



EIGHTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

(UNREVISED)

FIRST SESSION

TUESDAY 04 MARCH 2025

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THE CABINET

(Formed by Dr. the Hon. Navinchandra Ramgoolam)

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

Hon. Dhananjay Ramful	Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade
Hon. Darmarajen Nagalingum	Minister of Youth and Sports
Hon. Muhammad Reza Cassam Uteem	Minister of Labour and Industrial Relations
Hon. Mahomed Osman Cassam Mahomed	Minister of Land Transport
Hon. Mrs Marie Arianne Navarre-Marie	Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare
Hon. John Michaël Tzoun Sao Yeung Sik Yuen	Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection
Dr. the Hon. Kaviraj Sharma Sukon	Minister of Tertiary Education, Science and Research
Hon. Sayed Muhammad Aadil Ameer Meea	Minister of Industry, SMEs and Cooperatives
Dr. the Hon. Mahend Gungapersad, PDSM	Minister of Education and Human Resource
Dr. the Hon. Avinash Ramtohul	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. 06 of 2025

Sitting of Tuesday 04 March 2025

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

The National Anthem was played

(Madam Speaker in the Chair)

PAPERS LAID

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

A. Prime Minister's Office**Ministry of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications****Ministry of Finance****Ministry for Rodrigues and Outer Islands**

- (a) Certificate of Urgency in respect of the following bills:
 - (i) The Finance and Audit (Amendment) Bill (No II of 2025), and
 - (ii) The Bail (Amendment) Bill (No III of 2025). (In original)
- (b) The Annual Report 2023/2024 of the Central Procurement Board.
- (c) The Annual Report 2023/2024 of the Procurement Policy Office.

B. Ministry of Health and Wellness

The Food (Amendment) Regulations 2025. (Government Notice No. 19 of 2025)

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Madam Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition!

PREVAILING DRY SEASON – WATER VOLUME & STORAGE

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr G. Lesjongard) (*by Private Notice*) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the prevailing dry season, he will –

- (a) for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Water Authority, information as to the –
 - (i) current volume and percentage of water storage in each reservoir;
 - (ii) actual percentage of ground water in each of the six supply zones, indicating in each case the water production and water deficit on a daily basis, and
 - (iii) number of new boreholes drilled since December 2024 to date, indicating the additional volume of water harnessed therefrom, and
- (b) state the number of families who have benefitted from the Water Tank and Rainwater Harvesting Grant Schemes since December 2024 to date.

Mr Assirvaden: Madam Speaker, Mauritius is experiencing significant challenges to its water resources due to climate change, which has resulted in more frequent and severe droughts. This variability poses a threat to the availability of freshwater resources, impacting daily water consumption.

Over the past five years, Madam Speaker, the island has witnessed three prolonged dry episodes in hydrological years 2020-2021, 2022-2023, 2024, and even this year. The present hydrological year has been worst among those three. It is to be highlighted that since July 2024, Mauritius has been experiencing several months with deficit in rainfall with July 2024 being the driest in the past 120 years. Rainfall in the months of July to February has been generally below average.

With regard to part (a)(i) of the question, I am informed by the Water Resources Commission and the Central Water Authority that the total volume and percentage of water storage in the seven main reservoirs as at today, 04 March 2025, stands at 37.81 million cubic metres, representing 41%.

I am tabling the details of each of the seven reservoirs.

Concerning part (a)(ii) of the question, as of 03 March 2025, water production across the six water supply zone shows a reduction in both surface water and groundwater production compared to normal daily values. Overall, total surface water production across all six zones decreased by 17.34% while groundwater production fell by 20.85%. Consequently, the total combined water production dropped from a normal of 1,068,267m³/day to an annual of 865,061m³/day.

Madam Speaker, I am tabling the detailed information per zone.

With regard to part (a)(iii) of the question, the Ministry and CWA undertake borehole drilling campaigns every year based on CWA requirements for potable use. For the period January to November 2024, five boreholes have been drilled at Camp Levieux, Goodlands, Rampe Le Moirt, Côte d'Or, and Beard. New boreholes have been drilled at Constance La Gaieté and Fond du Sac from December 2024 to February 2025. Another borehole is currently being drilled at Mapou. Another five boreholes are planned to be drilled under existing contracts in the coming months.

I am informed by the Central water Authority that additional volume of water harnessed since December 2024 stands at 7,500m³ *par jour*.

Madame la présidente, concernant la partie (b) de la question, un programme de subvention pour l'achat des réservoirs d'eau a été mis en place en 2011 afin d'aider les familles à faible revenu à acquérir un réservoir d'eau, afin d'atténuer les difficultés causées par une alimentation en eau restreinte.

Ce programme est actuellement géré par la *DBM* et les ménages percevant un revenu mensuel inférieur à R 60 000 peuvent bénéficier d'une subvention de R 15 000 pour l'achat d'un réservoir d'eau de 1 000 litres et d'une pompe à eau et de certains accessoires.

La *DBM* a informé que 310 familles ont bénéficié du programme de subvention pour l'achat des réservoirs d'eau depuis décembre 2024 à ce jour. En outre, la *DBM* gère actuellement un programme de subvention pour la collecte des eaux de pluie, permettant aux ménages dont le revenu mensuel est inférieur à R 60 000 de bénéficier d'une subvention de R 10 000 pour l'achat d'un réservoir destiné à la collecte des eaux de pluies.

Au 10 décembre 2010, on m'a informé qu'un total de 6 400 demandes avaient été reçues, avec 609 coupons délivrés aux bénéficiaires.

Madam Speaker: Yes!

Mr Lesjongard: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I thank the hon. Minister for his reply. He has submitted the actual storage capacity of our reservoirs, which is quite alarming, and the tendency shows that the level is decreasing drastically. Will the hon. Minister inform the House that in case of a no-flow situation in those reservoirs, when do we expect those reservoirs to reach their dead storage level?

Mr Assirvaden: Madame la présidente, comme je l'ai dit dans le passé, si éventuellement nous ne recevons pas les pluies d'été qui, chaque année, remplissent nos réservoirs, à la fin d'avril de cette année-ci, nous serons dans une situation encore plus catastrophique. Même si nos réservoirs ont autour de 40 % à ce jour, bien en-dessous de 15 %, nous allons devoir arrêter les pompages, parce qu'il y a de la boue un peu plus bas.

Donc, pour répondre à la question de l'honorable leader de l'opposition, à la fin d'avril, nous serons dans une situation difficile. Mais entre-temps, je peux dire que nous avons commencé à faire le *drilling* des *boreholes*, simplement pour limiter la casse. Mais pour répondre à la question du leader de l'opposition, ce sera à la fin d'avril ou au début de mai.

An hon. Member: 24/sek !

Mr Lesjongard: Madam Speaker, will the hon. Minister inform the House whether there is a contingency plan which has been prepared by his Ministry for this dry season, and if yes, will he table a copy of that contingency plan?

Mr Assirvaden: D'abord, je dois...

An hon. Member: 10 an pann fer nanien !

(Interruptions)

Mr Assirvaden: ... Je dois préciser, Madame la présidente...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: On a bien commencé!

Mr Assirvaden: ... que...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hold your horses, please!

Mr Assirvaden: Je dois préciser, Madame la présidente, que nous gérons cette crise au quotidien. Je préside personnellement une réunion de crise chaque matin à mon ministère. Je dois dire que cette réunion de crise, la gestion de l'eau au quotidien, me prend presque toute la journée de travail.

En ce qui concerne un plan pour gérer la situation et après, je dois dire que d'abord, nous avons hérité...

(Interruptions)

Nous avons malheureusement hérité d'une situation qui nous met aujourd'hui, la population dans son ensemble, dans une situation difficile. Nous avons un plan qui se fait annuellement pour gérer la situation annuellement. Nous avons aussi un comité de crise qui gère la situation au quotidien. Nous avons aussi pris la décision d'avoir un plan pour après avril. Ce plan d'après-avril consiste aussi à utiliser à fond les *boreholes*, à utiliser à fond l'eau du *CEB*, les *dams* du *CEB* dont ils se servent pour l'électricité. Nous avons aussi pris la décision de prendre les *dams* qui appartiennent au secteur privé, et cela a été fait dans une coopération patriotique.

Pour répondre à la question du leader de l'opposition, je vais déposer l'information sur le *Water Crisis Committee* qui gère d'une façon quotidienne ce que nous a été légué par l'ancien gouvernement. Mais je dois aussi dire, puisque la question est venue de l'ancien ministre...

(Interruptions)

Je suis obligé, malheureusement, Madame la présidente, de revenir à comment on est arrivé à cette situation.

An hon. Member: C'est la plus grande trahison !

Mr Assirvaden : Le leader de l'opposition qui a été – si je me rappelle bien – l'ancien ministre responsable de ce dossier...

(Interruptions)

...me pose la question, en trois mois, comment je vais faire pour gérer les gabegies et les scandales de dix ans.

Permettez-moi, Madame la présidente, de parler du fameux projet de Rivière des Anguilles Dam...

(Interruptions)

Puisque vous voulez avoir des renseignements, je vous donne les renseignements.

Un projet de barrage de Rivière des Anguilles Dam...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Non, non, non !

Mr Assirvaden: ...annoncé...

(Interruptions)

Mr Lesjongard: Madam Speaker, please, I have not asked about...

Mr Assirvaden : ...annoncé...

An hon. Member: Walk out! Walk out!

Mr Assirvaden: ...depuis 2015 !

(Interruptions)

Mr Lesjongard: But I have not asked for...

(Interruptions)

Mr Assirvaden : Est-ce que...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: One minute, one minute!

You may not have asked specifically. Is that what you are saying? You did not ask specifically?

Mr Lesjongard: Madam Speaker, I have asked a specific question: whether there is a contingency plan for the country to face that dry season. The answer is yes or no...

(Interruptions)

...and if it yes...

(Interruptions)

...I have requested the Minister to table the contingency plan. Let me get to another question, Madam Speaker.

(Interruptions)

Let me get to another question...

Madam Speaker: No...

Mr Lesjongard: ...if he does not have that plan.

Madam Speaker: No, but he has not finished! He has not finished.

Mr Lesjongard: But he is talking about... Is Rivière des Anguilles the contingency plan?

(Interruptions)

Mr Assirvaden: Madame la présidente...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Laissez-moi décider!

Hon. Leader of the Opposition, you may ask a supplementary question; that is your right. But the Minister also has the right to reply the way that he thinks he should reply. I do not think he is really out of the subject. So, let him finish that part...

Mr Assirvaden: Je n'ai pas voulu...

Madam Speaker: ...and then you can put another question.

Mr Jhummun: *Al fer konferans de pres!*

Mr Assirvaden: Madame la présidente, encore une fois, ma réponse initiale...

(Interruptions)

Madame la présidente, vous apprécierez que ma réponse initiale a été très courte pour permettre au leader de l'opposition aussi d'avoir les renseignements voulus. J'ai préféré déposer ce plan pour que le leader de l'opposition puisse avoir le temps de poser des questions. Mais puisque le leader de l'opposition veut que j'énumère le *contingency plan*, alors laissez-moi donner à la Chambre ce que j'ai fait depuis que j'ai pris le poste –

1. Suspension of sugarcane irrigation across the island to give priority to potable use. *Cela a été fait, M. le leader de l'opposition.*
2. Revised hours of water supply across the island as from 20 January 2025.
3. The Central Water Authority has prioritised leak related complaints, attending to 5,511 repairs since 20 January 2025.

4. Additional resources have been provided for the Central Water Authority to face this situation and reinforce its Call Centre, water tankers services and operations unit.
5. A Water Tanker Unit has been set up under the supervision of a Chief Engineer and is being centrally managed.

Je continue, puisque le leader de l'opposition veut avoir des renseignements !

6. Installation of 16 water tanks of 9m³ mainly in the North, Port Louis, Plaine Wilhems, and South.
7. Mobilisation of additional water resources in partnership with the private sector – *comme je le disais un peu auparavant* –, namely Medine, ENL, private owners (abstraction from rivers and private boreholes).
8. Utilisation of CEB tail water – *comme je l'ai dit* – at Réduit hydro power station and Tamarind Falls.
9. Assistance from Mauritius Fire and Rescue Services to extend support for scheduled water supply to some severely affected areas, including public beaches.

An hon. Member : *Tousala dan zis 3 mwa ?*

(Interruptions)

Mr Assirvaden : *Je suis obligé de le faire. J'avais déposé...*

10. The Central Water Authority (Dry Season) Regulations...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Let the Minister speak!

Mr Assirvaden:

10. The Central Water Authority (Dry Season) Regulations 2025 came into operation with effect from 17 February 2025 enforcing a ban on the use of treated water or water from a water course through a hose or pressure washer for:
 - washing vehicles;
 - washing pavements, buildings or parts of buildings;
 - watering hedges, lawns or gardens;
 - filling swimming pools.

11. Meeting with the Mauritius Police Force to enforce the Central Water Authority (Dry Season) Regulations 2025.
12. An outreach programme in water stressed regions on water tank grant scheme to encourage eligible households to avail of the scheme.
13. Aggressive sensitisation campaign on water savings usage.

Madam Speaker: You are tabling this document?

Mr Assirvaden: *Yes, of course!* J'avais fait cela au départ, mais il ne voulait pas.

An hon. Member: Bravo!

Mr Lesjongard: Madam Speaker...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: *Chut !*

Mr Lesjongard: I requested that that information be tabled.

Madam Speaker: Yes, but does it hurt any citizen of the country that he speaks on that?

Mr Lesjongard: Then you have to give me excess time for me...

Madam Speaker: No, no!

Mr Lesjongard: ...to put my questions, Madam Speaker!

(Interruptions)

Can I...

(Interruptions)

All these decisions should have been taken last year; not this year.

(Interruptions)

May I ask the Minister a question then? Does the Minister find it normal that during this very difficult period, he took two weeks' vacation last year, and if it was not for the Minister replacing him who drew the attention of the Prime Minister...

Madam Speaker: Ça c'est très personnel !

Mr Lesjongard: ...on this situation, the situation would have been much worse than it is today?

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Don't!

(Interruptions)

No need to answer!

Mr Lesjongard: Does he find it normal?

Madam Speaker: No need to answer that!

The Deputy Prime Minister: *Zalou enn move pese sa !*

Madam Speaker: This is most unfair!

Ms J. Bérenger: This is cheap!

An hon. Member: Very cheap!

Madam Speaker: This is most unfair. Ministers travel...

(Interruptions)

Ministers travel; ministries carry on with their jobs. So, do not answer. There is no need to answer that.

An hon. Member: C'est méchant !

Mr Lesjongard: Can I go to my next question?

Madam Speaker: Yes, you may.

Mr Lesjongard: In a PNQ, the hon. Minister stated with regard to the Cluny Reservoir, that the reservoir will be demolished. Will the Minister table the report which has recommended the demolition of the Cluny Reservoir?

Mr Assirvaden: Madame la présidente, ce sujet est un sujet sérieux. L'eau, c'est la vie ! Je m'attendais à ce qu'il y ait un débat civilisé sur ce sujet d'eau, parce que cela concerne la population dans son ensemble, la population dans les coins et recoins de ce pays.

Madam Speaker: Tout le monde !

Mr Assirvaden: Si vous me le permettez, Madame la présidente, je voudrais dire franchement à la Chambre que je n'avais pas l'intention de parler du réservoir de Cluny, surtout la question venant du leader de l'opposition qui a été celui responsable de ce dossier

au ministère de l'Énergie et des Utilités publiques. Ne me forcez pas à dire à la Chambre ce que...

(Interruptions)

Ne me forcez pas à dire à la Chambre, M. le leader de l'opposition, Madame la présidente, ce que j'ai vu dans les dossiers au sein du ministère.

An hon. Member: *Dir!*

Mr Lesjongard: *Be dir! Mo pena problem mwa!*

Mr Assirvaden: Puisque vous n'avez pas de problème, M. le leader de l'opposition, je me permettrai de le dire.

Il fut un temps, Madame la présidente, où le *General Manager* de la *Central Water Authority*, Monsieur Prakash Maunthrooa, avec cette ardoise de R 700 millions pour le *Pipe Replacement Programme*, et ce même *General Manager*...

Mr Bhagwan: *Missie pran kas.*

Mr Assirvaden: ... ne répondait même pas à ce ministre de l'Énergie datant ; il répondait à *Lakwizinn* directement.

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: *Ala to valer !*

Mr Assirvaden: Et aussi, ce ministre ose me poser la question ; un ministre digne de ce nom, responsable de l'eau et de l'énergie dans ce pays, ne pouvait même pas interpellier le *General Manager* de la *CWA* sur les manquements, sur les dilapidations, sur les scandales qui étaient sous son ministère. Et, aujourd'hui, il ose me parler de Cluny ? Qui a pris la photo ensemble avec l'ancien Premier ministre devant le réservoir de Cluny ?

An hon. Member: Maunthrooa!

Mr Assirvaden: Qui avait ce sourire avec 25 dents dehors ? Et, aujourd'hui, la population ne rit pas avec 25 dents dehors, mais avec 25 fissures ! 25 fissures sur ce réservoir ! Et...

Mr Lesjongard: Madam Speaker ...

Madam Speaker: You asked about the reservoir of Cluny.

Mr Lesjongard: Yes. Oh, you agree to what he has said, Madam Speaker?

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: I can't hear! Let me listen to what the...

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: Ça fait mal !

Mr Lesjongard: We are not supposed to pass a comment on a person in this House, Madam Speaker.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Minister, don't make personal attacks!

Mr Assirvaden: Oui, bien sûr. Non, je n'ai pas fait référence au ministre.

