Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil): Merci, Madame la présidente.

Madame la présidente, en ce début de soirée, nous débattons des amendements à *l'Optical Council Act 2021*. Mon ami et collègue du Parlement a largement élaboré, d'ailleurs de par son métier, l'aspect vraiment médical du dossier mais néanmoins, moi, je vais élaborer parce que sur ce marché que représente l'optique, le marché de l'optique, Madame, *rightly so, honorable has pointed it out, it concerns 40% of Mauritians*. Cependant, Madame la présidente, ce marché est dominé par la mainmise atomisant de *l'Optical Council*. Si je dois résumer ce marché, je me réfère à l'adage en Kreol qui dit –

Met lisien vey sosis

Je vais m'expliquer, Madame la présidente. Qui dit marché, dit revenue. Qui dit revenue, dit intérêts commerciaux. Qui dit intérêts commerciaux, dit profits. Et lorsque ces acteurs, par la même, les bénéficiers de ces intérêts commerciaux sont chargés de réguler la pratique du métier et par ricochet le marché lui-même, qu'avons-nous ? Une situation ubuesque résumant l'adage *lisien vey sosis*.

La loi de 2021, Madame la présidente, a donné lieu à une cartellisation sidérante, cadenassant, verrouillant, à double, triple, quadruple tours l'accès au marché aux nouveaux opérateurs et cela, aux profits des opérateurs existants. Nous avons vu dans le discours du ministre de la Santé comment en l'absence des représentants légitimes de l'État, *l'Optical Council* a été accaparé par des opérateurs sans scrupules. Figurerez-vous, le Registrar de *l'Optical Council* est lui-même un opérateur du marché de l'optique. N'est-ce pas un cas flagrant de conflit d'intérêt ?

Je félicite le ministre de la Santé d'être aujourd'hui vent debout contre toutes les lobbys mercantilistes en faveur du maintien du statu quo.

Madame la présidente, l'opposition et les opposants aux amendements ciblent l'élimination de l'examen qui mène à l'enregistrement des opticiens, des ophtalmologues, des opticiens lunetier, etc...

Madame la présidente, sachez que ces examens justement, c'est le kalashnikov entre les mains des accapareurs du conseil qui s'en sert pour re-éliminer de manière chirurgical la compétition dans le marché.

Je m'explique.

Comment ces examens sont-ils organisés ? Par le MES.

Sur la recommandation de qui ? L'Optical Council.

Qui sont les examinateurs ? Ils sont choisis selon une liste de trois ou quatre personnes.

Soumise par qui ? L'Optical Council. D'accord.

Qui rédigent les papiers d'examen ? Ces mêmes personnes inféodées à l'Optical Council.

Qui corrigent ces papiers d'examen et notent les candidats ? Ces mêmes personnes.

Résultat ?

Mr Jhummun: Judge and party!

Mr Beehook : En juin 2024, seuls 9 candidats sur 22 ont pu passer les examens. En novembre 2024, seuls 7 sur 29. C'est une aberration, Madame la présidente.

Toujours au sujet des examens, la loi stipule que les examens doivent avoir lieu tous les ans. Quand est-ce que les derniers examens ont-ils eu lieu ? En Novembre 2024 ! Il y a plus d'un an et demi. Et imaginez-vous que s'est-t-il déroulé depuis ?

1. Beaucoup de magasins de l'optique, notamment les petits, ont fermé parce qu'en l'absence d'opticiens, ils ne peuvent opérer.
2. Les professionnels étrangers, en quête d'une *occupation permit*, ils obtiennent d'abord un titre de séjour temporaire d'un an en attendant les examens et bien, ils sont éliminés et ils sont contraints de rentrer dans leurs pays parce que cela fait plus d'un an qu'il n'y a pas eu d'examen.

Cela profite à qui ? Les opérateurs existants.

Et, cela pénalise qui ? Les nouveaux entrants.

C'est de la persécution professionnelle.

La perversion la plus nauséabonde, Madame la présidente, l'*Optical Council* profite de cette situation pour outrepasser son mandat, pour aller rencontrer des entités, notamment étatiques, le ministère de la Sécurité sociale, la SICOM, la NIC. Pour faire quoi ? Pour faire éliminer les prestataires qui s'inscrivent auprès de ces instances. C'est de l'élimination commerciale de prestataires.

J'ai devant moi, Madame la présidente, une lettre datant du 26 mars 2025 émanant du ministère de la Sécurité sociale. Je vais lire les grandes lignes –

"The Ministry in collaboration with the Optical Council of Mauritius..."

D'accord.

Entre autres, qu'est-ce qu'ils ont fait ? Ils sont allés rencontrer les officiers du ministère de la Sécurité sociale sans que cela soit dans leurs mandat.

Et par la suite, quel a été le résultat ?

"Thus, you are being deregistered from the Ministry's list of suppliers of spectacles with immediate effect."

Des opérateurs qui s'inscrivent auprès du ministère de la Sécurité sociale bénéficient d'un *grant* de R5000 pour *supply* des lunettes auprès des personnes les plus vulnérables. On a outrepassé ce mandat pour aller éliminer la compétition. Il a fallu une mise en demeure et l'avis légal du State Law Office pour qu'au bout de deux mois, cette entreprise, un nouvel entrant sur le marché, soit réinscrit dans le registre des prestataires du ministère de la Sécurité sociale.

Voilà comment opère cette mafia !

Pour terminer, Madame la présidente, on parle de ce fameux enregistrement des professionnels. Il faut voir la bonne foi du législateur qui dit qu'il a mis en place un conseil et ce conseil est chargé de mettre en place un mécanisme. Justement, ce n'est pas un système où on va enregistrer qui on veut ou à tour de bras. Bien sûr, il y aura un examen de chaque dossier par des professionnels.

Mais en ce qu'il s'agit de ce fameux enregistrement, Madame la présidente, *I can tell it without fear or favour*. Le cas de ce candidat, c'est une aberration ! Ce candidat remue ciel et terre pour avoir un enregistrement auprès du conseil de l'*Optical Council*. Cette personne est titulaire d'un baccalauréat *in optometry*.