La construction de deux réservoirs, Madame la présidente, Cluny et Riche-en-Eau, réalisés au coût de R 74 millions en vue d'approvisionner la région du sud (New Grove, Cluny et Rose Belle) a été un fiasco monumental ; scandaleux ! Et ceux ou celles responsables de ce scandale vont devoir payer tôt ou tard.

Un peu plus de 16 mois après l'inauguration par l'ancien Premier ministre et l'ancien ministre responsable de l'eau, 25 fissures, Madame la présidente, ont été relevées, rendant ces réservoirs inutilisables à ce jour – 3 000 m³. Nous devons, aujourd'hui, pomper dans des *boreholes* qui auraient été servis pour d'autres régions pour alimenter le sud. La population du sud subit les conséquences.

Actuellement, j'ai demandé une enquête sur ces deux réservoirs. La commission d'enquête fait son travail : les techniciens, le côté financier, le côté technique et aussi ceux et celles qui ont été responsables pour qu'après 16 mois, ce réservoir soit inutilisable. En temps et lieu, je déposerai à l'Assemblée nationale le rapport technique et financier concernant ces deux réservoirs.

Madam Speaker: Merci, Monsieur le ministre!

Mr Lesjongard: He has taken a lot of time.

Madam Speaker: No, you have got a few minutes!

Mr Lesjongard: *May I ask the hon. Minister* sur la base de quoi, de quel rapport, a-t-il dit à la Chambre qu'il faut démolir ce réservoir ? Sur la base de quoi ? Parce qu'il dit que l'enquête est en cours. Mais c'est sur la base de quoi ?

An hon. Member: *Lanket pou fer zot ferme!*

Mr Assirvaden: Madame la présidente, monsieur l'ancien ministre – si je peux me le permettre – ou leader de l'opposition actuel est sûrement au courant qu'avec 25 fissures sur un réservoir, après que le contracteur a essayé de réparer à plusieurs reprises, nous nous retrouvons, aujourd'hui, M. le leader de l'opposition, avec un réservoir inutilisable.

Madam Speaker: Don't address him! Address me, please !

Mr Assirvaden: Les rapports préliminaires des techniciens du ministère montrent que ce réservoir va devoir être détruit. Si ce réservoir peut être réparé, je serai l'homme le plus heureux du monde pour pouvoir alimenter.

Mr Lesjongard: Why did you say it has to be demolished?

Mr Assirvaden: Ceci dit – c'est important de le dire –, il n'y a pas que ce problème de réservoir, Madame la présidente. Il y a aussi le *Pipe Replacement Programme* qui a été un échec total. Nous parlons de R 700 millions – deux fois R 350 millions !

Je me pose la question des fois et j'ai posé la question aux techniciens de mon ministère : est-ce que le ministre responsable en ce temps a posé la question au responsable de la CWA pour savoir si nous investissons R 700 millions pour remplacer les tuyaux, combien de pourcentage en réduction dans le déficit d'eau de 62 % dans notre réseau va-t-on pouvoir réduire ? Si on investit un peu d'argent, c'est pour pouvoir réduire les *leakages*. Mais, aujourd'hui, les 62 % remontent à plusieurs années. Et ces R 700 millions, il faut bien le dire - l'occasion m'est donnée aujourd'hui de le dire - ont été dilapidées dans une opacité totale. Peut-être que lorsque le leader de l'opposition conduit sa voiture, il ne remarque pas, mais peut-être que vous, Madame la présidente, vous avez remarqué que les tuyaux de la CWA *sont* installés sur la terre, un peu partout, au risque d'être abimés.

Madam Speaker: Vous en avez déjà parlé !

Mr Assirvaden: La CWA, Madame la présidente, a payé pour l'enfouissement de ces tuyaux – l'enfouissement de ces tuyaux !

An hon. Member: *Inn' enfouir dan zot pos!*

An hon. Member: *700 millions!*

Mr Assirvaden: L'ancien leader de l'opposition, l'honorable Dr. Arvin Boolell et même l'honorable Bhagwan avaient posé la question à ce sujet, mais le ministre n'avait pas répondu.

Mr Bhagwan: I was ordered out.

Mr Assirvaden: Ce jour-là, quand on avait posé la question concernant le rapport de l'auditrice en chef de la CWA, l'ancien ministre a botté en touche et n'a pas voulu se mouiller, et aujourd'hui, il veut me mouiller ? Non, Madame la présidente ! Non !

Madam Speaker: We have got two minutes left!

Mr Assirvaden: La situation aujourd'hui est ...

Madam Speaker: Two minutes left!

Mr Lesjongard: Madam Speaker...

Mr Assirvaden: La situation aujourd'hui est due...

Madam Speaker: You can't talk to me! You stand up and object if you want!

Mr Assirvaden: Malheureusement, je ne peux pas poser de questions, mais la première question qu'il fallait poser, que le leader de l'opposition aurait dû me demander est : quand est-ce qu'on aura le fameux 24/7 ? C'est ça qu'il fallait me demander : quand aura-t-on le fameux 24/7 ? Pour moi, c'est l'escroquerie du siècle du MSM. C'est l'escroquerie du siècle du MSM, vendue à la population en 2014 par l'ancien ministre Collendavelloo, par l'ancien Premier ministre, Pravind Jugnauth, par l'ancien *lekip Lepep*. Ils ont vendu un mirage à la population ! Aujourd'hui, cette population souffre par la façon de gérer de l'ancien gouvernement, par la façon de gérer, excusez-moi, de l'ancien ministre. Je ne citerai pas son nom ici, mais suivez mon regard, on saura qui c'est ! Et, aujourd'hui, la population paye les pots cassés de dix ans de mal planifications, de scandales et de fiascos.

Ms Anquetil: *Bravo Patrick! Bravo!*

Madam Speaker: One minute! One minute!

Hon. Leader of the Opposition, we have one minute left!

Mr Mohamed: Joe, own goal *sa ta* !

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: *Petar fizet* !

Madam Speaker: *Chut!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Lesjongard: Madam Speaker...

Madam Speaker: You opened the floodgates! You opened the floodgates!

Mr Lesjongard: You do not have to put the blame on me. I need to put questions, Madam Speaker! I have put my questions!

Madam Speaker: Yes!

(Interruptions)

Now, time is up! Now, time is up!

(Interruptions)

I am sorry! I am sorry!

Mr Lesjongard: With all that he has said, the situation will deteriorate in the coming months.

Madam Speaker: That is not a question! Time is up!

(Interruptions)

Mr Lesjongard: I again request the hon. Minister to answer the question; whether he has a contingency plan for the dry season.

(Interruptions)

If he has one...

An hon. Member: *Dix ans zonn dormi! Dix ans* !

(Interruptions)

Mr Lesjongard: ... I will request him to table that plan for the House to see.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: This is repeating! You have no more time! I think you both have said quite a lot!

Mr Assirvaden: Puis-je ajouter quelque chose, Madame la présidente ?

Madam Speaker: *Non!* You have to table! You table! Table whatever document you can; you table!

Time is up! I am sorry.

Hon. Members: Bravo! Bravo! Bravo!

(Interruptions)

Mr Mohamed: *Ena own goal ladan ta!*

An hon. Member: *10 an to pann fer nanien, pe vinn invant larou ! Aster pe invant larou la !*

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, the Table has been advised that PQ B/91 will be replied by Dr. the hon. Prime Minister, time permitting, along with PQ B/74. Have I got it right, hon. Prime Minister? You are going to reply to both these questions.

So, now, I call hon. Fourth Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue!

PUBLIC PROCUREMENT ACT – PROPOSED REVIEW

(No. B/71) 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 proposed review of the Public Procurement Act to prevent abuses, he will state if consideration will be given to amending Schedule 2 of the Act forthwith to include all State-Owned Enterprises and Special Purpose Vehicles not currently listed therein.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. Member for the question. Indeed, there have been numerous abuses of the public procurement system by the previous Government.

One of the most striking and conspicuous abuse has been during the COVID-19 period for the purchase of medical supplies and equipment.

Madam Speaker, that is why in the Government Programme of 2025-2029, we have announced that the Public Procurement Act will be reviewed. Our aim is to prevent abuses, strengthen accountability, and enhance transparency and integrity in the public procurement system.

The review will also aim at aligning our procurement system with international best practices. It will enforce better contract execution and supplier performance.

With regard to the question of whether consideration will be given to amending Schedule 2 of the Act, I wish to clarify to the House that all the Schedules, including the Second Schedule, previously under the Public Procurement Act (PPA) were repealed as from 20 July 2023, and incorporated under the Public Procurement Regulations 2008.

Madam Speaker, clearly, the current public procurement system needs to be improved. Some issues need to be addressed urgently.

First, the current legislation is based on an outdated 1994 United Nations Model Law on Procurement.

Second, there is a lack of oversight over excluded and exempt public entities.

Third, there are too many entities dependent on public funds, which are not covered by the Public Procurement Act. It appears, Madam Speaker, that a few of them may have been deliberately excluded so that nobody can see what was happening.

Fourth, the system is discriminatory. There is no level playing field. I will give you an example: housing construction is being undertaken by the National Housing Development Company Ltd (NHDC), which is under the PPA; however, there is a New Social Living Development Co. Ltd (NSLD), which is also responsible for housing construction but does not fall under the PPA. How is that possible? We do not understand!

Similarly, the NDU is responsible for drains construction and operates under the PPA, whilst the Drains Infrastructure Construction Ltd (DICL), also involved in drains construction, does not. One can only guess, Madam Speaker, why such a discriminatory

approach – it beggars belief. We know what has happened. We know. We have heard just now how many millions have been – I don't know –whether pocketed or wasted or whatever.

Madam Speaker, during the review of the public procurement system, consideration will be given to cover, as far as possible, all entities which involve public funds for their operations, and for which Government is accountable in Parliament. Unlike the previous Government, we will make this accountable. This approach is also in line with our plan to introduce a legal framework for greater fiscal responsibility.

To make it clear, unlike the previous regime, with this Government, generally whenever there are public funds involved, there should be accountability for every rupee and every cent that is spent from public funds. This was never the case before.

I can assure the House that Government will have an oversight on the procurement by all entities using public funds.

Madam Speaker, I wish also to reassure the House that this Government is fully committed to ensure that there is a transparent and effective public procurement system in place which promotes value for money both in terms of monetary value and quality. Very often, we forget about quality. The cheapest is not necessarily the best. So, monetary value, quality, accountability, integrity, fairness, and efficiency in the use of public funds at all levels.

I have no doubt, Madam Speaker, that these reforms will reaffirm public trust in the public procurement system.

Madam Speaker: Thank you.

Mr A. Duval: Madam Speaker, I am glad to hear from the hon. Prime Minister that he intends to have a level playing field for public procurement wherever public funds are involved.

But as a matter of urgency, will the hon. Prime Minister consider adding all those SOEs and Special Purpose Vehicles that exist today since the legislation was enacted in 2006 by his Government and have not been specifically included under the application of the Act, and whether these would be done now as a matter of urgency, notwithstanding future amendments that may be brought?

The Prime Minister: This is precisely what I said. Wherever there is public money involved, every rupee and every cent of public money which is spent will fall under the new PPA Act.

Madam Speaker: Your next question! You have another one?

Mr A. Duval: Yes, on the same subject. Madam Speaker, it can be brought by way of regulation. The question is very direct: can the hon. Prime Minister tell us what is the hold-up for adding all those SPVs and SOEs now under the control of the Public Procurement?

The Prime Minister: For ten years, nobody thought about it! Now, when we are doing it, you are in a rush to know why and when?

An hon. Member: *Exact!*

The Prime Minister: We will do it when we are ready to do it!

Madam Speaker: Okay, next question now!

Mr Bhagwan: ... *tonn manze bwar kan to ti Speaker!*

Mr Mohamed: Happy hour!

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT – PROPOSED INTRODUCTION – CONFIDENTIALITY CLAUSES BAN

(No. B/72) **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 proposed introduction of a Freedom of Information Act to enhance transparency in relation to the decisions of public institutions, he will state if consideration will be given to banning the use of confidentiality clauses in transactions involving public funds, directly or indirectly, except for matters related to defence and national security.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, let me state at the very beginning that transparency and accountability will be the core values of the actions of this Government.

We have already announced in the Government Programme 2025-2029 that a Freedom of Information Act will be introduced for the purpose of enhancing transparency in relation to decisions of all public institutions.

The House would appreciate that Freedom of Information Acts lay the principle of access to information, but they also embody exceptions, as you rightly pointed out. A perusal of the existing legislation in the United Kingdom, the United States, and other democratic countries will show that these Acts come with some exceptions. This is universally the practice and is accepted. Exceptions are expressly spelt out in such Acts for the purpose of public order, for maintaining stability, for respecting other legal and ethical obligations, and more importantly, for the protection of basic rights of the individual.

In Mauritius, as with the legislation pertaining to this matter in other democratic countries, our Data Protection Act lays clearly the universal principle of protection of personal and sensitive data of the individual. Exemptions to this right are also clearly and limitatively laid down in the said Act.

When the Freedom of Information Act will be introduced, it will be in conformity with the best practices in other jurisdictions. As the hon. Member rightly says in his question, it will have to strike a balance between transparency and other interests such as, national security, public safety, and defence. The Act will also include exceptions aiming at protecting the fundamental rights of individuals.

Madam Speaker, transactions, whether they involve public funds or not, usually contain confidentiality clauses though this is not a mandatory requirement of the law of contract. However, confidentiality clauses are inserted in contracts for a wide variety of reasons, and these are universally accepted.

Therefore, a blanket ban on the use of confidentiality clauses in transactions except for matters related to defence and national security as proposed in the question, whilst desirable, may have to be examined in the broader context of exceptions applicable to such types of legislations, whilst ensuring that the principles of accountability and transparency are not undermined.

Madam Speaker: Thank you. Yes!

Mr A. Duval: Madam Speaker, the hon. Prime Minister realises that with the use of public funds, there has to be accountability. And in the past, whether the last government ...

Madam Speaker: Question! Question, please!

Mr A. Duval: Yes, I am coming up.

... whether the last government or the government before that have used confidentiality clauses with regard to contracts and, therefore, have relied on that so as not to allow Parliament to have its function of oversight.

Therefore, the question, Madam Speaker, is whether he understates that any contract with regard to public funds will not use confidentiality clauses? Because we have seen in the past that Mauritius has invoked confidentiality clauses while the other party had no problem in disclosing the information. So, can he undertake that such use of confidentiality clauses will not be used?

The Prime Minister: I just explained at length what we intend to do. You, yourself, in your question, say: 'except for matters relating to defence and national security'. I did say that also, but there are also some confidentiality clauses in some cases which need to be looked at very properly. This is what I said.

Mr A. Duval: If I may, Madam Speaker. I'll take an example. Let's take the example of Côte d'Or Ltd where there has been...

Madam Speaker: You are on slippery ground!

(Interruptions)

Mr A. Duval: ... there has been not only ...

The Deputy Prime Minister: *Ala li tir pese boug la!*

(Interruptions)

Mr A. Duval: I can take the example of Jin Fei also where there has been relied ...

Madam Speaker: We want you to put a question!

Mr A. Duval: I am putting the question, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: No, you are stating!

Mr A. Duval: The question is that wherever public funds are involved, of course, where the matter relates to security is one thing – acceptable! But wherever there are public funds, it should, one, fall under the Public Procurement Act, and it should not be the subject of confidentiality clauses because the public has the right to know. Therefore, will he contemplate not having any exception other than what we both agree, national security and public order? But for others, procurement of services, procurement of machinery and equipment, these should not be subject to confidentiality clauses, at all!

The Prime Minister: Exactly what you said! Look at what happened during COVID-19, I have just mentioned that in the other question. You know what happened; still, you joined the Party that was doing it.

An hon. Member: *Kokin!*

The Prime Minister: Then you didn't ask any questions. Now, you want to ask me questions when we are actually correcting the mistakes that you have made. We are going to be accountable for every rupee and cent that is spent, except for what I said just now.

Madam Speaker: Okay. Hon. Second Member for Rodrigues, please!

RODRIGUES - POLICE OFFICERS - SHORTAGE

(No. B/73) Mr F. François (Second Member for Rodrigues) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the Police Force in Rodrigues, he will –

- (a) state if he has been aware of the shortage of Police Officers posted thereat, and
- (b) for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the –
 - (i) number of Rodriguan Police Officers who, after completion of the Police training, have requested their transfer to Rodrigues, and
 - (ii) action being envisaged to address the issue of shortage and, if so, when.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that there is a shortage of personnel within the Force itself. The shortage of Police Officers is not limited to Rodrigues only, but also across the whole Republic. The number of vacancies for which funds are available is 3,381. The main reasons for the shortage of Police Officers are due to many officers proceeding on retirement on an annual basis, sometimes because of the policy of the previous government; they retired early because they were being victimised. Then, there is also a lack of interest from qualified candidates to join the Force. In the last recruitment exercise, which was held in August of last year, some 1,000 Police Officers were expected to be enlisted, but only 496 eligible candidates were enlisted by the Disciplined Forces Service Commission at that time. Now, out of the 496 candidates, 45 have already resigned from the Force.

There are currently 236 Police Officers posted in the six Police Stations in Rodrigues. The Commissioner of Police considers, at the moment, that Rodrigues is adequately staffed,

taking into consideration the ratio of Police Officers to the population, which is currently 1 Police Officer to 188 Rodriguans.

As regards part (b) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that out of 148 Rodriguan Police Officers who are currently posted in Mauritius, 23 have requested that they be transferred to Rodrigues. The requests are being considered by the Commissioner of Police and will happen after the next passing out exercise which will be conducted shortly, and will be based on operational exigencies.

Madam Speaker: One! Just one!

Mr François: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I thank the hon. Prime Minister for his answer.

Madam Speaker, with regard to the increase in the number of vehicles on our roads in Rodrigues, there is an urgency for the presence of more Police Officers on our roads. Will the hon. Prime Minister see to it with the Commissioner of Police and the Divisional Commander thereat, as a matter of urgency and security, to deploy more Police Officers on our roads despite, as I said, there being a shortage of Police Officers thereat?

Madam Speaker: *C'est le miracle ! Il cherche un miracle !*

The Prime Minister: I cannot order the Commissioner of Police on the operational exigencies; he will decide. But I will pass on your message.

Madam Speaker: Message will be passed!

Okay, now we have hon. First Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue!

REHABILITATION YOUTH CENTRES – LOW NUMBER ADMISSIONS

(No. B/74) **Mrs 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 Rehabilitation Youth Centres (RYC), he will state if he has been made aware of the low number of admissions at the Centres since the coming into operation of the Children's Act 2020 and, if so, state the measures being envisaged in relation thereto.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, as you rightly said, with your permission, I will reply to PQ B/74 and PQ B/91 together as they relate to the same subject matter.

The Rehabilitation Youth Centre (RYC) falls under the responsibility of the Commissioner of Prisons and operates under the aegis of the Prime Minister's Office. It is

governed by the Reforms Institutions Act 1988. Its purpose is to rehabilitate juvenile offenders who are below the age of 18 whilst ensuring the safeguard of their rights.

There are two centres for the RYC, as the hon. Member probably knows, one for boys and one for girls. Both centres are located at Barkly, Beau Bassin, and they can accommodate some 44 residents.

However, following the proclamation of the Children's Act 2020 in January 2022 and its subsequent implementation, there have been only four admissions at the RYC, for the following reasons –

- a) Children under the age of 14 years are no longer prosecuted;
- b) Children with serious behavioural concerns are sent to the Probation Home or Hostel;
- c) The law provides for the DPP to advise that the child offender be enrolled on a diversion programme.

Madam Speaker, over the last years, the number of inmates at the RYC has reduced considerably and currently, there is no inmate as the last one was transferred to Beau Bassin Prison on 30 January of this year because he had reached the age of 18.

There are 43 staffs at the RYC, headed by an Acting Superintendent who is responsible for the management and day-to-day operations, and reports to the Commissioner of Prisons. The Superintendent RYC is supported by officers in the grade of Chief Officers, Principal Officers, Senior Officers, and other officers. Since there are no inmates, the staffs have become redundant.

Following consultations held in February and May 2024 with the staff union and representatives of the Government Services Employees Association (GSEA), the possibility of redeploying the staff to the Correctional Youth Centres or the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare to provide support in Child Development Unit shelters was discussed. That was in February and May 2024. However, the representatives of Unions did not agree to these proposals. They, instead, came up with a counterproposal that they should be seconded to the Ministry of Education and Human Resource, and also to perform the duties at the level of Discipline Master. However, when the latter Ministry was consulted at that time, the proposal was not agreed upon. Similarly, no greenlight has been given so far by the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare.

Madam Speaker, in view of the need to redeploy – because we need to redeploy them – the redundant staff of the RYC, the representatives of my Office met the representatives of the GSEA and representatives of staff on 31 January 2025. It has been agreed that some RYC staffs would be temporarily posted to the Probation Home for Girls and Probation Hostel for Boys and some would be redeployed to the Correctional Youth Centres (CYC). The Acting Superintendent of the RYC and other senior staff would, for the time being, remain posted at the RYC for administration purposes and to monitor and organise the other schedules of work. The RYC officers would continue to report to the Acting Superintendent, RYC and retain all their benefits and allowances, and would continue to perform as per their schemes of service. However, all of them, in time, will have to be redeployed.

Necessary training will be imparted to enable them to integrate the Probation Institutions and the Correctional Youth Centres. At the Prisons Department, they will be providing assistance to the Officers of the Prisons Cadre, including those of the Welfare Unit given their counselling skills.

Madam Speaker, the RYC will remain operational in case an inmate is referred by Court, which might happen. The Acting Superintendent will then ensure that the necessary staff will be available to provide all the necessary training, counselling, and support.

As regards the future strategy of the RYC, consultations will be held with relevant stakeholders for appropriate legislative amendments.

Madam Speaker: Yes!

Mrs Savabaddy: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you, hon. Prime Minister, for your answer. May I kindly draw your attention to the fact that, since, as you said, 30 January, there are no inmates in RYC and that the staff posted there have been transferred to CYC, there is a mismatch since one scheme of duties is under the PSC and the other falls under the DFSC. Can this be addressed, please?

The Prime Minister: This is being addressed, Madam Speaker. Let me assure the hon. Member. In fact, this has happened in the past, and this will be addressed.

Madam Speaker: Yes!

Mrs Savabaddy: Thank you. Will the hon. Prime Minister agree that the whole concept of Rehabilitation Youth Centre or Correctional Youth Centre needs a complete

revamping to fulfil its mission to address juvenile delinquency and that there is a need for an assessment of the situation to see the heart of the problem? Thank you.

The Prime Minister: Yes, we will be doing that. In fact, as I said, the RYC has become redundant, but we will look at it globally.

Madam Speaker: Thank you. Yes, hon. First Member for Rodrigues, Ms Collet!

REHABILITATION YOUTH CENTRES – OPERATIONALISATION

(No. B/75) Ms M. R. Collet (First Member for Rodrigues) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to Rehabilitation Youth Centres (RYCs), he will –

- (a) for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the number thereof operating across mainland Mauritius and Rodrigues, indicating the number of –
 - (i) officers posted at each Centre, and
 - (ii) youth admitted in each Centre over the past 3 years, and
- (b) state if he has been made aware of difficulties faced for the admission of youth in RYC in Rodrigues over the past 3 years, indicating the assistance being envisaged for the operationalisation thereof.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am tabling the information requested by the hon. Member. It is a long answer.

Regarding part (b) of the question, Prisons and Reform Institutions in Rodrigues fall under the responsibility of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly, as outlined in the Rodrigues Regional Assembly Act. So, the question should be addressed to the Assembly.

Madam Speaker: Yes. Hon. Second Member for Rodrigues!

RODRIGUES – SUSPENDED DRIVING LICENCES – REHABILITATION COURSE

(No. B/76) Mr F. François (Second Member for Rodrigues) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to driving licenses

suspended during the last 5 years in Rodrigues, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the –

- (a) number of persons concerned therewith, and
- (b) number of drivers requiring enrolment for the mandatory Rehabilitation course, indicating the frequency the course is being dispensed in Rodrigues and where.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, Section 53 (1) (a) of the Road Traffic Act (RTA) stipulates that where a person who is the holder of a driving licence or a provisional driving licence in the Republic of Mauritius is disqualified by virtue of a conviction or order under Part IV of the Act, the licence shall be retained by the Licensing Officer as long as the disqualification is in force, and the licence shall be suspended as from the date of disqualification until the restoration of the licence to its holder.

With regard to part (a) of the question, I have been informed by the Commissioner of Police that since January 2020 to 27 February 2025, there has been a total of 915 licence holders who have been disqualified in Rodrigues.

As regards part (b) of the question, I am informed that since January 2020 to December 2024, 322 drivers have enrolled for the mandatory Rehabilitation Course, out of which 218 licences were reinstated. The course is currently conducted at the MITD of Rodrigues, Le Chou Training Centre, and is held every three months.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Third Member for Pamplemousses and Triolet!

STATE OF THE ECONOMY REPORT – DATA MANIPULATION – REMEDIAL ACTIONS

(No. B/77) **Mr K. Rookny (Third Member for Pamplemousses & Triolet)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to cases of alleged falsification of data/statistics as highlighted in the State of the Economy Report, he will state the –

- (a) actions, if any, taken to identify those who have compiled or given directions/instructions to compile misrepresented data, and
- (b) measures Government proposes to take to avoid the recurrence thereof.

The Prime Minister: Indeed, Madam Speaker, as highlighted in the State of the Economy Report, there was a deliberate manipulation of data under the previous government to convey a false sense of a booming economy. It was an illusion, a mirage.

GDP at market prices was overstated by around Rs22 billion for 2023, and more than Rs36 billion for 2024.

The budget deficit was understated in the Budget document by 1.8 per cent of GDP for fiscal year 2023-2024 and by 3.3 per cent of GDP for fiscal year 2024-2025.

We have amply demonstrated that the falsification of data was the only way for the previous government to conceal its economic and fiscal mismanagement, and the resulting disastrous situation. But the truth has finally come out.

Madam Speaker, with regard to part (a) of the question, the real culprits and the masterminds behind the falsification of data have already been booted out of office. Game-over for them! But we are looking very closely to take further appropriate actions if needed.

Madam Speaker, we are rebuilding our institutions to ensure that their independence, their good governance and effective functioning is a reality. One example is the Bank of Mauritius which has regained total independence to carry out its functions and its roles.

We will also carry out a fundamental review of the governance structure across key public sector institutions, including the Economic Development Board and Statistics Mauritius.

As regards part (b) of the question, Government has already secured technical assistance from the IMF to review and strengthen our institutions and statistical system so as to prevent the recurrence of this terrible manipulation that has taken place.

The IMF will carry out a comprehensive assessment of the extent to which our institutions, including the Ministry of Finance, Statistics Mauritius, and the Bank of Mauritius, are observing international statistical standards and codes while compiling and disseminating statistics.

The assessment will cover all statistical sectors, namely the national accounts, price indices, monetary and fiscal statistics, government finance statistics and the balance of payments.

At the end of the assessment, the IMF will submit a Report on the Observance of Standards and Codes (ROSC) together with appropriate recommendations. This assessment by the IMF is long overdue since the last one was carried out in 2002.

Madam Speaker, the IMF has, as a matter of priority, agreed to devote the first part of the exercise to reviewing the organisational structure of Statistics Mauritius, and its data collection and dissemination process to prevent, again, such interferences in the future.

We are acting fast to restore the integrity and quality of our statistics after ten years of abuse. A Steering Committee is being set up under the Ministry of Finance to coordinate the assessment of the IMF and ensure effective implementation of its recommendations.

Madam Speaker, we will shortly reconstitute the Statistics Board and appoint an independent and fully qualified Chairperson, and that Board will be given full independence in the exercise of its responsibilities.

With the implementation of the recommendations of the IMF, we will ensure that in future, no government will be able to manipulate data ever again.

Madam Speaker: Yes!

Mr Rookny: Madam Speaker, could the hon. Prime Minister advise if his administration has received any representation, in whatever form, from the then representatives of the MSM Government to defend the figures they have presented to the Mauritians?

The Prime Minister: I do not think they are able to do that.

Mr A. Duval: Madam Speaker, are we to understand that...

Madam Speaker: Brief! Brief, because time is almost up.

Mr A. Duval: ...the Director of Statistics, who by law has to be independent, does not take instruction from anyone? That, under the Statistics Act, there is no disciplinary action being envisaged, let alone taken against him and others under him for having wilfully falsified data, according to what is being said? Is this what the hon. Prime Minister is saying; that there is no action being envisaged, let alone being taken?

The Prime Minister: No, no! That is not what I said. I did not delve into it too much, but there will be action taken.

Mr A. Duval: It should be immediate...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Prime Minister: *Eta al dormi do ta! Al happy hour do!*

(Interruptions)

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

Mr A. Duval: How can we trust these figures?

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, we have got only one minute left!

An hon. Member: You chose those people!

Madam Speaker: *Chut !*

(Interruptions)

Mr Quirin!

Mr Quirin: B/78, please!

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Prime Minister: *Be ou pe assiz koste ar li foutou!*

Mr A. Duval: The same people there!

The Deputy Prime Minister: *Get dan so pos!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Mohamed: Take a seat back.

Madam Speaker: B/78 has been called, please! Last question!

LATE MR S. K. – DEATH INQUIRY – STATUS

(No. B/78) 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 inquiry carried out into the death of late Mr S. K. in or about October 2020, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to where matters stand.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I wish to inform the House that since 18 October 2020, date on which the case was reported to the Moka Police Station and transferred to the Central Criminal Investigation Department (CCID), 98 persons were interviewed by

the Police. I must say, if we look back, very few were interviewed at the beginning. When there was a hue and cry, we have seen more and more people going to the Central CID. So, 98 persons were interviewed, including the former Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection, Mr Yogida Sawmynaden.

Thereafter, a Judicial Enquiry was instituted by the Magistrate of the District Court of Moka to further investigate into the matter and a report was submitted to the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) on 22 November 2021.

The report, according to extracts, was a damning indictment of the way the enquiry was conducted by the Police and the departments under its responsibility. It was highly critical of the Police's "new level of incompetence" – never such a level had been reached – and "for trying to bury hard facts under layers of official lies".

The Magistrate in her report was also highly critical of the Police Medical Officer, a certain Dr. Ananda Sunassee. She referred to a scheme mounted around a concocted post mortem examination that concluded the cause of death was a suicide when it was clearly later found to be a homicide.

The Office of the DPP advised the Police to carry an in-depth investigation anew, with utmost diligence and professionalism with a view to exploring avenues as to the possible motives behind the unlawful killing of late S.K. I should say at that time, Madam Speaker, the DPP was requesting this. Do not forget what was happening to the DPP at that time! They were ignoring what the DPP was saying – completely – as if he never existed.

Having said that, since the said alleged murder was reported, we, on this side of the House, have been vehemently protesting against the way the investigations were being carried out under the direction of the previous Commissioner of Police. After four years now, it is clear that there was no willingness on the part of the previous Government to elucidate such an atrocious crime even though it was an agent of the former Prime Minister. On the contrary, they did a cover-up. They said it was a case of suicide. The former Prime Minister even said: 'I have done my own enquiry; it is suicide'. The citizens of this country, especially the affected family are still waiting for justice to be done.

I have said it before, Madam Speaker, and I am saying it again today, as Prime Minister, I wish to reiterate that I am not at all satisfied with the way the investigations had been carried out in this case.

This case is of utmost priority to the Police and the new Commissioner of Police has set up a dedicated team at the Central CID to conduct an in-depth inquiry with clear-cut instructions to review all the recorded statements, which are being done now, and reports and seeking fresh and compelling evidence to identify the perpetrator(s).

Madam Speaker, I have been further informed by the Commissioner of Police that a retired Police Officer with extensive expertise in criminal investigation has been appointed as advisor to the Central CID to look into the whole investigation again. With an extensive background in criminal investigations, he will play a crucial role at the Central CID and assist the department by leveraging his vast experience to elucidate this case.

Madam Speaker, I have said it publicly; we will be enlisting the services of enquiry officers from abroad. We think it is essential. We have done this before; I have done this before. I have already initiated actions to enlist the services of foreign investigating bodies to assist the Police Force in its investigations so that we are ensured that light is shed on this case as well as other – there are other – unresolved cases of false claiming to be suicide, jumping from cliffs or whatever. All this will be investigated into.

Madam Speaker: Time is up for PMQT!

The Table has been advised that B/81 and B/83 have been withdrawn.

We can proceed. I call on hon. Third Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien, Mr Lukeeram!

PRIMARY & SECONDARY SCHOOLS – DRUGS REPORTED CASES – 2015-2024

(No. B/84) Mr C. Lukeeram (Third Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resource whether, in regard to drugs in primary and secondary schools, he will state the number of reported cases thereof between 2015 to 2024, indicating the preventive measures being envisaged.

Dr. Gungapersad: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. Third Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien for this Parliamentary Question which will allow me to delve, albeit briefly on the prevalence of drugs in our schools.

Today, unfortunately, even our schools have not been spared from the insidious tentacles of drug traffickers. These ruthless criminals are even mercilessly exploiting our school children and are using school premises to expand their business.

Drug-related cases are categorised as criminal cases and are reported to the Police as per the protocol established in schools. I am informed that between 2015 to 2024, the number of cases reported to my Ministry in regard to drug-related incidents is as follows –

- 1 in primary school,
- 71 in secondary schools.

Madam Speaker, these figures are not taken lightly by my Ministry. The fight against the scourge of drug abuse in schools holds a prominent place in my Ministry's agenda. That is why on 30 January 2025, I chaired a high level multisectoral meeting with several stakeholders to address issues related to substance abuse as well as growing indiscipline in schools.

The meeting comprised representatives of the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare, Ministry of Health and Wellness, the Police Force, ADSU, SEDEC, Managers of Private Secondary Schools, officers of the Rehabilitation Youth Centre, among others. The discussions revolved around the effective strategies to combat the proliferation of drugs within and around school premises.

Madam Speaker, I would like to inform the House about the preventive measures currently in place to combat drug abuse in our schools –

- (a) Regular awareness talks are organised in schools to sensitise students and staff against the risks associated with drugs, especially synthetic drugs.
- (b) There are two drug prevention and education programmes known as –
 - i. Rebound,
 - ii. Get Connected Programmes.

These two programmes are run with the collaboration of the United Nations Office on Drug and Crime as to deter the students from surrendering to the temptation of substance abuse.

- (c) The National Education Counselling Service provides support to vulnerable students and their families so that they navigate the complex issue of substance abuse.

Apart from these preventive measures, Madam Speaker, my Ministry is fully committed to walk the talk. That is why we have solicited the support of other stakeholders to further enhance preventive measures. In concrete terms, we have initiated the following –

- (i) Targeted crackdown operations with the help of the Police department, particularly ADSU and *Brigade pour la protection de la famille*.
- (ii) Enhanced surveillance at school level by the school personnel, whom I would like to salute for the good job they are doing, and intelligence led policing and community involvement by organising sensitisation campaigns and increasing Police patrol in high-risk areas.
- (iii) We are also committed to reviewing and tightening relevant legislation to deter students from engaging in criminal activities, including drug use and trafficking both within and outside school premises.
- (iv) I hereby solicit the collaboration of NGOs specialised in drug prevention, the support of student councils, the school prefects and PTAs in our quest to prevent substance abuse. I make an appeal to our grandparents to promote human and moral values in order to enhance ethical behaviour and standards among our children.