Le terme baccalauréat en soi est un *undergraduate degree*, une licence. *They use alternative terms, either baccalauréat degree or Bachelor's degree*. En raison de ce changement d'appellation, en fonction des pays, des universités, c'est quelque chose tout à fait praticable. Ce candidat a soumis des documentations émanant du *World Council of Optometry*, du *Botswana Optometrists Association* en Afrique, de l'*Indian Optometric Association, India*, du *Maha Optometry Association, Mumbai*, toutes ces documentations pour soutenir qu'il est titulaire d'un *undergraduate degree*, d'une licence en optométrie. En dépit de cela, Madame la présidente, il a été éliminé. Son enregistrement n'a pas eu lieu !

Pourquoi ? Parce que le conseil se cache derrière le *Third Schedule, Section 18(2) of the Optical Act whereby acceptable qualifications are Bachelor's degree in Optometry/Ophthalmic Optometry. But this baccalauréat in optometry is an undergraduate degree in optometry!* Voilà comment les personnes de mauvaise foi ont tué, anéanti les candidats ! Je pose la question autrement, Madame la présidente. Nous, au sein de ce gouvernement et dans ce pays, sommes tous d'accord qu'il faut attirer les meilleurs talents étrangers pour venir travailler pour rehausser le niveau de service et apporter leur expertise.

Mais je pose une simple question à cette Chambre : Comment convaincre un Anglais, un Indien, un Américain, un Français, ayant plus de 20 ans d'expérience et étant inscrit auprès de l'instance suprême dans son pays d'origine, de venir travailler à l'île Maurice ? On lui demande : « Tu sais, il faut que tu passes l'examen de l'*Optical Council*. » C'est une aberration, Madame la présidente !

An hon. Member: Incroyable !

Mr Beehook: On ne pourra pas le faire ! La raison, le résultat, c'est qu'aujourd'hui, ceux qui sont là depuis longtemps tiennent des commerces dans des grands centres commerciaux, sur les axes ils ont pignon sur rue sur les axes principaux du pays. Et les nouveaux entrants, ils ont du mal à trouver de la main-d'œuvre. Tout au long, la rhétorique de mon discours, c'est pour vous démontrer, Madame la présidente, comment l'*Optical Council* a usé de son pouvoir pour éliminer la compétition.

Je vais terminer, Madame la présidente. La compétition est importante. Il est crucial de démocratiser l'accès à ce métier. Je prends l'exemple de mes verres à moi. Cela m'a coûté R 12,000 ; les verres antireflets, etc. Le même verre, Madame la présidente, je l'ai acheté dans un petit magasin d'un nouvel entrant sur le marché. Les mêmes verres, quasiment gamme moyenne, ça vous coûte entre R 35,000 et R 45,000 dans un magasin qui est là depuis longtemps et qui est parenté ou a des contacts au sein de l'*Optical Council*.

Ce *Bill* va permettre, Madame la présidente, l'épanouissement des nouveaux entrants au sein de ce marché, de décadénasser, de déverrouiller l'accès au marché et d'offrir aux Mauriciens des lunettes de qualité, inscrites par les professionnels à des prix abordables.

This is why, Madam Speaker, I am here to commend the Bill to the House. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Merci. Merci. Merci beaucoup ! Je remercie tous ceux qui font un effort pour que le public comprenne bien les enjeux.

Honourable Ms Babooram !

(6.20 p.m.)

The Junior Minister of Health and Wellness (Ms A. Babooram): Madam Speaker, before I proceed with the substance of my contribution, I wish to extend my sincerest and most heartfelt commendation to the hon. Minister, Mr Bachoo, besides whom I have the privilege now to humbly serve at the Ministry of Health and Wellness, for his extraordinary dedication, tireless effort and sheer commitment in bringing this Bill before this House.

This is not a simple piece of legislation.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Chut!

Ms Babooram: It touches upon the livelihood of dozens of professionals. The health outcomes of hundreds of thousands of Mauritians and the integrity of any industry that has grown considerably over the years.

Madam Speaker, let me paint a picture of where we stand today.

The Optical Council today comprises around 106 registered professionals both Mauritians and expats who are registered as optometrist, *opticien-lunetier*, and dispensing opticians, but there are no registered orthoptists. This is our first reason for this Bill: to be able to register orthoptists when they become available in the country.

Unlike optometrists, orthoptists, as has been thoroughly explained by hon. Dr. Aumeer, are specialised in binocular vision anomalies and other complex conditions that affect how the eyes work together. They provide the appropriate therapy in each case. There are now many foreigners in the optical industry and they are trained in various countries. This further explains the importance of a proper Optical Bill.

Now, coming to our local graduates and professionals, previously, they had to undergo a professional exam before being registered. However, not many could clear the exam because of a lack of transparency, information and proper training.

The Optical Council (Amendment) Bill will recognise our young professionals and register them in due course if they fulfil all the required criteria. The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness has already pointed out the many flaws in the existing Act. I will not, therefore, indulge into this again.

Madam Speaker, the industry is a flourishing one. That is why rigorous checks and proper scrutiny into the profession is needed. There was a time when ophthalmologists, alongside two or three opticians, used to recruit opticians and dispensing opticians in the eye hospital.

We now have optometrists who are qualified to diagnose different eye pathology using certain equipment and ophthalmic drops and refer to eye specialists whenever needed. The same has been mentioned in the Bill. This explains the need for a proper Bill and regulations in order to monitor our optical professionals and avoid cases of malpractice. The study of optometry is not currently available in Mauritius.

Therefore, our students travel abroad to pursue their studies. When they choose to return back to Mauritius, they have a legitimate expectation to be recognised as professionals and serve this country; their country. In this respect, this Bill aims to make it easier for our young professionals to contribute massively to the welfare of the society.

Madam Speaker, with a growing and ageing population of Mauritius, there is a need for optometrists, especially in our five regional hospitals. We currently only have part-time optometrists serving in the public sector.

This explains the long waiting list, understaffed facilities and preventable suffering. It has been noted that our local professionals are not quite interested in working full-time in hospitals. It would then be of utmost importance to recruit optometrists from abroad.

Apart from that, with the new Bill and newly registered optometrists, there is a scope that our locals would be willing to work in the five regional hospitals in order to ensure the continuity of care. I have spoken about our hospitals being greatly understaffed. I think we need to ponder on this option. Both our hospitals and that of Rodrigues cater for the maximum number of patients needing glasses.