Madam Speaker, very often, students do not have the necessary skills to deal with those who influence them to take drugs. They do not know what to do and how to resist temptation. That is why, it is imperative to engage our students in meaningful dialogues and programmes which deal principally with prevention. The battle against drugs cannot be confined to the four walls of school premises only. It is a relentless battle that we must fight together as a nation. Every parent, teacher, police officer, citizen, and politician has a key role to play in breaking the stronghold of drug trafficking. We must all be vigilant, proactive and unwavering in our commitment to eradicating the scourge of drugs from our schools, our community and our nation.

Madam Speaker, in the Government Programme 2025-2029, on page 28, paragraph 56, we can read the following –

“The fight against drug trafficking and use will be one of the major priorities of Government. (...)”

Government will adopt bold measures to end the suffering of families and society in general, as a result of the significant increases in drug trafficking over the [past ten years] and the breakdown in law and order.”

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Thank you, Minister! Yes, hon. First Member for La Caverne and Phoenix!

**MUNICIPAL COUNCIL OF VACOAS-PHOENIX – PLASTIC BINS –
PROCUREMENT & DISTRIBUTION**

(No. B/85) **Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix)** asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to the contracts for the procurement, purchase and supply of plastic bins awarded in 2023 and 2024 by the Municipal Council of Vacoas Phoenix, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the

–

- (a) name of the supplier/s thereof, and
- (b) number of bins procured, indicating the –
 - (i) amount of fund paid as at date;
 - (ii) number thereof distributed to the inhabitants falling under the jurisdiction of the Council, and
 - (iii) number thereof not yet distributed and where they have been stored.

Mr Woochit: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I want to make it clear that the previous government acted in bad faith when managing the procurement of the plastic bins for the Municipal Council of Vacoas-Phoenix. Their decisions seemed to be driven by political interest rather than the real needs of the community.

In regard to part (a) of the question, the Municipal Council of Vacoas-Phoenix has provided the following details about the supplier and the procurement process –

- A national bidding process was launched on 10 February 2023 through the e-procurement portal for the supply of 39,000 plastic bins, each with a capacity of 70 to 80 litres.
- The bidding closed on 31 March 2023 with three bidders: Plastic Industry Mauritius Limited, Alpha Hygiene Ltd, Young Bros (Plastics).
- The contract was awarded to Plastic Industry Mauritius Limited after a price revision negotiation.
- The contract was finalised on 07 August 2023 for a total cost of Rs20,989,800, including VAT.

Regarding part (b), subsection (i) of the question, the full contract amount of Rs20,989,800 was paid to the contractor. However, it later became clear that the actual demand for plastic bins was much lower than the number ordered.

Regarding part (b), subsections (ii) and (iii) of the question, as a result, Madam Speaker, only 28,988 bins have been distributed to date, leaving 10,012 bins undistributed due to this miscalculation and mismanagement. These bins are currently stored at various locations –

- Paillote Squash Court – 2,347 bins;
- Palmerston Squash Court – 1,562 bins;
- Hermitage Kindergarten – 1,624 bins;
- St Paul Municipal Complex – 3,679 bins;
- Unoccupied space at Paillote Kindergarten – 800 bins.

This situation highlights poor planning by the previous administration, leading to unnecessary public expenditure.

Madam Speaker: Thank you. Yes!

Mr Lobine: Madam Speaker, may I ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware that bins are also being kept in the office of the Mayor of the township of Vacoas-Phoenix? Are you aware of that? I will request a visit. It is in the office of the Mayor of Vacoas-Phoenix.

An hon. Member: *Sa osi dan so lakaz...*

(Interruptions)

Mr Woochit: Madam Speaker, I am not aware.

Madam Speaker: Minister, are you aware?

Mr Woochit: No, I am not aware.

Madam Speaker: Of course not. Of course, he won't be aware! How big is that office?

Mr Lobine: I will invite a site visit there. Is the hon. Minister aware that those places where those bins are being kept, these are in breach of the law? It is in breach of the Occupational Safety and Health Act with regard to those bins that are highly flammable, where people are practicing sports and being kept in a very poor hygienic conditions, with dead rats around. Is the Minister aware of this?

Mr Woochit: Madam Speaker, I have made several visits around the island, to the markets and everything. But now, it is making me more want to have a visit over at these sites.

Madam Speaker: Now, you are dealing with bins!

Mr Woochit: Yes.

Madam Speaker: Very important for women...

Mr Woochit: Yes, this is what I said. Now, it is urged for me to go and have a site visit over there.

Madam Speaker: Now that you know, you will do the needful. I am sure. Mr Lobine!

Mr Lobine: One last?

Madam Speaker: One very last!

Mr Lobine: Will the hon. Minister also engage into an internal enquiry to find out with regard to those buildings that do not have Fire Certificates...

Madam Speaker: That is another question!

Mr Lobine: ...whether these have been in order with regard to placing those bins there by the Welfare Department of the Municipal Council of Vacoas-Phoenix?

Madam Speaker: You will do the needful!

Mr Wochit: Madam Speaker, I will do the needful, this is true. It is only after the site visits that we can take actions.

Madam Speaker: I know a lot about bins, myself! Okay. Hon. Third Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue, Mr Caserne!

PUBLIC HEALTH INSTITUTIONS – CONSULTATION ROOMS – PATIENTS’ PRIVACY

(No. B/86) Mr L. Caserne (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to public health institutions, he will state the measures being taken to ensure the privacy of patient while being attended by doctors in the different outpatient departments including the casualty and unsorted one.

Mr Bachoo: Madam Speaker, I wish to inform the House that the following measures are in place at the level of public health institutions to ensure privacy of patients while being attended by doctors in the different out-patient departments, including the casualty and the unsorted ones –

- (i) One patient is seen at a time by the treating doctor;
- (ii) The patient is consulted in all privacy of a consultation room by the doctor at health care service points;
- (iii) The couch in each consultation room is shielded by a curtain to create privacy;

- (iv) Consultation rooms which are fitted with two consultation couches due to lack of space are properly shielded from one another by a curtain of portable screen, and
- (v) Male doctors are assisted by a female nursing officer when examining a female patient to ensure patient's comfort, safety and adherence to professional standards.

Madam Speaker: Yes, Dr. Aumeer!

Dr. Aumeer: Can I ask the hon. Minister – he is very much aware, there have been two recent cases where healthcare personnel have been brutally attacked in the hospital – if he will issue strict guidelines so that there is a fine line between privacy and security of healthcare personnel? Thank you.

Mr Bachoo: Madam Speaker, I am aware of the incident which occurred and that is why during my speech today, I will lengthily speak on that issue, and we will be without any pity against those who have committed such blunders in the hospitals. Secondly, I take note of what you have told me. I will look into it.

Madam Speaker: Thank you, Minister! Yes, hon. Third Member for Rodrigues, Mrs Henriette-Manan!

RODRIGUES, PLAINE MAPOU – NEW MODERN HOSPITAL

(No. B/87) **Mrs D. Henriette-Manan (Third Member for Rodrigues)** asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the increasing number of patients travelling from Rodrigues to Mauritius for medical treatment and the high costs associated thereto, he will state the support being extended to the Rodrigues Regional Assembly for the establishment of a modern hospital in Rodrigues, indicating the steps being taken to ensure that essential healthcare services are accessible on the island.

Mr Bachoo: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Acting Health Director of Rodrigues that the establishment of a new modern hospital at Plaine Mapou, near Plaine Corail Airport, has been envisaged by the Rodrigues Regional Assembly. This initiative aims to enhance access to upgraded healthcare services, addressing the growing demand from both

local population, who seek higher quality care on the island, and the very expanding tourism sector.

Madam Speaker, in the same breath, the World Health Organization has been consulted to provide technical support for the project. To date, a conclusive assessment as well as pre-feasibility study have been completed.

Madam Speaker, I am further informed that the Commission will, in the first instance, conduct a full feasibility study. This study will be crucial in determining the detailed requirements, cost implications and timeline necessary for the successful establishment of the hospital. The Government remains committed to ensuring that healthcare services in Rodrigues are accessible, efficient and aligned to the growing demands.

Madam Speaker: Yes!

Mrs Henriette-Manan: Madam Speaker, I would also like to ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware of the acute lack of staff in the Rodrigues Health System, and if his Ministry plans to help in the recruitment of new staff in the meantime until the establishment of this new hospital? Thank you.

Mr Bachoo: Madam Speaker, we have taken note of her request. Even a few weeks ago, request was made to my Ministry and I am trying to make arrangements so that there will not be any difficulty as far as the patients are concerned. And we are increasing the number of Specialist doctors who are also visiting for Rodrigues.

Madam Speaker: Hon. François, yes!

Mr François: Thank you, Madam Speaker. May I ask the hon. Minister whether, he is aware that there is a Comprehensive Report by the Hospital Services Consultancy Corporation Limited of India that proposes a State-of-the-Art landmark hospital for Rodrigues through redevelopment Master Plan for the existing Queen Elizabeth Hospital with salient features such as ensuring seamless transition and no hindrance in the current functioning of a hospital with modern infrastructure, more space for additional services, expanding bed capacity from 194 to 442 and planning along with all the latest equipment?

Madam Speaker: This is almost a statement! Are you aware? Will you talk about it later?

Mr Bachoo: I am aware of the Report. We are working on that but it all depends on the availability of funds.

Madam Speaker: Of course! Okay, the hon. Fourth Member for Rodrigues!

**RODRIGUES – ELECTRICITY SUPPLY – PRODUCTION CAPACITY &
POWER OUTAGE**

(No. B/88) Mr J. Edouard (Fourth Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to electricity supply in Rodrigues, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Electricity Board, information as to the –

- (a) production capacity of the Rodrigues plant, indicating the peak power demand, and
- (b) reasons for the frequent power outage, indicating the remedial measures being taken in relation thereto.

Mr Assirvaden: Madame la présidente, je voudrai avec votre permission répondre à la question B/88 et B/89 en même temps.

Madam Speaker: Okay.

Mr Assirvaden: Madame la présidente, je suis informé que le *Central Electricity Board* dispose d'une capacité de production effective totale de 13,7 MW à l'île Rodrigues, comprenant deux centrales thermiques d'une capacité effective de 11,4 MW, deux parcs éoliens de 1,22 MW et un parc solaire photovoltaïque de 1 MW.

La prévision globale de l'offre et la demande d'électricité pour l'île Rodrigues pour 2025 est de 9,19 MW.

Je suis également informé qu'à 19 heures le 3 février 2025, une demande maximal historique de 8,97 MW a été enregistrée sur l'île Rodrigues. Le *CEB* a pu répondre à la demande grâce à ses unités de production.

Madame la présidente, en ce qui concerne les coupures de courant rencontrées sur l'île, il convient de noter qu'il existe deux types de coupures de courant à savoir les coupures planifiées et les coupures imprévues. Les coupures planifiées permettent aux personnels du *CEB* d'effectuer des travaux de maintenance. Les coupures imprévues par contre, en revanche sont imprévues bien sure et leur durée dépend de la nature du défaut.

Le *CEB* m'a informé qu'un total de 178 pannes a été enregistré sur l'île au cours des 12 derniers mois, dont plus de 80 % étaient dues à des défauts inévitables de nature transitoire qui ont été résolues en quelques minutes. Les autres coupures de courant plus longues à Rodrigues étaient principalement dues à des pannes générales du réseau à trois reprises en 2024 et à deux reprises en février 2025.

La première panne du 16 février 2025 est survenue suite à un déclenchement de l'alimentateur d'Oyster Bay à Rodrigues en raison d'un poteau tombé et la panne du 22 février 2025 est survenue suite au déclenchement de l'alimentateur de Malartic en raison d'un bras transversal brisé d'un poteau. Dans les deux cas, la protection du générateur s'est déclenchée entraînant le déclenchement cascade de tous les groupes électrogènes, provoquant ainsi une panne générale, *blackout*. Au fait, le 22 février 2025 à 13h15, un défaut de surintensité a provoqué le déclenchement de l'alimentation de Malartic. Lors du rétablissement de l'alimentation de Malartic à 13h22, 7 minutes après, l'alimentation a été fermée mais le défaut n'a pas été éliminé. Cela a provoqué le déclenchement des groupes électrogènes à Port Mathurin et à Pointe Monnier et a ainsi conduit à une situation de panne générale encore une fois – *blackout* général.

Madame la présidente, en raison des problèmes fréquents sur le réseau électrique à Rodrigues, j'ai demandé à une équipe du *CEB* de se rendre d'urgence à Rodrigues pour faire le point de la situation, examiner les raisons des perturbations fréquentes et de faire des recommandations pour une action rapide. Une équipe composée d'un membre du conseil d'administration, du directeur par intérim de la distribution et d'un technicien de l'unité production thermique. Ils étaient à Rodrigues la semaine dernière du 24 au 25 février 2025. Ils ont soumis leur rapport qui est actuellement à l'étude par le *board* du *CEB*. J'ai les six points soulevés dans le rapport.

Madame la présidente, je tiens à souligner que comme c'est le cas à Maurice, peu ou pas de planification a été faite pour répondre à la demande croissante d'électricité à Rodrigues. Le *CEB* a été chargé de travailler sur un nouveau plan énergétique qui garantira la sécurité énergétique d'abord ainsi que la transition vers l'énergie verte sur toute la République.

Madame la présidente, pour répondre à la question en ce qui concerne la partie (b) du *PQ B/89*, je suis informé que les travaux d'enfouissement du réseau de câbles de 22 KW de Port Mathurin à l'aéroport de Pointe Corail via l'hôpital La Ferme ont été initiés par le *CEB*

en 2019 à la demande de l'Assemblée Régionale de Rodrigues. Le projet doit être réalisé en quatre phases sur la base de partage des coûts. Je suis informé que la phase 1 du projet de la centrale électrique de Port Mathurin à l'usine de dessalement de English Bay est terminée. Le *CEB* est en contact avec la *RRA* pour obtenir l'accord de cette dernière pour achever le projet.

Concernant la partie (c) du *PQ* B/89, je suis informé que les six unités de la centrale thermique de Port Mathurin d'une capacité effective de 400 KW chacune, fonctionnent depuis 34 ans en moyenne et que leur maintenance est devenue extrêmement difficile et coûteuse. Elles ne sont exploitées qu'en cas d'urgence lors des pics de production et malheureusement, très souvent ces temps-ci.

Afin de relever ces défis et d'assurer la sécurité énergétique de Rodrigues d'abord, le *CEB* réfléchit actuellement – je dis bien – réfléchit actuellement à l'utilité d'un nouveau moteur thermique de 2,5 MW à la centrale électrique de Pointe Monnier tout en retirant systématiquement les moteurs obsolètes. Ces moteurs pourront être convertis à l'avenir pour fonctionner avec des sources d'énergie plus propres à un stade ultérieur dans le cadre de la décarbonisation du réseau électrique à Rodrigues.

Madam Speaker: Okay, time is up for the moment, but you will be able both of you to put your questions after we come back. So, we suspend for one hour and a half. we come back at 2.30 p.m.

At 1.01 p.m., the Sitting was suspended.

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

Madam Speaker: We were on the question of Mr Edouard, I think. Yes!

Mr Edouard: Merci, Madame la présidente. Je voudrais demander au ministre s'il y a un plan pour la transition vers les énergies renouvelables pour Rodrigues ?

Mr Assirvaden : Oui, effectivement, Madame la présidente, nous avons un plan. On travaille déjà sur un plan avec la *RRA* sur la transition énergétique. Mais, comme je l'ai dit dans ma réponse initiale, c'est que d'abord et avant tout, nous allons insister sur la sécurité énergétique. La sécurité énergétique veut dire qu'il faudra s'assurer que les Rodriguais et les Rodriguaises, en général, soient pourvus d'électricité au moment voulu. Mais, au même moment de la transition énergétique, la sécurité énergétique y va de pair.

Madam Speaker : Merci, M. le ministre ! Honorable François !

Mr François: Just one supplementary, Madam Speaker. May I ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware if CEB Rodrigues is contemplating of recruiting additional human resources for an efficient and effective service thereat?

Mr Assirvaden: Le nécessaire sera fait. Je veux dire que nous regardons d'une façon holistique, une approche générale. C'est pour cette raison que j'ai demandé à une équipe de Maurice avec plus d'expérience d'aller à l'île Rodrigues pour voir en général ce qui peut être fait. Rassurez-vous, messieurs et mesdames de l'Assemblée nationale, que le nécessaire sera fait pour assurer cette sécurité énergétique.

Madam Speaker: Thank you very much.

**RODRIGUES – ELECTRICITY SUPPLY – DISRUPTIONS, UNDERGROUND
CABLE NETWORK & SUSTAINABLE POWER DEVELOPMENT**

(No. B/89) Mr F. François (Second Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to electricity supply in Rodrigues, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Electricity Board, information as to –

- (a) the number of power disruptions registered during the last 12 months, indicating the overall electricity demand-supply in the island;
- (b) where matters stand as to the works to be undertaken for the –
 - (i) underground cable network from Port Mathurin to Plaine Corail Airport via La Ferme Hospital, and
 - (ii) retirement and replacement of the 6 MWN Engines at Port Mathurin, and
- (c) future sustainable power generation development in Rodrigues, if any.

(Vide Reply to PQ B/88)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Fourth Member for Rodrigues, your next question!

MV TROCHETIA – DRYDOCKING COSTS

(No. B/90) Mr J. Edouard (Fourth Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Agro-Industry, Food Security, Blue Economy and Fisheries whether, in regard to the MV Trochetia, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Shipping Corporation Ltd., information as to the –

- (a) repairs/drydocking carried out in Sri Lanka in 2024 and the costs incurred therefor;
- (b) damages sustained by the vessel in Agalega in February 2025, and
- (c) current seaworthiness condition of the vessel, indicating the impact thereof on sea route to Rodrigues.