This Government has worked towards a proper regulation of the optical body that this Bill will attain. Our patients waiting for glasses in hospitals will find their needs satisfied in due course. Thus, reducing the load on our ophthalmologists, allowing them to focus on more complex eye care such as surgeries and after-care.

Optometrists are primary eye care providers. They are known for dispensing glasses and helping patients to see better but little do patients know that optometrists can diagnose various eye pathologies on the very first visit.

Some systemic diseases are seen through eye pathologies and we take the example of diabetic retinopathy that is associated with diabetes mellitus. For instance, many children do not realise that we have a decreased vision. They think it is normal to see poorly.

However, when the child is brought in for a regular eye exam, starting as young as five years, it can help in detection of many vision anomalies. A well-regulated, well-staffed optical profession which is precisely what this Bill moves us towards, is a prerequisite for ensuring that our children's vision needs are identified and addressed early.

Under the current legislation, it has come to our attention that some professionals with appropriate qualifications have been denied registration for as far as 10 years and when asked for a reason – no transparency, no apparent reason were forthcoming. Whereas this Government has made sure that this Bill aims for transparency as its core importance.

Our aim is to cater for our local professionals recognise their contribution to society. The COVID-19 pandemic has taught us the importance on relying on local resources. Now, with the crisis in the Middle East, we will definitely need the help of all of our professionals. This Bill facilitates and encourages our professionals in the Diaspora to come and serve our country.

Zealous in our commitment to progress, this Government has shown the vision, the will and the determination to modernise our institutions and place the welfare of our people at the very heart of its action. At the core of this Bill, lies fairness, transparency and the recognition of merit, ensuring that no qualified Mauritian is left behind. Harnessing the potential of our

professionals, both locally and abroad, we are determined to build a stronger, more self-reliant healthcare system. Empowering our youth and restoring confidence in our institutions, this reform paves the way for a brighter and more inclusive future. Every citizen stands to benefit from a system that upholds quality, accountability and equal opportunity. Rooted in unity, guided by purpose, we must continue working together to strengthen our nation and uplift our people.

As we move forward, let us do so with pride and determination shaping a Mauritius that reflects the excellence, resilience and dignity of its people.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Thank you very much. Thank you for respecting the time.

Yes, hon. Dr. Boolell!

(6.29 p.m.)

The Minister of Agro-industry, Food Security, Blue Economy and Fisheries (Dr. A. Boolell): Madam Speaker, I feel like saying only fools rush in where angels fear to tread and I must say if to do the hon. Minister has stood up and convincingly spoke of the merits of this legislation, it is precisely to correct not only an anomaly, but a Bill which should not have been introduced in the first place.

I am not going to say how controversial it is but the hon. Minister is right, he is being decisive and incisive to bring the necessary amendments and he deserves our congratulations because time is of an essence and it is the signals which we send to the public which are relevant.

I made it a point to listen to the speeches delivered by our hon. Friends and I must say some of the arguments put forward by the hon. Leader of the Opposition are worth listening to. Notwithstanding what our good friend, our fellow from Dublin has said – the good hon. Dr. Aumeer – but we will come to the harsh realities. I listened to the arguments put forward by our good friend who has spoken very eloquently and he has put across arguments which cannot be rebutted and I say hats off to you, Sir. And of course, as to the hon. Lady, she has lived up to expectation.

But let me say, what the naked truth is. Our friend, the hon. Minister had lent his ears to those who had been complaining and there was a lot of hue and cry from professionals who

have been denied the legitimate rights to work as professionals and this in itself is tantamount violation by an Optical Council which is not legitimate.

It may have the legacy but it is not legitimate and it has operated as a closed shop. If we are a government which is responsible, we have to speak up and be heard and we cannot tolerate an institution to operate simply because it has the legacy but to operate in all illegitimacy. As a responsible government, we have to act and act without fear or prejudice because this is the mandate that we have.

The hon. Minister is right to say the buck stops here. We have to refer to Section 18(3)(b) of the current Act as has been highlighted by our distinguished friend which provides that examination for registration of opticians shall be held once a year. But since the Bill was proclaimed – how many times have exams been held and to whose detriment? And who has hidden behind the MES? MES has simply acted as a facade and who prepared the exam papers?

Ms. Anquetil: That is the question!

Dr. Boolell: Who prepared the exam papers? It is not because they have invited a few foreign examiners that the job is done. The paper was set deliberately to undermine the process of democracy and we cannot allow democratic values to be violated and the Minister is right to come and say: we are going to widen the circle of opportunities, create opportunities for those who are eligible, who have a legitimate right, who had spent time on overseas studying. Not everybody has the means to go and study in Dublin or France but some make the sacrifices and they go to reputed institutions in India or elsewhere and when they come back, should they be discriminated upon and denied their legitimate rights?

What else have we not been told – that there is no provision for definition of optometrists. But when we look at the provision of legislation, it is there, looking at us, glaring, obvious, and yet, when I had a letter from the acting Chairperson of the Optical Council, she said there is no provision. But provision is there! When we look at the law, the definition ...

Madam Speaker: Section 3.

Dr. Boolell: Section 3, you said it, section 3(g) –

““optometrist” –

(a) means a person who –

- (i) evaluates visual acuity and prescribes, fits and supplies optical appliances for remedial purposes; and
- (ii) uses such equipment and such medication as miotics, cycloplegics, (...) as may be necessary for remedial purposes;”

And when we look at the Council, Madam Speaker, there is legitimate provision for the Minister not only to have his leeway – certainly, he is not going to have his leeway – but who are those appointed by Government? Or am I to understand that the representatives of the Prime Minister’s Office will bend backwards to the whim and caprices of those who think they can exercise undue influence? Or the representatives from the Attorney General’s office? And who are the two members who are going to be appointed by the Minister? Any Tom, Dick and Harry? We are a government which has the responsibility to act and to act without fear or prejudice. When you are in government, you decide and you govern not in poetry but in prose. That is why we are here!

Madam Speaker, let me say and I say it in prose, of course, I have talked of membership and I have talked of transparency but there have been sound arguments also put forward and I do say, because there are provisions for regulations. Supervised internship, we are not against. This is what regulations are here for. What stops us to say that, in the distant future, we may entertain the proposal made by our good friend, hon. Dr. Aumeer? Why not? The law is an ass but we have to amend, we have to regulate, otherwise there is no point in us sitting here, Madam Speaker, if we are not going to amend.

Let me also make it quite clear, in relation to who is an orthoptist. Optometrist, we already know about. An orthoptist has to have basic knowledge in brain anatomy. He has to have basic knowledge. You know, the hon. Prime Minister would say the best way to remember the 12 nerves, you know what it is? I will not say it. He is laughing.

Madam Speaker: We do not know!

Dr. Boolell: No, I will not say it that way, otherwise you will ask me to go out. I do not want to be! I can start O, O, O, that is all.

Madam Speaker: O, O, O. Okay!

Dr. Boolell: Yes, doctors’ secret. In good, how do we say that? As good; not hypocrites but as good Hippocrates.

Madam Speaker: Hippocrates! Hippocrates!

Dr. Boolell: Now, let me make it quite clear that there is a vast difference and an orthoptist notwithstanding that he has to acquire knowledge in relation to brain anatomy, but he is also part and parcel of a team run diligently by an ophthalmologist and they work in hospital. And it is a service delivered and it has to be delivered as a team and with a team spirit. And this is what an orthoptist does. He makes early diagnosis in children, does not only prescribe glasses to be worn but he has more depth as I say, scale and score. Is it lazy eye? Can the blurred or double vision be corrected with an eye patch or glasses? If not, will minor surgery do? But there is more to amblyopia or strabismus.

Now, I will also refer to the comeback to section 7. You know, when I assess the Vet Council, do you know the problems we are having? It is a mirror image of the problem being encountered in relation to the Optical Council. It is lock, stock and barrel and they prevent good qualified vets to be registered. And I have flagged the issue, I have flagged it but it is time for us now to bring the necessary amendment as a responsible Government and we are not going to retreat nor surrender and I congratulate my good friend, the hon. Minister because he has not retreated nor surrendered under the able leadership of the hon. Prime Minister.

Thank you very much.

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

(6.40 p.m.)

Mr Bachoo: Madam Speaker, to start with, I would like to thank all my colleagues, Members of Parliament, who have taken part in this debate and now, the House will realise the reason why we have brought this Bill. On the contrary, we have been too late and I know the sufferings that many of our own children have undergone. They have been sitting there for the past many years without getting the right to work in those optical shops.

You know, throughout the island, we have got optical shops which are mushrooming everywhere but the right to work in those shops is meant only for the handful. They are enjoying the luxuries of life, other than lacking the basic necessities of life and that, as a responsible Government, we could not have accepted it. The hon. Leader of the Opposition, in the beginning, referred to the statement that I had made, that the Act as it is, is unstatutory because there are three members, three opticians who form part of the Council and I had mentioned that they are illegal. It is not legal because they are not officials and then I have to maintain that they are not officers because they are working on a part time basis and

according to the Attorney General's Office advice, they are not officials and that is the reason why I had maintained that from the very beginning, this Act itself was illegal and I am going to maintain it.

I would like to refer to the speech made by our friend, hon. Uteem, that was on the Optical Council Bill in July 2021. I get the feeling that, of course, I have to congratulate him because he was farsighted at that time. He was wise enough to have mentioned a few things which we have seen. I am quoting him. While participating in the debates for the Optical Council Bill 2021, he stated –

“There is one aspect of the Bill which has not been dealt with by the then Minister of Health and Wellness and it is the establishment of a monopoly for local opticians when it comes to selling spectacles and optical appliances. This Bill is creating a monopoly. As from the day the Bill is passed, only a registered local optician will be able to sell spectacles and contact lenses in the country.”

Hon. Uteem further denounced the fact that the main object of the Optical Council Bill was to give opticians the exclusive right to sell spectacles and contact lenses. He also termed this as a lobby from a small group. The latter brought proceedings against 12 companies, seeking an order from the Court, preventing them from selling spectacles and lenses but on the day of the hearing, they withdrew the case. He further emphasised the need to allow competition in this sector, is not just to drive down prices. It is also to do with protecting young opticians who do not have the financial means to invest in equipment, to invest in stock of branded glasses. I thank him for that. He was farsighted enough and he struck the nail rightly.

Madam Speaker, it is necessary for me to address certain arguments that have been put forward regarding this Bill. The true intent of this Bill is to modernise and rebalance the regulatory framework governing the optical profession in our country. We have to correct the structural weaknesses that have emerged under the current system, including excessive gatekeeping, lack of transparency and regulatory capture as my friends have already mentioned. This reform ensures that the Optical Council operates in the public interest, strengthens governance, broadens representations and aligns the regulatory framework with contemporary healthcare systems where patient protection, not professional control, is paramount. Let me state clearly, many of the arguments reflect a desire to preserve entrenched interest rather than to advance patient care or modern regulation.

Let me also remind the House that the Leader of the Opposition, who was in Government in 2021, had a significant responsibility in ushering through the House a Bill which turned out to be illegal and which gave rise to gross unfairness and injustices.

Regarding examinations, Madam Speaker, this reform was not taken lightly. It is a deliberate and necessary correction of a system that had become fundamentally flawed, unfair, and out of step with modern regulatory practice.

Let me remind the House that according to the Optical Council Act of 2021, examinations were supposed to be held – as my friend, hon. Dr. Boolell, mentioned – at least yearly. Members of the Council acted illegally, and only two examinations were held. In six years' time, we had only 16 who were qualified as opticians, out of hundreds of them who were still roaming around.

Let me now delve more deeply in issues related to these examinations. The existing examination process, as my friends have already mentioned, raised serious concerns regarding fairness and transparency, as the members of the Council were involved – as you have heard – in determining examiners and those responsible for marking. So, they were marking, correcting and doing everything. It was their business. Such an arrangement creates an inherent conflict of interest and undermines confidence and integrity. That is the reason they left no stone unturned to see to it that this Bill does not pass in this House.

Secondly, while the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate was involved, it was limited to only administrative oversight. It did not provide independent technical validation of the content, standard-setting, or marking. Therefore, the core academic and professional integrity of the examination remained within the control of the very body being regulated, which is not acceptable.