Dr. Boolell: Thank you very much. Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Mauritius Shipping Corporation Ltd. that following a bidding exercise carried out, a contract for drydocking of MV Mauritius Trochetia was allocated to Columbus Shipyard Public Co. Ltd. on 02 October 2024 for a sum of 1,0281,178 dollars equivalent to 60 million dollars.

Accordingly, the MV Mauritius Trochetia sailed for Columbus Shipyard, Sri Lanka on 28 September 2024 and was drydocked on 07 October 2024. The drydocking and repair works of the MV Mauritius Trochetia was completed on 03 December 2024 and it left Colombo on 10 December 2024 to reach Port Louis on 17 December 2024.

On 06 December 2024, the Mauritius Shipping Corporation Ltd has effected payment of USD 613,985, representing 50% of the repair cost. We will settle the 40% in March 2025 and the remaining 10% in June 2025.

As regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed by the Mauritius Shipping Corporation Ltd that during the last trip of Mauritius Trochetia to Agaléga, the vessel collided with a jetty on 02 February 2025 due to inadequate tug assistance, and this has caused underwater hull damage. Moreover, above water hull has also sustained damage due to lack of proper fenders on the jetty.

Madam Speaker, regarding part (c) of the question, the Shipping Corporation Ltd. contacted Chantier Naval de l'Océan Indien for drydocking of the vessel. On Wednesday 19 February 2025, the latter has indicated that no slot is available before December 2025. On the same day, the Mauritius Shipping Corporation Ltd. contacted a company, namely Secren located in Diego Suarez, Madagascar, for permanent repair of the vessel.

On 24 February 2024, Secren confirmed that its drydock would be available as from 27 February 2025. Necessary clearances have been sought from Bureau Veritas Classification Society located in France and filed administration for the vessel to sail to Madagascar. Subject to favourable reply, permanent repairs will be carried out in Madagascar and expected to be completed in a month.

Madam Speaker, I am further informed that the Mauritius Shipping Corporation Ltd will put the MV Trochetia into commercial operation and to Rodrigues and Agaléga until all repairs are carried out. And I mean full repairs.

As regard voyages to Rodrigues, the hon. Member can rest assured that MV Peros Banhos shall continue with its usual free regular voyages per month so as to avoid any disruption in cargo transportation. The Mauritius Shipping Corporation Ltd is currently liaising with local shipping companies for chartering a vessel to additionally service Rodrigues and Agaléga in the event of unpredictable circumstances.

Madam Speaker: Thank you, hon. Minister.

**CHILDREN'S ACT 2020 – AMENDMENT – JUVENILE OFFENDERS & ABUSE
CASES**

(No. B/91) Mrs A. Savabaddy (First Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the recent increase in cases of abuse in shelters, juvenile delinquency, repeated escapes from probation hostels and indiscipline in schools, she will state if consideration will be given to amending the Children's Act 2020 to facilitate the detention of juvenile offenders in such cases in Rehabilitation Youth Centres.

(Vide Reply to PQ B/74)

Madam Speaker: The hon. Third Member for Grand' Baie and Poudre d'Or!

FSC – RECRUITMENT & PROMOTION POLICIES (2024)

(No. B/92) Mr R. Etwareea (Third Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of Financial Services and Economic Planning whether, in regard to recruitments, promotions and change of contracts effected at the Financial Services Commission prior to the General Elections in 2024, she will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commission, information as to the –

- (a) recruitment and promotion policies thereof;
- (b) names and details of staff, particularly those above the rank of Assistant Manager, initially working on a contractual basis but subsequently appointed on a permanent basis in the second half of 2024, and
- (c) name of the current head of the AML/CFT of the Commission, indicating the terms and conditions of work of the incumbent.

Dr. Mrs Jeetun: Madam Speaker, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am advised by the Financial Services Commission that recruitment and promotion exercises are carried out in accordance with Section 80 and Section 81 of the Financial Services Act 2007 and in line with the Recruitment and Promotion Policies of the FSC.

Please bear with me, I will read those policies. So, the Recruitment and Promotion Policies are laid down in the Terms and Conditions of Employment 2023 of the FSC which stipulate the following –

- (i) The Commission may employ on such terms and conditions as it thinks fit such employees as may be necessary for the proper discharge of its functions.
- (ii) Where the Commissions decides to fill any vacancy arising on its establishment for any post, it may resort to any form of advertisement whether internal or otherwise and prescribe such qualifications, experience, competences, skills and aptitudes for such post as it deems fit.
- (iii) Recruitment, appointment and promotion of employees shall be made by the board which may empower the staff committee or delegate to management on such terms of reference as it considers necessary, including the request to examine, interview and shortlist candidates;
- (iv) There will be equal opportunities for recruitment, employment, learning and development, advancement and promotion to all based on merit.
- (v) When vacancies arise the FSC shall give priority to internal candidates first before searching externally, should a suitable candidate not be found.

Madam Speaker, as to part (b) of the question, I am informed by the FSC of the following –

- (1) The Manager, Human Resources was previously appointed on a contractual basis with effect from 01 April 2022 for a period of two years. Thereafter, the contract was extended twice up to September 2024. Following an internal advert which was launched on 02 May 2024, the incumbent has subsequently been appointed on probation with effect from 01 September 2024 with a view to confirmation on a permanent and pensionable capacity.

- (2) The Manager, Communications was initially recruited on a contractual basis as PR and Communications Officer for a period of two years with effect from 11 October 2021.

The contract was extended for a further period of one year. The incumbent has thereafter been appointed as Manager, Communications on probation with effect from 01 October 2024 with a view to confirmation on a permanent and pensionable capacity following an internal advert launched in May 2024.

- (3) One Director and three Assistant Directors were serving as permanent employees as Senior Managers and were appointed on a performance contract on an assignment basis in line with the Review Report conducted by Mr Appana in 2016. On 01 September 2024, they were all appointed in substantive capacity, and
- (4) One Director and two Assistant Directors were initially appointed on a contractual basis in 2018 and 2019. They were offered a new contract for a period of two years with effect from 01 September 2024 renewable subject to satisfactory performance.

Madam Speaker, I am further informed by the FSC that 51 employees in different grades were recruited during the period January 2024 to November 2024 or up to the elections out of whom, 48 are on a permanent basis and three on a contract basis. The Board has been requested to look into these recruitments done during the year prior to the election.

Madam Speaker, as regard to part (c) of the question, I am informed that the current head of the AML/CFT directorate, Mrs Y. S., joined the FSC on 09 January 2013 as Assistant Manager, formerly known as Chief Examiner, on a permanent and pensionable basis. She was promoted to the post of Manager with effect from 01 September 2018 and has been assigned the responsibilities of Acting Senior Manager in the AML/CFT directorate with effect from 03 October 2022. In addition to her salary, she is being paid an acting allowance and other benefits in line with the FSC terms and condition of employment. Thank you.

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

Mr Etwareea: Madame la présidente, tout semble indiquer que certains recrutements et promotions ont été faits juste avant les élections et ma question à l'honorable ministre c'est si les résultats de l'enquête en cours seront publiés ?

Madam Speaker: Vous avez entendu ? Moi, j'ai eu du mal.

Mr Etwareea: Je peux répéter la question.

Dr. Mrs Jeetun: I will see with the Board, but, as you know, there is also data protection concerning employees and there is a contract of employment between the employer and the employee. So, there is so much that can be disclosed outside of the contract, subject to advice. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: One more and then one behind you.

Mr Etwareea: Par rapport à cette question et aux informations et à la protection des données, on dirait qu'il y a une dissimulation de l'information. Est-ce que vous avez contacté le *Law Office* pour ne pas donner ces informations ?

Dr. Mrs Jeetun: The Data Protection Act is quite clear. We cannot disclose, we will be in breach of the Data Protection Act if we disclose personal data, and also, the employer has an obligation towards their employee not to disclose that information.

Madam Speaker: Okay. Yes!

Mr Rookny: Madam Speaker, considering the fact that the regulator imposes on licensees to carry out due diligence the more so to check if the applicants are Politically Exposed Person (PEP), could the hon. Minister advise, if she is aware, of the recruitments she just mentioned, how many of them were PEPs and if the FSC is aware to which political people those employees are attached?

Dr. Mrs Jeetun: I will make inquiries and give back the information later.

Madam Speaker: Yes, please.

Mr Juman: Thank you, Madam Speaker, it is clear that the FSC has not...

Madam Speaker: Please speak up, is there a problem with the mike? Please speak up all of you! *Je n'entends pas!*

Mr Juman: Thank you, Madam Speaker, it is clear that the FSC has not adhered to the proper recruitment process on the eve of the election. Can you consider to request the Board to cancel these appointments?

Dr. Mrs Jeetun: The Board has been made aware of those 51 recruitments done in the year before the election, and I have asked them – you know, the Board is mandated with the powers – to look into this, and I will wait for their outcome.

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

ALBION & ROSE-HILL – BUS ROUTE SERVICE – COMPLAINTS

(No. B/93) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Land Transport whether, in regard to the bus route between Albion and Rose-Hill, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Land Transport Authority, information as to the number of complaints made by the public against the public and private bus operators servicing this route, indicating the –

- (a) number of buses operating thereat, and
- (b) scheduled time table for the buses servicing on this route.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the National Land Transport Authority that some 22 buses of the United Bus Service Ltd operate along route 45 which runs between Albion and Rose-Hill. According to the established timetable, these buses operate at a frequency of 10-20 minutes whereby the first bus from Albion and Rose-Hill leaves at 05 45 in the morning while the last bus from Albion and Rose-Hill leaves at 17 40 and 19 00hrs, respectively.

According to the NLTA, two complaints have been filed at its office as at date regarding the lack of buses along route 45. Moreover, the hon. Quirin had drawn my attention and my Ministry had looked into the matter previously as well. It is to be highlighted that the NLTA inspectorate has observed that the UBS buses along route 45 are operating at interval of 20-30 minutes instead of 10-20 minutes as set out in the established timetable, hence, the hue and cry.

Madam Speaker, I wish to point out that despite that fewer trips are being carried out by the buses of the UBS, the latter is being paid the same quantum in respect of the free travel compensation by the NLTA. Given that the same is a monthly fixed amount calculated based on 80% of the operator's fleet, this is not normal. I will explain later in the same reply what I intend to do in five steps.

With regard to the unsatisfactory level of service along route 45, Madam Speaker, a meeting was held on 19 February 2025 at the level of the NLTA with the representatives of the UBS whereby, it was imparted that the main cause entailing irregular bus service thereat was the lack of drivers. I wish to point out that the issue of shortage of crew has been highlighted by most bus operators, and my Ministry has already initiated consultations with

stakeholders including with the Ministry of Labour and Industrial Relations with a view to expediting the recruitment of foreign labour in the transport sector while considering the streamlining of procedures thereof.

Moreover, like I mentioned in this House during previous Sittings, the problem of poor level of bus service is occurring along several routes around the island and I listed several mitigating measures which included are –

- (i) The introduction of a Fleet Management System. I had explained in great detail previously what it is all about but this will take some time.
- (ii) Meanwhile, the Memorandum of Understanding – this is what I meant earlier – relating to the payment of free travel compensation which was signed between the NLTA and the bus operators in 2005 will be reviewed in the interest of the travelling public subject to a government approval such that payment will be a trip-based system rather than a daily based one.

So, this is what I can do in order to pressurise the bus operators to work harder;

- (iii) The road service license of operators not providing services as per the conditions of their licenses will be revoked and section 77D of the Road Traffic Act will be used to have new players;
- (iv) The inspectorate of the NLTA which is currently devoid of such officers will be strengthen with Management Support Officers pending a substantive recruitment exercise of inspectors to ensure a higher NLTA presence along bus routes to help out, and
- (v) Consultations are ongoing with bus operators to acquire new buses and avail of the incentive provided under the bus modernisation programme.

Meanwhile, Madam Speaker, I have urged the NLTA inspectorate to ensure close monitoring of the operations of the UBS buses along route 45.

Madam Speaker: Thank you, Minister. Yes?

Mr Quirin: Merci, Madame la présidente. L'honorable ministre est parfaitement au courant de la situation et d'après les informations qui me sont parvenues et l'honorable ministre dans sa réponse en a fait état, les compagnies qui desservent cette route ne sont pas en mesure de respecter les horaires ; ce qui fait que cela cause pas mal de problèmes pour les étudiants le matin, pour ceux qui vont au travail aussi. Donc, je peux comprendre que

l'honorable ministre est coincé quelque part, il n'a pas toutes les solutions à ce jour mais, dans l'immédiat, comment faire, Madame la présidente, pour donner satisfaction, pour éviter que cette situation continue à dégénérer ? Est-ce que l'honorable ministre pourrait dans un premier temps nous dire quelles sont les mesures correctives immédiates qui pourraient être prises ?

Madam Speaker: Yes, Minister?

Mr Osman Mahomed: Yes, like I said in my reply, Madam Speaker, as an interim measure, pending the arrival of the Fleet Management System which will put good order in the House, I am asking the Ministry and the NLTA to review the Memorandum of Understanding, that is a *de facto* payment on a daily basis. This is not normal. So, if we have them paid on a trip basis, they will have to work.

Mr Quirin: L'honorable ministre est-il disposé à considérer – et je vais lui partager cette proposition des usagers – qui suggèrent que le terminus pour les bus d'Albion-Rose Hill et Rose Hill-Albion se fassent à la gare de la Place Margeot au lieu de la place Darès Salaam à Rose Hill, cela afin de faciliter – j'espère que l'honorable ministre me comprend – la mobilité des personnes du troisième âge et des usagers en général. Et aussi, de considérer la possibilité, Madame la présidente, d'une ligne directe Beau Bassin-Albion et vice versa, car les habitants rencontrent trop de problèmes par rapport aux connections.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Yes, as regards the first part, the change of location in the interest of the senior citizens, I can certainly look into. As regards the second proposition, depending on the availability of buses and I just mentioned, the big challenge is having drivers, which is a rare competence now seemingly. So, I will definitely look into and discuss with the Member.

Madam Speaker: Thank you, hon. Minister. *C'est bon?* Thank you, now we have the hon. Second Member for Vieux Grand Port and Rose Belle!

GRAND PORT DISTRICT COUNCIL – FOOTBALL PITCHES – LIGHTING FACILITIES

(No. B/94) **Mr M. Seeburn (Second Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle)** asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to the football pitches found in the villages of Grand Sable, Bambous Virieux, Bois des Amourettes and Rivière des Créoles, he will state if consideration will be given for the provision of lighting facilities thereat.

Mr Woohit: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the District Council of Grand Port that a budgetary request of Rs16 million was submitted for the Financial Year 2024-2025 to provide lighting facilities for the football pitch in the villages of Grand Sable, Bambous Virieux, Bois des Amourettes and Rivière des Créoles. The estimated cost for each football ground is Rs4 million. However, the necessary funds were not allocated by the previous Government to implement this project.

Additionally, I have been advised that the District Council of Grand Port is currently formulating its project proposal for the upcoming financial year. The installation of lighting facilities for these football pitches will duly be considered as part of the budgetary planning for the 2025-26 Financial Year.

Madam Speaker: Thank you, yes?

Mr Seeburn: Madam Speaker, being given that we have inherited huge social degradation problems, in particular the rising drug problem in these areas from the previous Government, would the hon. Minister consider implementing the lighting facilities project to these football pitches and promote evening sports facilities to combat the drug problem and perhaps consider same in the forthcoming budget?

Mr Woohit: Madam Speaker, it is indeed regrettable that despite a request from the District Council of Grand Port for Rs16 million in the last year's budget to provide lighting facilities for these football pitches, the previous Government did not consider it as a priority and failed to allocate the necessary funds but this Government recognises the importance of sport facilities infrastructure for community development and sport engagement. I can assure the hon. Member that the District Council of Grand Port is actively working on its project proposal for 2025-26 Financial Year and the installation of lighting facilities on these football pitches will be given serious consideration during the upcoming budgetary discussion.

Madam Speaker: Yes, thank you. Your next question!

**DR JAMES BURTY DAVID MARKET FAIR, ROSE BELLE – ADDITIONAL
PARKING FACILITIES**

(No. B/95) Mr M. Seeburn (Second Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle) asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to the Dr James Burty David Market Fair at Rose Belle, he will state if consideration will be given for the provision of

additional parking facilities in the nearby area of the market and/or construction of a Parking Tower thereat.

Mr Woohit: Madam Speaker, I wish to inform the House that the Dr James Burty David Market Fair in Rose Belle was built and started operating in 2010. It includes 1,067 stalls and has about 490 parking spaces over an area of 9,419 m³. Over the years, the number of people visiting the market has increased due to the growth of the surrounding population. As a result, parking has become a major issue. Many visitors struggle to find parking space and are forced to park along nearby roads, causing traffic congestion and serious safety risks. Additionally, crowded parking areas and blocked access routes make it difficult for vendors to operate properly, leading to lower sales and frustration among customers.

Madam Speaker, to tackle this issue, I have instructed the Chief Executive of the District Council of Grand Port to take urgent measures to improve this situation. I will personally monitor the progress and conduct surprise visits to ensure action is being taken.

Regarding parking solution, I wish to inform the House that we are planning to build additional parking facilities near the new food court, with an estimated cost of Rs12 million and this project will be included in the next budget for consideration. Recently, 70 additional parking spaces were created by the District Council of Grand Port but this is clearly not enough to solve the problem.