Thirdly, Madam Speaker, opticians fall within the broader category of Allied Health Professionals. It is important to note that under the Allied Health Professionals Council, there are no such pre-registration examinations. Competency is ensured through recognised qualifications and regulatory oversight – not through potentially exclusionary examinations.

When we speak of allied professionals, in our country, we have six clusters of Allied Health Professionals in my Ministry. They do not undergo any examination. I am going to name a few of them. For example, Occupational Therapists, Orthopaedic Technicians,

Physiotherapists, Podiatrists, Chiropodists, Sports Therapists, Audiologists, Speech and Language Therapists, Dieticians, Nutritionists, Psychologists, Clinical Psychologists, Psychotherapists, Psychomotor Therapists, Chiropractors, Osteopaths, Clinical Scientists, Medical Imaging Technologists, Medical Laboratory Technologists. They do not participate in examinations. They are skilled. They are doing very well, but they are controlled by the Allied Professional Council.

Fourthly, historically, opticians were registered earlier under the Optical Registration Board, where no examinations existed. And that was the case for the past 60 years. There was no evidence that the system compromised standards or patient safety. The introduction of the examination did not demonstrably improve outcomes, but instead introduced barriers and controversy.

Fifthly, and most strikingly – this is very funny –, the same examination was required for both opticians and optometrists, despite the clear difference in their training and scope of practice. So, it is a set of paper which is prepared, and both the opticians and the optometrists have to take part in the same examination. It appears as if cardiac surgeons, skin specialists and surgeons, all of them have to take part in the same examination. Madam Speaker, this is not standardisation. It is misclassification, and frankly, it is ludicrous to subject two fundamentally different professions to an identical assessment.

Sixthly, internationally, countries such as India and France – both key partners in the training of our health professionals – do not require such examinations for registration. They rely on accredited qualifications and structured regulatory systems. Mauritius is aligning itself with these practical and established models.

Seventhly, the possibility of using an independent external examination body was indeed considered. However, this raises significant practical challenges. There are clear cost implications both for the State and for candidates. Furthermore, given that countries like India and France do not operate such examination systems, there is no obvious partner institution readily available to provide such services.

Madam Speaker, one must also consider the practical complexity of arranging such examinations. Would we need to engage separate external bodies for opticians, optometrists, and orthoptists? This would introduce fragmentation, increase costs and administrative inefficiency without clear benefit.

This reform is about removing an opaque, inconsistent and unjustified barrier, and replacing it with a system grounded in recognised qualifications, fairness and modern regulatory principles. Regulation must ensure competence, not create artificial hurdles. This amendment restores credibility, coherence and fairness to the system.

We have heard claims that removing examinations will lower standards. We have heard about it, but this is not correct. As I have just mentioned, there are countries with well-established optical sectors, which do not rely on standalone licensing examinations imposed by regulatory bodies.

Rather, we have to rely on –

- accredited qualifications;
- structured training, and
- institutional oversight.

Mauritius is not lowering its standards. We are aligning with global best practices. When registration was carried out under the Optical Registration Board, we did not encounter any problem with quality of care or patients' safety.

As I have just mentioned, currently, we have a number of Allied Health Professionals who were doing very well without undergoing those examinations, but they are being controlled by the professional bodies.

As far as the composition of the Council is concerned, I heard the Leader of the Opposition; he drew our attention on one point: that there is an attempt from us to monopolise the Council. But, previously, out of 15 members, six were from the private sector and nine was from the Government. That has been the case till now.

In the new one, we have 13 members: six from the private sector and seven from the Government. In all the councils that we have or on any board, it is always the Government that has at least an advantage over the others. If we are not going to maintain it, then we are doomed. They will do whatever they like. So, out of 13 members, if they have six and we have seven, which includes representatives of the Prime Minister's Office, the Ministry of Finance, the Attorney General's Office, my Ministry, plus two independent members, as has always been the case, I do not find anything wrong in that. So, let us be frank and we stop deceit.

This Bill further introduces –

- broader representation;
- stronger accountability, and
- alignment with national health priorities.

A regulator exists to protect the public – not to function as a closed circle of practitioners.

It has been suggested that the Government is trying to its will upon them, but that is not true. This is really misleading. We have always worked in this way. What this Bill does is clarify and rationalise that representation. We are not introducing anything new.

As far as the definition of “optometry” is concerned, the Leader of the Opposition mentioned about it, but this is nonsensical because the definition is very well spelt out in the Act.

Under the previous framework, opticians and optometrists were required to take – as I have mentioned – the same examination despite having fundamentally different levels of training and clinical responsibilities. This created a situation where unequal roles were treated as equivalent, which is neither logical nor safe. An optician is primarily a technician – a technical professional involved in dispensing and fitting optical devices, whereas an optometrist is a clinically trained practitioner capable of assessing vision and detecting eye disease. To subject both of them to the same assessment standard is not standardisation. It is miscalculation.

Madam Speaker, the amendment corrects this by recognising the different competencies required, appropriately differentiated pathways of assessment and regulation. This strengthens, not weakens, professional standards. It ensures that patients clearly understand who is providing their care. Practitioners are assessed according to their actual scope of practice. Regulatory systems reflect real world clinical distinctions. As far as creating division, this amendment restores coherence, protects patients’ safety and aligns the system with sound regulatory principles.

Madam Speaker, eye care, today, is delivered through a multi-disciplinary model. Orthoptists play a critical role in diagnosing and managing visual disorders, particularly in children and neurological condition. Bringing them under the Council to choose uniform

standards of care, proper accountability, enhanced patient safety. This is a necessary step towards an integrated and modern eye care system.

In any modern healthcare system, multidisciplinary oversight is essential. The presence of an ophthalmologist strengthens –

- clinical governance;
- patient safety, and
- integration across services.

To oppose this is to oppose progress in healthcare delivery.

Madam Speaker, the removal of a rigid statutory definition of the practice of optometry is a deliberate and well-founded decision grounded in sound legislative principle. Firstly, health care practice, whether in optometry or medicine, is not static. It evolves continuously with advances in technology, new diagnostic tools, changing models of care. To fix a detailed definition in primary legislation, is to freeze a dynamic profession in time rendering the law quickly outdated.

In parallel with practice of medicine, Madam Speaker, we do not define the practice of medicine in rigid exhaustive terms within legislation. We do not attempt to list every diagnostic act, every procedure, every evolving intervention, instead the law recognises the profession broadly and trust regulatory bodies to define scope of practice, standards and competencies. The same principle applies here. By removing a fixed definition, the Bill avoids legislative rigidity, empowers regulatory body, ensures relevance over time.

Addressing concerns of ambiguity, Madam Speaker, this does not create a vacuum. The scope of practice will be clearly defined through regulations, guidelines and professional standards linked to training and competence, subject to regulatory oversight and discipline. This is a controlled flexibility, not uncertainty. Regulations define who is qualified and accountable, not to attempt to exhaustively define every act they may perform.

Madam Speaker, just as we do not confine the practice of medicine within rigid statutory wording, we should not constrain optometry. A modern law must enable a profession to evolve, not trap it in definition that would be obsolete tomorrow.

Madam Speaker, it is both surprising and deeply concerning that certain members of Optical Council appear not to understand the most basic function of the very body on which they sit. The Optical Council is not mandated to regulate optical shops. Its role is to regulate

professionals, not commercial enterprises. To suggest otherwise reflects either a profound misunderstanding of the law or a deliberate attempt to blur responsibilities for convenience. Regulations for optical shops falls squarely within the scope of other appropriate legislations and this is being looked into. What we are doing through this reform is restoring clarity, professional regulations where it belongs, an institutional and commercial regulations where it must be exercised. Let us be clear, confusing these roles does not protect patient, it weakens oversight. This Bill corrects that.

The real issue: resistance to change. Madam Speaker, a clear pattern emerges from the criticisms we have heard. Every reform is portrayed as a threat; reform of entry is a threat; reform of governance is a threat; reform of oversight is a threat, but what is never acknowledge is the risk of doing nothing. A system that restricts entry, lack transparency and resist evolution is itself the greatest threat to patient care.

For the summing up, I would say that this Bill not about weakening the profession. It is about strengthening the system. It is about ensuring that regulation serves –

- the patient;
- the public interest, and
- the future of healthcare.

Today we are, with this Bill, and most probably tomorrow we will come with a Bill to look at the Medical Council as well because we have got a multiplicity of problems in Medical Council, Madam Speaker. Those who resist reforms must ask themselves: are they defending standards or defending control?

This Government will always stand –

- for patients over privilege;
- for transparency over opacity;
- for progress over stagnation.

I, therefore, commend this Bill to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a second time and committed.

COMMITTEE STAGE

(Madam Speaker in the Chair)

The Optical Council (Amendment) Bill (No. I of 2026) was considered and agreed to.

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

Third Reading

On motion made and seconded, the Optical Council (Amendment) Bill (No. I of 2026) was read a third time and passed.

ADJOURNMENT

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Tuesday 31 March 2026 at 11.30 a.m.

Mr Mohamed rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Madam Speaker: The House stands adjourned!

At 7.04 p.m. the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Tuesday 31 March 2026 at 11.30 a.m.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

DRUG TRAFFICKING – MONEY LAUNDERING PROCEEDS – ARRESTS – SEIZED VEHICLES

(No. B/82) Dr. F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port-Louis South & Port-Louis Central) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the laundering of money suspected of being proceeds of drug trafficking, since November 2024 to date, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Financial Crimes Commission and the Commissioner of Police, information as to the –

- (a) number of suspected drug dealers arrested in relation thereto, and
- (b) list of vehicles including cars, motorbikes and quads and pleasure craft seized in connection therein, indicating the total estimated value thereof.

(Withdrawn)

MAURITIUS – SPECIAL DATA DISSEMINATION STANDARD PLUS – KEY BENEFITS

(No. B/85) Mr M. Seeburn (Second Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the upgrading of Mauritius to the Special Data Dissemination Standard Plus (SDDS+) status by the International Monetary Fund, he will state the –

- (a) measures taken by Government that led thereto, and
- (b) key benefits associated therewith, particularly, in terms of access to financing, investment prospects and economic resilience.

(Withdrawn)

DRUG DEALING – DRUGS & ASSETS SEIZED – JANUARY 2025-MARCH 2026

(No. B/88) Ms S. Anquetil (Second Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to drug dealing, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police and the Financial Crimes Commission, information as to, since January 2025 to date, the quantity of drugs and number of assets seized, respectively.

(Withdrawn)

GRA – APPRENTICE JOCKEYS & JOCKEYS – INSURANCE PREMIUM

(No. B/90) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the granting of licences to local and international apprentice jockeys and jockeys respectively, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Gambling Regulatory Authority, information as to the type of insurance required therefor, indicating –

- (a) the monthly or yearly premium applicable category-wise, and
- (b) if there is an age limit for apprentice jockeys and, if so, give the reasons therefor.

(Withdrawn)

STATE OF THE ECONOMY REPORT – OFFICIAL STATISTICS – MANIPULATION ALLEGATIONS

(No. B/93) Mr A. Duval (Fourth Member for Port-Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the allegations of manipulation of official statistics and data referred to in the State of the Economy Report, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to whether an inquiry has been carried out thereinto and, if so, indicate the outcome thereof, including whether it has revealed –

- (a) evidence of falsification or manipulation of data, and
- (b) the number of persons allegedly involved therein and, if so, indicate the number thereof interrogated and/or arrested in connection therewith and charges, if any, preferred against them.

(Withdrawn)

**POLICE QUARTERS – RETIREMENT ON MEDICAL GROUNDS –
ACCOMMODATION POLICY REVIEW**

(No. B/94) Ms A. Savabaddy (First Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to Police Officers, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number thereof having had to vacate their lodging in police quarters on retiring due to sudden or serious illness, indicating –

- (a) the delay granted thereto and their families to find alternative accommodation, and
- (b) whether consideration will be given for a review of the current practice in such circumstances.

(Withdrawn)

**EDB – DEPUTY CEO, MR S.M. – APPOINTMENT & CONTRACT’S TERMS &
CONDITIONS**

(No. B/95) Mr R. Beehook (Second Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to Mr. S. M., Deputy Chief Executive Officer of the Economic Development Board, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to his date and terms and conditions of appointment, indicating the circumstances under which his contract was renewed and the terms and conditions of his new contract.