Madam Speaker, the previous Government did absolutely nothing to address this parking crisis. Despite repeated complaints from the public, they ignored the problem for years, leaving market visitors and vendors to suffer. On 21 January 2025, I personally visited the Dr James Burty David Market Fair, accompanied by my Junior Minister and MPs of the Constituency. What I found was shocking, Madam Speaker. Not only was parking a major issue but the entire market was in a poor state due to the neglect by the previous administration. The problem includes –

- Poor maintenance of the market yard;
- Delays in removing wastes, leading to unhygienic conditions after market days;
- Dirty and unsanitary conditions in the poultry and meat section;
- No fire extinguishers and no valid fire certificate, creating a serious fire hazard;
- Pigeon droppings on stalls, making the environment unhealthy;
- Exposed electrical cables causing a major safety risk;

- Narrow walkways making it difficult for people to move around, especially in an emergency;
- Filthy public toilets with no proper cleaning;
- Report of illegal vendors coming from all over the island to sell goods on parking and embarking areas without any control, thus causing obstruction and harming legal traders.

Madam Speaker, the previous Government turned a blind eye to these problems. They had the responsibility to take action but they failed completely. Now, under this administration, we are taking firm and urgent steps to fix these longstanding issues and I will personally ensure that the necessary improvements are made and I will not allow this market to continue suffering from the past neglect.

Madam Speaker: Yes?

Mr Seeburn: Madam Speaker, now that the hon. Minister mentioned the construction of additional parking near the food court at an estimated cost of Rs12 million, can he confirm when this project will begin and when is it expected to be completed, and also what measures will be taken to prevent illegal parking on adjacent roads and ensure proper management around the market area?

Mr Woochit: Madam Speaker, in fact, this project could have been planned long ago. Unfortunately, the previous government, I have just said it, failed to recognise the growing need for additional parking space. They lacked vision and did not allocate funds properly.

However, this Government is ensuring that parking expansion is included in the next budget. As soon as funds are allocated, work will begin without further delay. No structure plan was put in place to regulate the vehicle flow. So, we are now working with relevant authorities to introduce designated parking zone, proper signage and traffic enforcement to address this issue.

Madam Speaker: Yes, I cannot tell you more!

Hon. Second Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien!

BARACHOIS LA CHAUX, MAHEBOURG – LEASE

(No. B/96) Mr T. Apollon (Second Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Agro-Industry, Food Security, Blue Economy and Fisheries whether, in regard to the barachois found next to the fisheries post in Mahebourg, he will state if same has been leased and, if so, indicate the name and address of the leaseholder of the barachois.

Dr. Boolell: Thank you, hon. Member. Madam Speaker, I want to inform the House that the barachois found next to the fisheries post in Mahebourg is known as Barachois PG Rivière La Chaux or Barachois La Chaux and was vested to the Ministry on 19 April 1961.

In 2018, part of the Barachois PG Rivière La Chaux, of an extent of 2 acres out of 83 acres, was allocated by the Ministry to a company, namely One Two Go Enterprise Limited, having as Director Mr Chrisna Dattoo, and address, Jean Paul Toulet Street, Beau Vallon, for undertaking mud crab culture as per set of condition.

Thus, the barachois was allocated to the promoter and not leased to One Two Go Enterprise Limited. Now, there has been undue delay in the implementation of the project and the matter is being fully investigated.

Madam Speaker: Yes!

Mr Apollon: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you, hon. Minister for your answer. As the Minister is aware that the said site is in front of Mahebourg fisheries post, will the Minister take action for all these illegal damages carried out by the promoters such as backfilling, cutting of mangroves, especially closing access for fishermen which was tolerated by the previous government?

Dr. Boolell: I thank my hon. friend for conveying the information to us. He can rest assured that relevant action is being taken, corrective measures are being taken. The matter is being address in a very forceful and meaningful manner. We are told that they even erected effects to deny access to fishermen to go on the fishing expedition. Now, he has acted contrary to the spirit and the letter of the law and the matter will be dealt with accordingly.

Madam Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. First Member for Rodrigues!

**MAURITIUS & RODRIGUES – SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT POLICY &
IMPLEMENTATION**

(No. B/97) Ms M. R. Collet (First Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change whether, in regard to sustainable development, he will state the impact thereof on local communities, indicating –

- (a) the policy of Government thereon, and
- (b) the initiatives developed for the implementation thereof across the Republic, giving details of those initiatives for Rodrigues.

Mr Bhagwan: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, with regard to part (a) of the question, I wish to inform the House that the policy and legislative framework formulated for the Republic of Mauritius are applicable to Mauritius, Rodrigues and the outer islands.

Rodrigues has an autonomous status since October 2001 with its own Regional Assembly and Executive Council for the framing and implementation of its socio-economic policies. However, Rodrigues is taken on board in all key strategic policies measures pertaining to environment and sustainable development for the Republic of Mauritius. My Ministry is thus responsible to oversee effective environmental management across sectors and bears primary responsibility for environmental protection, planning, monitoring, coordination and awareness raising.

To this end, a series of strategies and action plans have been developed in line with the Environment Protection Act of 2004 to help achieve these goals, including the Environment Master Plan 2030, the Roadmap and Action Plan for Circular Economy (2023-2033), the Climate Change Act 2020, the Nationally Determined Contribution 2021 and Action Plan 2022.

Madam Speaker, I wish to highlight that the Environment Act 2024 has been enacted to safeguard the country's environmental assets and promote sustainable development across the Republic of Mauritius. A holistic integration of environment into key sectors, supporting Mauritius Sustainable Development Agenda, is paramount to achieving our sustainability goals.

Section 10 of the Environment Act 2024 makes provision for the formulation of a National Policy, Strategy and Action Plan on Sustainable Development. In line with international obligations, the plan should position sustainable construction and production as a means to achieve sustainable development. Provision is also made for the Strategy and Action Plan to be reviewed every five years or at such other time as may be determined.

Madam Speaker, moreover, in view of the inherent impacts of climate change, the Climate Change Act 2020 makes provision for the establishment of a legal framework for Mauritius to become a climate change resilient and low emission country. The Act also contributes to sustainable development in Rodrigues as specific provisions have been made for Rodrigues under Part VI therein.

Sections 20 and 21 of the Act make provision for the Commissioner responsible for the subject of environment in Rodrigues to be responsible for the formulation of a Climate Change Adaptation Strategy and Action Plan and a Climate Change Mitigation Strategy and Action Plan for Rodrigues. As Chairperson of the Rodrigues Climate Change Committee, the Commissioner responsible for the subject of environment is also responsible to ensure that climate change measures, including greenhouse gas emission reduction, climate change risk and vulnerability assessment and adaptations to climate change are effectively and efficiently implemented and monitored in Rodrigues.

Madam Speaker, with regard to part (b) of the question, I am tabling a list of the different initiatives which are being implemented for the Republic of Mauritius, including Rodrigues.

Madam Speaker: Yes, alright. The hon. Third Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien!

MAHEBOURG HOSPITAL – AMBULANCE SERVICES – OPERATING FLEET & REPLACEMENT PLAN

(No. B/98) Mr C. Lukeeram (Third Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the ambulance services at Mahebourg hospital, he will state the –

- (a) number of ambulances –

- (i) currently available and operational;
 - (ii) in good working conditions and fully equipped to handle emergencies, and
- (b) ongoing efforts, if any, to improve the fleet.

Mr Bachoo: Madam Speaker, I am informed that there are five ambulances which have been put at the disposal of Mahebourg Hospital as follows –

- Three ambulances with stretchers, out of which, two ambulances are operational on a 24/7 basis and used to convey patients in laying position. These include dialysis patients, patient requiring immediate transfer to Jawaharlal Nehru Hospital for admission, patients on appointment at Out-Patient Department at Victoria Hospital, SSRN Hospital, Moka Hospital, Jeetoo Hospital, National Cancer Centre, and Jawaharlal Nehru Hospital and for discharged of patients.
- The other one ambulance with stretcher operates from 8.00 in the morning till 4.00 in the afternoon and is used for conveying of laying patients for physiotherapy and dressing.
- Moreover, one ambulance with stretcher is operational on a 24/7 basis at the airport medical post. There is also a 15-seater van which is operational from 8.00 in the morning till 10.00 at night and is used for conveyance of dialysis patients to Jawaharlal Nehru Hospital.

I am further informed that Mahebourg Hospital, being a District Hospital, receives support from Jawaharlal Nehru Hospital for emergencies requiring SAMU services. There are two SAMU ambulances posted at Jawaharlal Nehru Hospital and one is operational on a 24/7 basis, while the other one operates from 8hrs to 16hrs.

Madam Speaker, with regard to part (a) (ii) of the question, I am informed that out of the five ambulances posted Mahebourg Hospital, only the one which is on stand-by at airport hospital and the 15-seater van are in good condition, while the other ambulances need replacement due to frequent breakdowns. However, all the ambulances are equipped with oxygen cylinders and a first aid box to help in basic emergencies. Moreover, drivers and attendants servicing ambulances have all received training in first aid.

Madam Speaker, concerning part (b) of the question, my Ministry had prepared a replacement plan for our fleet of vehicles with priority of consideration being given to replacement of medical vehicles in the first instant. As such, my Ministry will be procuring, in this financial year, 10 medical vehicles, including one SAMU ambulance, five ambulances and four 15-seater vans which should be distributed among the different health regions for the smooth conveyance of patients.

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

ST JEAN ROAD – FIRE STATION – RELOCATION

(No. B/99) Ms S. Anquetil (Second Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to the Fire Station situated along St Jean Road, Quatre Bornes, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Fire and Rescue Service, information as to whether consideration will be given for the relocation thereof and, if so, give details thereof and, if not, why not.

Mr Woochit: Madam Speaker, I have been informed that the Mauritius Fire and Rescue Service (MFRS) started working on the relocation of the Quatre Bornes Fire Station approximately six years ago.

Despite this, the project has not yet started. It is concerning that in the Financial Years 2022-2023 and 2023-2024, a total sum of Rs9 m. was allocated for the project. However, due to the previous government's mismanagement, these funds were not used and the project did not progress. For the Financial Year 2024-2025, only Rs500,000 has been allocated for this project.

Madam Speaker, a 7,569 m² plot of land along Tulip Avenue, Quatre Bornes was acquired and officially transferred to the MFRS on 01 October 2019 for the construction of the new Fire Station. It is also important to highlight that the Government currently pays Rs100,000 annually to the Municipal Council of Quatre Bornes for renting the existing Fire Station premises.

Additionally, the MFRS Headquarters located at Atalian Tower, Labourdonnais Street, Port- Louis costs the Government Rs13,386,000 per year, including VAT.

Madam Speaker, this Government is committed to ensuring that this project is completed as soon as possible. The new Fire Station project includes, not only a Fire Station

but also the new MFRS Headquarters, a Special Operation Division, a main control room and a Fire Safety Division. My Ministry is closely monitoring this matter. I can inform the House that the preliminary drawings for the new Fire Station and Headquarters are currently being prepared by the Ministry of National Infrastructure. These drawings should be completed by mid-March 2025. Once the MFRS approves the plans, a cost estimate will be finalised before seeking financial clearance from the Ministry of Finance.

Madam Speaker: Yes, please!

Ms Anquetil: Je vous remercie, Madame la présidente. Je remercie également le ministre pour la délocalisation de la caserne des pompiers de Quatre Bornes, une initiative essentielle pour garantir la sécurité des habitants. *Can the hon. Minister provide a clear timeline for when the construction of a new Fire Station is expected to begin and to be completed? Thank you.*

Mr Woochit: Madam Speaker, the failure of the previous government to follow-up on the project has caused significant delays. During a cluster meeting on 17 February 2025, chaired by the Director of Architect, the MFRS raised concerns about the delays in this project and emphasise the need for urgent action.

At the Project Steering Committee Meeting on 06 February 2025 chaired by the Permanent Secretary of my Ministry, the Deputy Director of the Ministry of National Infrastructure (MNI) confirmed that updated preliminary drawings would be ready by the end of February 2025. However, the MNI has now stated that they will be submitted by mid-March 2025.

Madam Speaker, this project is a priority for this Government. Despite the delay under the previous administration, we are committed to seeing it through. With the completion of the preliminary plans by mid of March 2025, and the necessary financial approvals, we will ensure that the new Quatre Bornes Fire Station and MFRS Headquarters are built as soon as possible.

Madam Speaker: Yes! The hon. Third Member for Rodrigues!

**RODRIGUES – MINISTRY OF SPORTS & COMMISSIONER OF SPORTS –
MEETING – KEY ISSUES**

(No. B/100) Mrs D. Henriette-Manan (Third Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the recent meeting held between the Ministry of Sports and the Commissioner of Sports in Rodrigues, he will state the key issues discussed during the meeting, indicating the outcomes or proposed collaborative initiatives agreed upon.

Mr Nagalingum: Madam Speaker, Mr Joseph Varok Ravina, Commissioner for Youth and Sports in Rodrigues, accompanied by his officers paid a courtesy call on me on 20 February 2025. He expressed his concerns on the disastrous effects of synthetic drugs which has found its way in Rodrigues. During the discussion, the latter stressed on the urgent need to protect the youth and I sought the help of my Ministry in this endeavour.

Regarding sports, Mr Ravina mentioned the revival of the *Jeux de Rodrigues*. He has expressed the wish for the support of my Ministry in this project. He has also pledged for more consideration towards Rodriguan athletes, especially in the composition of National Teams. Moreover, the Commissioner has submitted proposal for the drafting of the new Sports Act.

Madam Speaker, my Ministry will give due consideration to the request of the Commissioner. The vision of the Government has been shared with the Commissioner of Youth and Sports, and he was also reassured of the inclination of my Ministry to surge for youth and sport talents wherever they are, including Rodrigues.

Madam Speaker: Yes!

Mrs Henriette-Manan: Thank you, hon. Minister. Is the hon. Minister aware that there have been cases during which national sports competitions occurring in Mauritius had no participants from Rodrigues due to unavailability of funds to cater for flights and accommodation of participants? Will the hon. Minister consider measures, through his Ministry, that can help the RRA for a systematic funding of participants, qualified sport persons from Rodrigues to participate in high level competition in all sport discipline, as many are aware, Rodrigues has many qualified sport persons who has brought national pride to the Republic.

Mr Nagalingum: Madam Speaker, my Ministry will provide technical assistance for all games. However, in respect of funds, same are provided by the central Government to the Rodrigues Regional Assembly for various sectors as listed in the Fourth Schedule of the

Rodrigues Regional Assembly Act. The Fourth Schedule lists youth and sport as one of the areas of responsibility to be exercised by the Rodrigues Regional Assembly.

Madam Speaker: Thank you. Yes!

Mr François: Madam Speaker, with due respect to our autonomy, may I ask the hon. Minister whether discussion was also held with regard to the creation of a decentralised *Comité régional olympique et sportif rodriguais* representing all regional committees in Rodrigues?

Madam Speaker: That's another...

Mr Nagalingum: There was no such discussion.

Madam Speaker: *Il abuse hein. Bon, allez.* The hon. Second Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka!

PRIVATE GRANT-AIDED SECONDARY SCHOOLS – MANAGERS & ASSISTANT MANAGER

(No. B/101) Dr. Ms Thannoo (Second Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resource whether, in regard to Private grant-aided Secondary Schools, he will state –

- (a) the number of Managers thereat granted registration despite not meeting the eligibility criteria, indicating if his Ministry proposes to inquire into the matter and, if so, the actions being envisaged in cases of malpractices, and
- (b) if the post of Assistant Manager has been formally established and approved thereat and, if so, since when and if the post will be maintained.

Dr. Gungapersad: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the Second Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka for this question.

I wish to inform the House that the registration of Managers for these schools is governed by sections 11A, 12 and 13 of the Education Act, as amended by Act No. 12 of 2023. These provisions establish the eligibility criteria and registration requirements for Managers, including conditions under which registration may be refused.

In line with these regulations, all Managers should apply for registration and renewal annually. Circular letter No. 41 of 2023 issued by the Private Secondary Education Authority

to inform Managers of these requirements and applications were to be submitted by 30 November 2023.

As at date, the registration status is as follows for the 108 schools Private grant-aided Secondary Schools –

1. Managers have been registered for 91 schools;
2. Applications for registration of Manager for 13 schools are in process, and
3. No application for registration of Manager for 4 schools.

On 16 December 2024, after *changement*, the Authority has sought the approval of my Ministry for the registration of the few Managers in respect of whose applications pertain to –

1. Those age 70 and above;
2. The schools for which no applications for registration of Manager had been received, and
3. A secondary school boys/girl in the Eastern region; I am not naming it.

I am informed that the ‘no objection’ of my Ministry has been conveyed thereto.

As regards part (b) of the question, I wish to inform the House that the post of Assistant Manager does not exist under the Education Act and the Private Secondary Education Act and schools are under the responsibility of a Manager.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Yes, the hon. Fourth Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue! Hon. A. Duval!

MOTOR VEHICLES - NOISE POLLUTION - CONTRAVENTIONS

(No. B/102) 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 noise pollution, occurring as a result of modified motorcycle exhausts and loud music in motor vehicles, houses and on public beaches, he will state the –

- (a) number of contraventions booked since November 2024 to date;
- (b) number of Police Officers currently posted at the *Police de l'Environnement* in the Northern, Eastern, Western and Southern Divisions, and
- (c) enforcement actions being taken by his Ministry to address same.

Mr Bhagwan: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that for the period 01 November 2024 to 28 February 2025, 190 contraventions have been established with regard to loud noises emanating from modified motorcycles exhausts, loud music from vehicles, from premises and public beaches in breach of –

- (i) Regulations 83(2) and 83(3) of the Road Traffic (Construction and Use of Vehicles) Regulations 2010 concerning exhaust silencer system not in good and efficient working order, and alteration of silencer, respectively;
- (ii) Regulation 84(3) for using motor vehicle causing excessive noise, and
- (iii) the Environment Protection (Control of Noise) Regulations 2022.