(Withdrawn)

FCC – SEIZED ASSETS (NOV 2024-MAR 2026) – NUMBER DISPOSED & VALUE

(No. B/97) Mr R. Jhummun (Second Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the assets seized by the Financial Crimes Commission since November 2024 to date, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the number thereof disposed and the total value thereof.

(Withdrawn)

**RESIDENTIAL CARE HOMES – NUMBER REGISTERED & UNREGISTERED,
INSPECTIONS & HYGIENE & SAFETY STANDARDS**

(No. B/115) Dr. Ms R. Daureeawo (Third Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac) asked the Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity whether, in regard to the residential care homes, he will state the –

- (a) current number thereof being –
 - (i) registered, and
 - (ii) unregistered;
- (b) frequency of inspections carried out thereat by his Ministry, indicating the number of cases of non-compliance or abuse detected in the course thereof and the actions taken in relation thereto in each case, and
- (c) policy framework put in place to ensure compliance with hygiene and safety standards for residents.

(Withdrawn)

**YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT – RATE – EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY
PROGRAMMES**

(No. B/117) Dr. Ms R. Daureeawo (Third Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac) asked the Minister of Labour and Industrial Relations whether, in regard to youth unemployment, he will state –

- (a) the current rate thereof by gender, region and educational level, and
- (b) outline the programmes being implemented to promote employment opportunities for young graduates.

(Withdrawn)

**CHILD DEVELOPMENT UNIT – CHILDREN IN PUBLIC HOSPITALS –
EDUCATIONAL FOLLOW-UP**

(No. B/120) Mr E. Juman (First Member for Port-Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to children currently placed in public hospitals by the Child Development Unit, she will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the number thereof who, to date, present no health issues, indicating –

- (a) the public hospitals where they are currently placed;

- (b) the duration of stay;
- (c) since when they are missing classes, and
- (d) whether arrangements have been/are being made, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Human Resource, to ensure that they continue their education while in hospital.

(Withdrawn)

BROWN SEQUARD HOSPITAL – UNCLAIMED CORPSES – MEASURES

(No. B/123) Ms A. Savabaddy (First Member for Port-Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the Brown Sequard Hospital, he will state the current number of unclaimed corpses in its mortuary, indicating since when they have been lying there and the measures being envisaged to deal with this issue and whether his Ministry is in presence of requests from medical colleges to be handed over same for research purposes and, if so, where matters stand.

(Withdrawn)

HeForShe CLUBS – COMMUNITY CENTRES – COMPOSITION – PROJECTS

(No. B/124) Ms S. Anquetil (Second Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the HeForShe Clubs, she will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the Community Centres wherein such clubs have been established, indicating in the case of each club the –

- (a) composition of the executive committee, and
- (b) projects undertaken.

(Withdrawn)

ELECTRONIC MONITORING BRACELETS – IMPLEMENTATION – PROPOSED TIMEFRAME

(No. B/125) Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Attorney-General whether, in regard to the use of electronic monitoring bracelets, he will state where matters stand as to the –

- (a) implementation thereof, indicating the reasons –
 - (i) why the relevant provisions for electronic monitoring have not yet been proclaimed or put into operation as at to date, and
 - (ii) for the absence of regulations defining the operational protocols and monitoring procedures, and
- (b) proposed timeframe for the full implementation thereof.

(Withdrawn)

BRITANNIA POST OFFICE – RENOVATION – EXPECTED REOPENING DATE

(No. B/126) Mr R. Jhummun (Second Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac) asked the Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation whether, in regard to the proposed renovation of the Britannia Post Office, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from Mauritius Post Ltd., information as to the duration thereof and expected date of reopening thereof.

(Withdrawn)

MORC. LA CONFIANCE, BEAU-BASSIN – FOOTBALL PLAYGROUND – RENOVATION

(No. B/129) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to the renovation of the football playground at Morcellement La Confiance, in Beau-Bassin, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council of Beau Bassin/Rose Hill, information as to where matters stand.

(Withdrawn)

RODRIGUES – LAND DRAINAGE MASTER PLAN – PROJECT STATUS

(No. B/133) Mr F. François (Second Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure whether, in regard to the implementation of the Land Drainage Master Plan and National Development Unit Projects for Rodrigues, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to where matters stand.

(Withdrawn)

NATIONAL PENSIONS FUND – BALANCE & RETURN ON INVESTMENT

(No. B/135) Mr E. Juman (First Member for Port-Louis Maritime & Port-Louis East) asked the Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity whether, in regard to the National Pensions Fund, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the –

- (a) balance currently standing to the credit thereof, and
- (b) return on investment thereof in the last financial year.

(Withdrawn)

GRAND SABLE FOOTBALL GROUND – LIGHTING FACILITIES

(No. B/138) Mr M. Seeburn (Second Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle) asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to the project for the installation of lighting facilities at the football ground of Grand Sable, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the District Council of Grand Port, information as to the expected date of implementation thereof.

(Withdrawn)

MAURITIAN GLOBAL BUSINESS SECTOR – INDIAN SUPREME COURT JUDGMENT – IMPACT

(No. B/139) Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Financial Services and Economic Planning whether, in regard to the Mauritian Global Business Sector, she will state if her Ministry has conducted a thorough and detailed assessment of the impact of the recent judgment of the Supreme Court of India in the case of Tiger Global International II Holdings vs. The Authority for Advance Rulings thereon, particularly concerning the future eligibility of Mauritius-resident entities for capital gains tax exemptions under the India-Mauritius Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement.

(Withdrawn)

PENALTY POINT SYSTEM – IMPLEMENTATION OUTCOME

(No. B/140) Ms S. Anquetil (Second Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Land Transport whether, in regard to the Penalty Point System effective from January 31, 2026, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the outcome of the implementation thereof as at to date.

(Withdrawn)

ROAD CONGESTION – STUDY – DECONGESTION STRATEGY

(No. B/141) Dr. Ms R. Daureeawo (Third Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac) asked the Minister of Land Transport whether, in regard to road congestion, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Road Development Authority, information as to whether a study has been carried out to identify the reasons thereof and, if so, indicate the outcome thereof and the road decongestion strategy put in place.