I am further informed that out of 190 contraventions, 53 have been established by the *Police de l'Environnement* while the remaining 137 contraventions have been established at the level of the Emergency Response Service (ERS) and the seven Divisions of the Police Department.

Madam Speaker, with your permission, I am tabling the breakdown of the contraventions.

The House may wish to note that 190 contraventions (53 from the *Police de l'Environnement* and 137 from the Police Department) for noise nuisance have been established from November 2024 to February 2025 compared to 153 contraventions (34 from *Police de l'Environnement* and 119 from Police Department) for the four previous months, namely from July 2024 to October 2024.

Madam Speaker, with regard to part (b) of the question, the *Police de l'Environnement* is currently manned by 33 Police Officers and is led by an Inspector of Police. The Officers are deployed in seven Divisional Environment Protection Teams to provide service island wide and the main office (Headquarters) is based in Port Louis. The staffing position is as follows –

- Northern Division 4 officers
- Eastern Division 3 officers
- Western Division 5 officers
- Southern Division 3 officers
- Central Division 4 officers

- Headquarters 5 officers
- Port Louis (North) 3 officers
- Port Louis (South) 4 officers

The Divisions are under the responsibility of two Sub-Inspectors. My Ministry is also having discussions with the Commissioner of Police to increase the number of staff posted at the *Police de l'Environnement* to ensure better enforcement actions.

Madam Speaker, with regard to part (c) of the question, crackdown operations are carried out island wide by the *Police de l'Environnement* in relation to noise pollution. Besides, as a preventive measure, awareness/ sensitisation campaigns are being conducted through Community Policing with the support of neighbourhood police.

As for noise nuisances caused on public beaches, *Police de l'Environnement* will intensify their presence and will initiate appropriate actions in connection with the coast guard.

My Ministry is closely monitoring the situation and amendments to Regulations are being envisaged for tougher penalties. My Ministry would even consider the seizure of motor vehicles for repeated offenders.

Madam Speaker, I wish to take this opportunity to express my thanks to the Commissioner of Police for his active support and collaboration, and I commend the staff posted at the *Police de l'Environnement* for their commitment and dedication in the performance of their duties.

Madam Speaker: Yes!

Mr A. Duval: Madam Speaker, 190 contraventions are nearly not enough, unfortunately, when we see the number of motorcycles nowadays driving all around Mauritius, especially in coastal areas, which is becoming a real hazard for people. The quality of life of people *se fait dégrader* with these, let alone the loud music on public beaches, etc.

So, 190 contraventions still seem very little for so much, even if it is an improvement from before. Can the Minister seriously look into setting up a taskforce by the officers of the *Police de l'Environnement* together with the local Police Stations so that we enforce road traffic rules with regard to these motorcycles which are known to local Police? Every day, they drive their motorcycles; every day, they create noise pollution. Safe city also can help.

Will the Minister look into the matter? Because people are really complaining now as the use of light exhaust has become exaggerated.

Mr Bhagwan: Madam Speaker, this is not a new phenomenon; this is also the case in towns, in urban areas, in coastal regions. Since I have taken over the Ministry with my young colleague, the Junior Minister, hon. Ms J. Bérenger, we have actively been working on this issue. I do not know what the performance was before, from the previous Minister. He was busy looking after his notary office. But we are actively working with the Commissioner of Police and we are also appealing to the public in general, *de dénoncer, de participer à cette action collective, non seulement en informant la Police de l'Environnement, au niveau des stations de police et de venir dénoncer.* We are in Parliament. We need people to go to Police Stations *et dénoncer, donner les plaques d'immatriculation, et je suis sûr que le nouveau Commissaire de Police,* unlike his predecessor who was using the Striking Team for other things, is also working to find ways and means, at least to better perform, I can say, within the parameters of the law.

Madam Speaker: Yes!

Mr A. Duval: Madam Speaker, it is regrettable that, for now, the situation has not improved. In fact, these users of motorcycles also go on public beaches, like I said, but there is a *laisser-aller* on the part of the Police as well because they know these people and they do not stop them. So, why did I say a taskforce? I think it's time. I would suggest that the hon. minister sees with the Prime Minister that we use special units to crack down...

An hon. Member: *Laisser-aller la mem qui ...*

Mr A. Duval: To crack down, stop and enforce these regulations because local Police Stations...

An hon. Member: *Laisser-aller la...*

Madam Speaker: I can't hear...

Mr A. Duval: *Atan do matlo ! To pou koze tou le 2 minit ?*

Madam Speaker: You have the floor, don't ...

Mr Jhummun: *Astere to pe ...*

Mr A. Duval: Madam Speaker, you need to...

Mr Jhummun: *Depi 10 an pe ale sa !*

Mr A. Duval: I mean, how long are we going to go with this? This guy has been shouting at every turn.

Madam Speaker: I don't appreciate all this going on, at all! Hon. Jhummun, let him speak. Then you can stand up and speak if you want! Okay?

Mr Jhummun: Okay.

Madam Speaker: You finish your sentence.

Mr A. Duval: Yes. Thank you. Madam Speaker, what I am saying is local Police...

Madam Speaker: It's a very simple problem; we know the problem!

Mr A. Duval: ... local Police seem powerless today.

Madam Speaker: Question! Question!

Mr A. Duval: The question is whether he will look into it because with his 33 Police Officers, it is nearly not enough to enforce; whether he will look at utilising other units of the Police to make sure that there are crackdowns all over the island.

Madam Speaker: We got your message! Will you do that, please, Minister?

Mr Bhagwan: Madame la présidente, il n'y a plus de laisser-aller. Le laisser-aller, c'était dans le passé lorsqu'il était au gouvernement.

(Interruptions)

Il n'y a plus de laisser-aller. Maintenant, le nouveau Commissaire de Police, la Police de l'Environnement, y compris moi-même et la *Junior Minister* de l'Environnement, sommes en train d'agir.

Madam Speaker: Les policiers sur place!

Mr Bhagwan: Il n'y a plus de laisser-aller, Madame. Peut-être à son époque, lorsqu'il était au gouvernement, c'était un laisser-aller. C'était comme ça!

Madam Speaker: Not too much! Not too much!

Okay. Where am I? Now, I'll have hon. Third Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien, Mr Lukeeram!

**PLEIN BOIS, CARREAU ESNOUF & CARREAU ACCACIA – ROUTES 10A, 137 &
99 – IRREGULAR BUS SERVICE**

(No. B/103) Mr C. Lukeeram (Third Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Land Transport whether, in regard to the irregular bus services in the region of Plein Bois, Carreau Esnouf and Carreau Accacia, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Land Transport Authority, information as to whether consideration will be given for the provision of a regular bus service along Route No. 10A, L'Escalier/Plein Bois to Curepipe; Route 137, Carreau Accacia to Curepipe via Rose-Belle and Route 99, from Carreau Accacia to Mahebourg, respectively.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the National Land Transport Authority that there is a regular bus service along Routes 10A, 137 and 99. Three routes so, I will go one by one for the sake of clarity.

In fact, there are currently 21 buses of individual operators and two from the United Bus Service Ltd which operate along Route 10A (L'Escalier/Plein Bois to Curepipe) at intervals of 20 and 30 minutes during peak and off-peak hours, respectively. The first bus leaves La Sourdine at 5 o'clock in the morning and Curepipe at 6 o'clock in the morning while the last trip from La Sourdine and Jan Palach is at 18:20hrs and 19:00hrs, respectively. Furthermore, nine trips are performed both in the morning and afternoon in respect of school services.

However, I am informed that this route has been subject to repeated complaints from commuters in relation to a shortage of buses during school times, coupled with some bus operators not adhering to established timetable. However, as confirmed by the NLTA, with the integration of two temporary licenses allocated to Lone Star Company Ltd and Muzput Company Ltd to operate along Route 10A since 21 February 2024 and 13 August 2024, respectively, the service has reasonably improved. So, this solution is supposed to be working seemingly according to the NLTA, unless you differ.

As regards Route 137 (Carreau Accacia to Curepipe via Rose-Belle and Carreau Esnouf) nine buses, that is, three belonging to the NTC and six from individual operators are licensed to operate thereat.

However, it is worth noting that four buses belonging to individual operators have ceased operations since October 2018, January 2023, November 2023, and January 2025, respectively for various reasons, including sale and non-replacement of the said buses. The three buses of the National Transport Company have started operation along that route since May 2021.

Moreover, arrangements are ongoing for an additional bus of the NTC to provide its service along the same route. As regards the bus which is off road since 2018, my Ministry has requested the NLTA to consider the license of the said bus as being lapsed and initiate prompt actions for the licensing of another bus accordingly. Additionally, the NLTA has been urged to convene the bus operators whose buses are off road since 2023 to press upon them for the replacement thereof. I believe this will provide relief given time hopefully.

Coming to Route 99 (Carreau Accacia to Mahebourg), Madam Speaker, I am informed that there are presently three buses of individual operators which are licensed to operate on the said route at intervals of 30 and 45 minutes during peak and off-peak times, respectively. These buses have to operate from 6 o'clock in the morning up to 6 o'clock in the evening. Given that there have been numerous complaints due to only two buses operating along this Route, an additional license has been granted to one operator on a temporary basis since January 2024 to improve service. I hope this is the case.

Now, in view of the repeated complaints received on poor level of public bus transport services along many routes, my Ministry is working on several remedial actions which I had elaborated earlier on in my reply to PQ B/93 and at our Sitting of Tuesday 04 February 2025 in reply to PQ B/22. Thank you.

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

Mr Apollon: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Comme vous le savez tous, le plus gros problème sur cette ligne, comme vous l'avez mentionné, c'est qu'il y a beaucoup de permis individuels. Mais malheureusement, ces propriétaires de bus, des fois, ils font exprès pour ne pas travailler parce qu'ils disent que ce n'est pas rentable. Est-ce que le ministre peut considérer de voir avec la *National Transport Authority* pour donner un bon service ou même mener une enquête pour savoir pourquoi les bus individuels refusent de travailler pour manque de revenus sur cette route-là. Merci.

Mr Osman Mahomed: The problems are multipronged actually; I explained before. Firstly, not enough people are travelling by buses because now everyone has motorcycles and motorbikes. So, buses used to be powerpack full once upon a time. This is no longer the case and this is a big challenge. Unfortunately, their timetable is not adjusted accordingly. So, we had to rework on this. Then, the other challenge that is being faced by bus operators are the availability of competent drivers. So, these are the two issues we are facing island wide, Madam Speaker.

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

**MR K.R.'S. NOTARIAL OFFICE – SQUARE DEAL MULTI-PURPOSE
COOPERATIVE SOCIETY LTD – EIA CERTIFICATE APPLICATION**

(No. B/104) Ms S. Anquetil (Second Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change whether, in regard to Mr K.R.'s. notarial office, he will state if the former Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change was, directly or indirectly, involved in support of the application for an Environment Impact Assessment Certificate in respect of Square Deal Multi-Purpose Cooperative Society Limited and, if so, indicate the actions, if any, being envisaged thereon.

Mr Bhagwan: Madam Speaker, let me at the outset thank the hon. Member for putting this question as this will give me an opportunity to enlighten the House on the way my predecessor who was, at the material time, a notary, and was functioning as a Minister.

Madam Speaker, the issue of an application for an EIA license by Square Deal Multi-Purpose Cooperative Society Limited was first raised in this House on 12 June 2024 in a Private Notice question of the then Leader of the Opposition, hon. Dr. Arvin Boolell and was replied do you know by whom? The then Attorney General, Mr Gobin!

Madam Speaker, with regard to part (a) of the question, Square Deal Multi-Purpose Cooperative Society Limited made an application for an EIA license with regard to a prosed residential commercial *morcellement* at Queen Victoria to my Ministry on 08 May 2024. I am informed that the documents submitted were not in order. Given that the notary certificate contained the seal of Étude Me Kavydass Ramano, notary public, and was not signed by a notary public in accordance to Section 18(1)(c)(iv) of the Environment Act 2002, but by an unidentified person.

On 21 May 2024, the proponent and its consultant were requested to submit a new notary certificate. Will you believe it, Madam Speaker, within 24 hours, that is, on 22 May 2024, a new certificate was signed by whom? By a notary public and was submitted to the Ministry. The submission of the first document which was not signed by notary public and the rapidity with which the new notary certificate was produced to my Ministry is a clear indication that there was collusion between the then Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change and his notarial office which was, at all material time, not only functioning, but trading.

Madam Speaker, I am duty bound to inform the House that the then Attorney General in his reply to Private Notice Question to the then Leader of the Opposition, hon. Dr. Arvin Boolell, did mislead the House on several aspects of the EIA application and was thus party to a coverup operation to protect his colleague, Mr Kavydass Ramano.

Madam Speaker, with regard to the case of the EIA application made by Square Deal Multi-Purpose Cooperative Society Limited, my Ministry is conducting an internal audit to find out as to whether there have been other cases of collusion between the then Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change and his notarial office.

It is clear that there are reasonable grounds to refer the matter to the Financial Crimes Commission to elucidate as to whether Mr Kavydass Ramano has acted in breach of the existing legislation in respect of conflict of interest and public official using his office for gratification and *trafic d'influence*.

An hon. Member: Shame!

Mr Jhummun: *Bizin ena lanket!*

An hon. Member: *Met taskforce!*

Mr Jhummun: *Bizin ena lanket!*

Mr Mohamed: *Sa mem lin dir la ta!*

Ms Anquetil: Je vous remercie, Madame la présidente. Pour vous dire, je suis scandalisée. Je suis scandalisée et révoltée par la réponse de l'honorable ministre Bhagwan. Nous sommes face à une affaire d'une gravité absolue !

Madam Speaker: *Mademoiselle*, question please. Question!

Ms Anquetil: Je note que le ministre prévoit de renvoyer ce dossier à la *FCC* pour d'éventuelles infractions pénales. Puis-je, Madame la présidente...

Madam Speaker: Voilà, question!

Ms Anquetil: Puis-je demander à l'honorable ministre s'il compte également saisir la Chambre des notaires afin qu'une enquête approfondie soit menée sur le notaire R pour déterminer s'il a violé le code de déontologie, et si tel est le cas, si des sanctions doivent être prises sous le *Law Practitioners Act* ? Je vous remercie, Madame la présidente.

Madam Speaker: Je vous en prie.

Mr Bhagwan: Madam Speaker, definitely we will do everything to elucidate where there has been *trafic d'influence*, but we all know, and not only for *la Chambre des notaires* but for all those *qui sont impliqués dans ce scandale*.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Third Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien, Mr Lukeeram!

MAHEBOURG MARKET – RENOVATION WORKS – FINANCIAL CLEARANCE

(No. B/105) Mr C. Lukeeram (Third Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to the works for the renovation of the Mahebourg Market, he will state if his Ministry is in presence of any request from the District Council of Grand Port for financial clearance for the renovation work of the market and, if so, indicate where matters stand.

Mr Wochit: Madam Speaker, I am informed that a request for financial clearance has been submitted by the District Council of Grand Port on 29 August 2024 amounting to Rs5.1 m. for the construction of stalls and also to undertake lighting works at the Mahebourg market. Moreover, the then Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development did not accede to that request, and instead, the Council was informed that it should consider using the existing metal stalls in the upgrading market and to meet expenses amounting to Rs2.1 m. pertaining to lighting works from within its current budget.

Madam Speaker, I wish to highlight that the previous Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development did not consider it important and useful to provide the necessary funding to all the Local Authorities, including the District Council of Grand Port with respect to maintenance of their amenities. The outgoing government invested Rs12 m. in the upgrading of external structure of the Mahebourg market and did not consider it necessary to provide an additional sum of Rs5 m. to construct the new stalls and do some lighting works. The new market was also inaugurated in *toute vitesse* without any new stalls, lighting and fire certificate just before the last general elections by the former Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development.

Madam Speaker, I wish to highlight that I effected a site visit at the Mahebourg market on 21 January 2025, whereby I asked the representative of the District Council of Grand Port to adhere to all fire safety norms as well as to expedite matters for the obtention of a fire certificate and to conduct a proper survey and submit a detailed breakdown for all the works

that need to be carried out at the said market, including associated costs following which my Ministry would seek additional funds from the Ministry of Finance to complete the project.

Moreover, I have laid emphasis on the fact that this project will have to be completed at the earliest possible as it is long overdue.

Madam Speaker: Yes.

Mr Apollon: Merci, *Madam Speaker*, et merci l'honorable ministre. Concernant la deuxième partie du marché qui a été rénovée comme vous avez si bien dit dans votre réponse, ils ont fait l'inauguration avec la télévision et tout, mais malheureusement, le lendemain c'est fermé parce que ce n'est pas complété à 100%. Le ministre peut-il voir avec le *District Council* pour débloquer la situation, laisser les maraichers commencer à travailler avec leur propre table, parce que le seul *issue* qui n'est pas encore fait c'est les tables. Cela cause un gros problème pour le marché de Mahebourg. Si le ministre peut voir cela assez rapidement pour laisser travailler les maraichers de Mahebourg. Merci.

Mr Woochit: Madam Speaker, as I have just said, the new market does not have a fire certificate. So, by the time we adhere with the fire certificate and at the same time we may put up new stalls where the vendors can sell their commodities in a safe and clean manner.

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

PSEA – GRANTS ALLOCATION – PRIVATE GRANT-AIDED SECONDARY SCHOOLS

(No. B/106) Mrs A. Savabaddy (First Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resource whether, in regard to complaints made against the Private Secondary Education Authority for the allocation of grants to Private grant-aided Secondary Schools, he will state if his Ministry will initiate an inquiry thereon.

Dr. Gungapersad: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the First Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue for this question.