(Withdrawn)

OVERSEAS MEDICAL TREATMENT – REGISTERED ORGANISATIONS & MEDICAL INSTITUTIONS – AUDIT

(No. B/144) Dr. F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port-Louis South & Port-Louis Central) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to Mauritian nationals proceeding overseas for medical treatment, he will state the number thereof over the past three years, indicating –

- (a) whether his Ministry has a list of the medical institutions attended;
- (b) the names of the organisations offering private medical services overseas and whether they are registered with his Ministry, and
- (c) whether an audit of the outcome of treatment proposed thereto has been carried out.

(Withdrawn)

MIDDLE EAST GEOPOLITICAL SITUATION – FOOD SECURITY – CONTINGENCY PLAN

(No. B/147) Ms A. Savabaddy (First Member for Port-Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Agro-Industry, Food Security, Blue Economy and Fisheries whether, in regard to food security, he will state the contingency plan being put in place, if any, in the light of the current geopolitical situation.

(Withdrawn)

TAXI OPERATORS WELFARE FUND – MEMBERS & BENEFICIARIES – CONTRIBUTION

(No. B/148) Mr R. Beechook (Second Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil) asked the Minister of Land Transport whether, in regard to the Taxi Operators Welfare Fund, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to –

- (a) the current number of members thereof;
- (b) the quantum of contributions collected from taxi operators since the inception thereof to date, indicating the total amount disbursed therefrom under each scheme and the corresponding number of beneficiaries, and
- (c) whether a review regarding contribution thereto is being envisaged and, if so, indicate where matters stand.

(Withdrawn)

RODRIGUES – FOUNDATION PROGRAMME IN LITERACY, NUMERACY & SKILLS – IMPLEMENTATION (GRADES 7-9)

(No. A/6) Dr. Ms B. Thannoo (Second Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resource whether, in regard to the Foundation Programme in Literacy, Numeracy and Skills, he will state the –

- (a) number and purpose of official visits undertaken to Rodrigues in relation thereto, and
- (b) workshops, consultations and capacity-building activities organised and partnerships established and the current level of readiness of teaching and learning materials for students in Grades 7 to 9, since the launch thereof.

Reply: As regards part (a) of the question, I undertook an official visit to Rodrigues Island from 20 to 24 February 2026 *inter alia* to take stock of progress achieved in the implementation of the Foundation Programme in Literacy, Numeracy and Skills.

During my visit, I participated in a roundtable discussion organised by the Deputy Chief Commissioner of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly and attended by the Departmental Head (Education), Rectors, Deputy Rectors and Senior Educators of the Secondary Schools. The deliberations focused on the philosophy of the Foundation Programme and the importance of the setting up of a Monitoring Committee at school level to monitor the teaching and learning of the programme.

As for part (b) of the question, I am informed that two workshops/ consultations and two capacity-building activities were conducted with the local counterparts in Rodrigues by technicians of my Ministry along with Lecturers from the Mauritius Institute of Education

(MIE) and officers from the Mauritius Examination Syndicate. A representative of the Service Diocésain de l'Éducation Catholique was also present during one of the workshops. It is to be noted that my Ministry has an ongoing collaboration with the Commission of Education of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly.

I am further informed that the teaching and learning materials for students of Grades 7 to 9 for all subjects of the programme, including electives, are available on the website of the MIE. 18 out of 40 student workbooks have already been printed and are currently being distributed to schools. The remaining workbooks are being printed and will be distributed to schools by the beginning of the second term of 2026.

PUBLIC SECTOR RECRUITMENT – QUALIFICATION REQUIREMENTS – REVIEW

(No. A/7) Dr. Ms B. Thannoo (Second Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Minister of Public Service and Administrative Reforms whether, in regard to recruitment in the public sector, he will state whether consideration will be given for –

- (a) a revision of the current five credits qualification requirement, including the English Language, and
- (b) the acceptance of –
 - (i) alternative qualifications equivalent to the school certificate and higher qualifications, including undergraduate degrees, and
 - (ii) the two most recent qualifications.

Reply: I wish to inform the House that any review of the existing qualifications requirements at entry level requires a policy decision.

In this context, a preliminary consultation with relevant stakeholders, namely the Prime Minister's Office, the Public Service Commission and Disciplined Forces Service Commission, the Ministry of Education and Human Resource and the Pay Research Bureau was held on 23 February 2026.

Accordingly, my Ministry issued a circular letter to Supervising Officers in-charge of Ministries/Departments requesting them to identify those grades in respect of which the qualifications requirements at the Cambridge School Certificate Level could be amended to specify three credits instead of five credits.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I wish to apprise the House that currently, the Cambridge General Certificate of Education at “Ordinary” and “Advanced” Levels are specified as alternative to the School Certificate and the Higher School Certificate in all schemes of service where the School Certificate and the Higher School Certificate are specified.

Additionally, provisions are also made in all schemes of service for equivalent qualifications acceptable to the service commissions to cater for those candidates who may not possess the School Certificate, Higher School Certificate or the General Certificate of Education at “Ordinary” and “Advanced” Levels or undergraduate degree, as the case may be, but hold other qualifications which have been duly certified by the Higher Education Commission as being equivalent.

As a general rule, qualifications to be specified in schemes of service are determined at the level of Ministries/Departments. However, any qualification which has been duly recognised by the Higher Education Commission is acceptable.

I also wish to inform the House that as from the year 2012, in line with Government decision at that time, only the highest qualification is specified in all schemes of service for entry grades in the public sector. For example, for posts requiring the School Certificate and the Higher School Certificate, only the Higher School Certificate is specified as a requirement. Similarly, for posts requiring a post Higher School Certificate and degree, only the degree is specified except where qualifications at the lower level need to be prescribed in view of nature of duties to be performed, as in the education sector.

It is to be noted that the salary attached to each post in the public sector, which is governed by the Pay Research Bureau, is based to a large extent on the qualifications prescribed in the scheme of service for the post. Any review of the qualifications requirement at entry level would also need to take this factor into consideration as well as salary relativity between grades in the public sector.

In this context, my Ministry will hold further consultations with all relevant stakeholders as to the qualifications that could be considered as alternative equivalent qualifications to the existing qualifications requirements.

My Ministry will, thereafter, make appropriate recommendations to Cabinet for its agreement.