With regard to complaints made by Private grant-aided Secondary Schools against the Authority, the main concerns raised by managers relate to various operational and financial matters. In recent times, the key issues brought forward include the need to review the comprehensive grant formula, shortage of educators in private secondary schools, the status

of a secondary school boys and girls located in the eastern region, and complaints against another college.

The last review of the comprehensive grant formula was conducted in September 2023 for the 2024-2026 period. Two legal cases were filed against the Private Secondary Education Authority concerning the comprehensive grant formula. One challenging the 2020-2023 formula which was overturned by the Supreme Court, and another against the 2024-2026 formula which is still under review. An application for conditional leave to appeal to the Supreme Court's judgment of 25 July 2024 to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council made on 19 August 2024. The Supreme Court granted leave on 04 February 2025 but on 18 February 2025, the appeal was withdrawn at the request of the applicant's counsel.

Madam Speaker, with a view to addressing concerns regarding the comprehensive grant formula, Government has approved the introduction of a new formula for the period 2025-2027. When I say Government, it is this Government, the present Government. A technical working group chaired by the Senior Chief Executive of my Ministry and including key stakeholders has been set up to –

- (i) Review the grant formula;
- (ii) Address any shortcomings in validation and disbursement, and
- (iii) Make recommendations.

A first meeting was held on 17 January 2025. Pending this review, the Private Education Secondary Authority has disbursed grants on an interim basis to facilitate the running and upkeep of the private secondary schools.

Regarding the shortage of educators in private secondary schools, managers have raised concerns following the implementation of the Education (Amendment. No. 4) Regulations 2023 – this is the legacy we have from the previous Government. Alright? They messed up with everything and we are trying to sort out things now – which introduced new qualification requirements for educators including the requirement to hold a degree in the subject to be taught and a Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE).

This amendment led to a shortage of educators in 2024 in private secondary schools as many potential candidates did not meet these stringent criteria though they were graduates, some of University of Mauritius. In response to these concerns, the Education (Amendment) Regulations 2025 has been introduced, whereby the requirement for a PGCE prior to

recruitment has been waived. Furthermore, educators will no longer be required to hold a degree in the subject to be taught but rather a degree related to the subject to be taught. However, they will be encouraged to have their PGCE within a reasonable timeframe after being recruited.

As regards to a school found to the eastern region, a case has been lodged before the Supreme Court by Mr V.C.J. in his capacity as trustee against the Authority. The case seeks among others, the disbursement of grants to the schools and the appointment of new managers in compliance with instructions from the trustee. Legal advice is presently being sought on these matters.

Madam Speaker, I also wish to inform the House that my Ministry remains committed to addressing concerns raised by stakeholders in the private secondary education sector and ensuring that all matters are handled in a fair and transparent manner. This is *changement*. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Yes?

Mrs Savabaddy: *Thank you, Madam Speaker.* Je remercie l'honorable ministre pour sa réponse.

Il y a eu ce cas d'un collège dans l'est, M. le ministre, contre lequel leur psy réclame une enquête pour divers abus. Par exemple, les parents doivent payer R 2 600 – je cite bien – pour la PTA sinon leurs enfants n'auront pas accès aux manuels scolaires distribués gratuitement par le gouvernement aux salles d'examens. En sus des autres maldonnes, l'honorable ministre peut-il demander à ses officiers d'enquêter sur ces abus afin de mettre fin à de telles pratiques ? Je cite : 'À noter que ce collège précis reçoit une compensation du gouvernement, R 350 000 mensuellement pour les dépenses administratives et pour la maintenance de l'école, sachant qu'annuellement ils reçoivent R 140 millions.' Merci.

Dr. Gungapersad: Madam Speaker, I would reassure the hon. Member that we are being proactive; we did not wait for the PQ in order to initiate, in order to create an independent committee which is reviewing the mechanism in which this secondary school, which we are not naming; neither you nor me, is managing funds. Rest assured everything is being done in all transparency and accountability is definitely at the top of the agenda. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Yes!

Mr Ramkalawon: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Is the Minister aware that last year, it was during the month of August and September that a massive recruitment was done by the ex-government? This created a great problem within private secondary schools. What are some of the measures that the Minister can propose so that in this coming year, we do not face the same problem? Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Minister!

Dr. Gungapersad: This is something which is ongoing. I understand the sector, just like the hon. Member. Very often, when PSC advertise for posts in Secondary Schools, there is an influx as Educators who work in private secondary schools move from private and go to state secondary schools, creating a void in the private secondary schools. So, that is why we have waived that PGCE thing and we have enlarged this spectrum of recruitment for Educators. That is why for the subject to be taught, they need a degree related to that subject. This is going to ease the situation. And fortunately, the public is aware that this year, we did not have shortage of staff thanks to this government.

Madam Speaker: Okay. Yes, Ms Collet, the hon. First Member for Rodrigues!

INFANT MORTALITY RATE – STATISTICS – CHILD WELFARE EARMARKED BUDGET

(No. B/107) Ms M. R. Collet (First Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to infant mortality, she will state the number thereof island wide during the last three years, indicating the amount of fund earmarked annually by her Ministry for child welfare.

Mrs Navarre-Marie: Madam Speaker, I am informed that the number of infant mortality for mainland Mauritius stands at 165, 157 and 173 for the year 2022, 2023 and 2024, respectively, while for the island of Rodrigues stands at seven, 11 and 11, respectively, for the same period.

With regard to the second part of the question for child welfare, for the Financial Year 2024-2025, a total sum of around Rs19,500,000 has been earmarked.

Madam Speaker: Yes, Mr Seeburn!

**BOIS DES AMOURETTES, BAMBOUS VIRIEUX & GRAND SABLE – NETWORK
COVERAGE**

(No. B/108) Mr M. Seeburn (Second Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle) asked the Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation whether, in regard to the coastal areas along Bois des Amourettes, Bambous Virieux and Grand Sable, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from Mauritius Telecom, information as to whether consideration will be given for the installation of additional telephone aerial/antenna to improve the signals for telecommunications in these areas.

Dr. Ramtohul: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. Second Member for Vieux Grand Port and Rose Belle. An interesting problem has been raised and this also links up to the question that was asked around two weeks back with regard to the network coverage.

Madam Speaker, you see, this is the legacy of the previous government and we have seen the digital divide increasing. So, the concept of e-inclusion was set onto a secondary plane. I am informed by Mauritius Telecom, Madam Speaker, that it has several telecommunication towers in that region, namely at Vieux Grand Port, Anse Jonchée, Bambous Virieux, Grand Sable and Pointe du Diable.

However, due to the winding roads and elevation of the terrain, that is, the topology of that region, as well as the natural features of that space, these towers do not provide adequate coverage thereat. Mauritius Telecom has envisaged the deployment of additional towers in the region and has accordingly initiated site search exercises in view of securing new locations. These exercises were, nevertheless, not successful since most of the lands identified are State-owned and have already been allocated to particulars.

Madam Speaker, my Ministry will, in collaboration with the Ministry of Housing and Lands, provide the necessary support to Mauritius Telecom Ltd in finding an appropriate site for the setting up of an antenna to enhance telecommunications coverage in the region. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Thank you. Yes.

Mr Seeburn: Would the hon. Minister also consider urging the other network providers such as Emtel and MTML in particular, to equally improve their current services so as to have better mobile network coverage in these areas?

Dr. Ramtohul: Madam Speaker, the other providers are obviously private companies and as far as they are in compliance with the provisions of the ICT Authority, we are satisfied with their service. However, given the issue with the coverage, we will extend the same collaborative approach to all the operators. I think I should mention as well that Mauritius Telecom does carry out proactive tests in various regions. So, I would also encourage other Members who do identify those challenges to let us know so that we can enhance the coverage and we can also extend e-inclusion and close the digital divide. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

RODRIGUES – SPECIALISTS/SENIOR SPECIALISTS – TOUR OF SERVICE

(No. B/109) Mr F. François (Second Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to specialists of the public health sector on official visits to Rodrigues, he will state the –

- (a) frequency and duration of their visits, and
- (b) number of visits effected by each specialist, since January 2024 to date, indicating the measures, if any, his Ministry proposes to take for a more effective service.

Mr Bachoo: Madam Speaker, I am informed that presently Specialists/Senior Specialists are posted to Rodrigues on a monthly tour of service in the following specialities

–

- Anaesthesia;
- General Medicine;
- General Surgery;
- Obstetrics and Gynaecology;
- Orthopaedic Surgery;
- Paediatrics;
- Radiology.

In other specialities, the duration of the tour of service varies depending on the demands from Rodrigues in terms of the number of patients awaiting specialist services.

Madam Speaker, I am also informed that in addition to the monthly visit, Specialists/Senior Specialists in the following fields are sent on short visits to Rodrigues at the following frequency –

- Cardiology – 8 times yearly;
- ENT/Ophthalmology – 6 times yearly;
- Oncology – 5 times yearly;
- Gastroenterology, orthodontics nephrology, physical medicines – 4 times yearly;
- Dermatology, neurosurgery, oncology, oral surgery, plastic surgery – 2 times yearly, and
- Gastroenterology – once yearly.

Madam Speaker, I am further informed that since January 2024 to date, in addition to the short visits, a total of 90 monthly tour of service to Rodrigues have been effected in the fields of anaesthesia, general medicine, general surgery, obstetrics and gynaecology, orthopaedic surgery, paediatrics and radiology.

Madam Speaker, I have taken note that in certain fields like dermatology, neurosurgery, oncology, oral surgery, plastic surgery and gastroenterology, the frequency of short visits is inadequate. I wish to assure the House that the frequency of these short visits will be revisited.

Madam Speaker: Okay, the hon. Second Member for Quartier Militaire-Moka.

CHILD DEVELOPMENT UNIT – REFORM & PROFESSIONAL TRAINING

(No. B/110) Dr. Ms B. Thannoo (Second Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the Child Development Unit (CDU), she will state –

- (a) if her Ministry will consider reviewing the current procedures to ensure prompt and professional services in urgent cases of child trauma;

- (b) the ongoing professional training provided to new and existing employees of the Unit, and
- (c) if access to therapy services is provided to employees at the CDU to support them in their professional performance.

Mrs Navarre-Marie: Madam Speaker, my Ministry has already initiated the necessary actions to review the current procedures of the Child Development Unit (CDU). A contract for consultancy services for a reform in child services was awarded to the University of Technology Mauritius in December last year. This initiative aims to undertake a comprehensive reform of child services. The objective of the consultancy services is to gain insights into the current structure, policies, procedures and practices within the CDU, identify gaps and adopt necessary remedial actions.

Madam Speaker, I am also informed that the consultancy team will submit a final report with recommendations by the end of September 2025.

I further wish to inform the House that my Ministry organised an *Assises de la femme et de la famille* on December 10 last year with the collaboration of NGOs and other stakeholders to explore, among other matters, ways and means to enhance our services related to the protection of children in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which Mauritius is a signatory.

Madam Speaker, regarding part (b) of the question, as far as ongoing professional training is concerned, I understand that we are already providing such training to new and existing employees of the unit. These trainings are conducted by the psychologists of the Ministry, ensuring that child trauma cases are handled professionally and in line with the best international practices.

I am further informed that through interactive sessions, case studies and practical exercises, some 52 officers of the CDU have gained valuable insights into *inter alia*, trauma informed approach, which is a way of working that considers the impact of trauma on people, including children, groups and communities, among others.

Madam Speaker, with regard to part (c) of the question, I am informed that during the period 2024-2025, free psychological services have been available for 10 staff members at the CDU to help them overcome any emotional trauma. These psychological services, including psychotherapy and counselling are provided free of charge upon request.

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

I am sorry, one moment. I thought you had another question?

Dr. Ms Thannoo: I am sorry. Yes!

Madam Speaker: I was right!

Dr. Ms Thannoo: You were right! Thank you, Madam Speaker. B/111, please!

FOREIGN WORKERS – RECRUITMENT & ILLEGAL OVERSTAY (2019 TO 2024)

(No. B/111) Dr. Ms Thannoo (Second Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Minister of Labour and Industrial Relations whether, in regard to foreign workers, he will state the number thereof –

- (a) recruited on a monthly basis over the period 30 May 2024 to 31 October 2024 and the monthly corresponding figures for the past 5 years, indicating the economic sector and skills concerned, and
- (b) currently illegally overstaying in Mauritius.

Mr Uteem: Madam Speaker, with regard to part (a) of the question, the aggregate number of work permits and certificate of exemptions both, including renewals in respect of economic sectors and skills categories issued by Ministry is as follows –

- May to October 2024 – 15,940;
- May to October 2023 – 14,885;
- May to October 2022 – 17,898;
- May to October 2021 – 12,670;
- May to October 2020 – 5,139;
- May to October 2019 – 14,111.

Madam Speaker, a breakdown of this information being quite bulky, is being tabled.

The bulk of the migrant workers, more than 80% relate to the manufacturing sector and the construction sector.

Madam Speaker, as regards to part (b), I am informed by the Passport and Immigration Office that there are currently 2,285 migrant workers illegally overstaying in Mauritius whose permits have expired. In addition, there are 2,542 migrant workers who have been reported missing.

Madam Speaker, it is a criminal offense under the Non-Citizens (Employment Restriction) Act for non-citizen to take up employment without a valid work permit and it is equally an offence for a person to employ a non-citizen without a valid work permit. Both offences are punishable by fine between Rs100,000 and Rs500,000 and a term of imprisonment not exceeding 5 years.

Madam Speaker, once a work permit of a non-citizen expires, the employer either has to repatriate the worker or has to renew the work permit and pay the claim. Unfortunately, many enterprises fail to do so. This explains the number of migrant workers who are overstaying.

Non-complying companies, Madam Speaker, have been given a delay by my Ministry to comply with the positions of the Non-Citizens (Employment Restriction) Act or to repatriate the worker. Until they do so, my Ministry has decided not to entertain any new application for recruitment of migrant workers from these companies.

Madam Speaker: Yes! That's alright!

Hon. Third Member for Grand' Baie and Poudre d'Or, Mr Etwareea!

FISHING PERMITS DISTRIBUTION – 2024 GENERAL ELECTIONS EVE

(No. B/112) Mr R. Etwareea (Third Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of Agro-Industry, Food Security, Blue Economy and Fisheries whether, in regard to fishing permits, he will state the number of permits distributed on the eve of the recent General Elections, indicating –

- (a) the criteria used for the selection process, and
- (b) if his Ministry proposes to cancel these permits, indicating the measures, if any, envisaged in cases of abuse.

Dr. Boolell: Thank you very much, hon. Member. I take it for granted that the hon. Member is referring to the issuance of artisanal fishermen cards.

Following the issue of a communiqué dated 13 March 2023, inviting potential fishers to apply for a fisherman card, a walk-in exercise was carried out on 20 and 21 March 2023.

Accordingly, 709 fishermen cards were issued in year 2024, out of which, 192 were issued in July and 416 in September, and 101 in December in relation to an exercise carried out well before October 2024.

Madam Speaker, with respect to part (a) of the question, the House may note that applicant fishers are eligible for fishers' card as per the following criteria –

1. The applicant fisher shall not be less than 18 years and not more than 50 years old at the time of application.
2. The applicant fisher shall be neither engaged in gainful employment nor be hold of a trade licence or any remunerative licence.
3. The applicant fisher shall submit a valid Certificate of Character. Any applicant fisher involves or convicted in drug dealing is eliminated upon confirmation received from the Commissioner of Police.
4. The applicant fisher shall submit a recommendation letter from the registered fishers in whose boat he is fishing.
5. The applicant fisher shall be medically fit to work at sea as certified by Government Medical Officer.
6. The applicant fisher shall pass a swimming assessment which is conducted by the National Coastguard in presence of Fisheries Protection Officers of the Ministry.

Madam Speaker, once all the above criteria are met, the eligible applicant fisher are required to successfully complete a General Fisher Course conducted by the Ministry so as to qualify for registration as an artisanal fisher.

With respect to part (b) of the question, Madam Speaker, in light of the information circulated, the exercise was flawed as basic procedures were not followed. This calls for an in-depth enquiry following which, corrective measures will be taken.

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

I have been advised that the following PQs have been withdrawn: B/113, B/114, B/117, B/119, B/120, B/121, B/123, B/124 and B/127.

MOTION**SUSPENSION OF S.O. 10(2)**

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

The Deputy Prime Minister rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

PUBLIC BILLS*First Reading*

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

- (a) *The Finance and Audit (Amendment) Bill (No. II of 2025)*
- (b) *The Bail (Amendment) Bill (No. III of 2025).*

MOTION**GOVERNMENT PROGRAMME 2025-2029**

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on the following motion of the Second Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka (Dr. Ms B. Thannoo).

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

Madam Speaker: Hon. Second Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Riviere, the floor is yours!

(4.13 p.m.)

The Junior Minister of Youth and Sports (Mrs K. Foo Kune-Bacha): Madame la présidente, c'est avec émotion que je prends la parole aujourd'hui, non pas parce que c'est ma première intervention de ce mandat, mais après avoir subi, enduré, dictature, censure, *bullying*, au sein de cette même Assemblée les cinq dernières années durant, c'est une vraie joie et un réel soulagement de pouvoir m'exprimer au sein d'un véritable temple de la

démocratie digne de ce nom. Et, cela, grâce à vous, Madame la présidente, et à votre adjoint. Et, c'est toute la population mauricienne qui aujourd'hui se sent soulagée, libérée et qui respire à nouveau.

Madame la présidente, je profite de cette occasion pour exprimer ma profonde gratitude envers les électeurs de la circonscription numéro 20, Beau Bassin/ Petite Rivière, qui m'ont fait à nouveau confiance. C'est un privilège de pouvoir servir ma circonscription ; c'est un privilège de pouvoir servir le peuple mauricien. Je remercie, l'honorable Rajesh Bhagwan, figure emblématique de la circonscription numéro 20, qui a été et qui est plus qu'un colistier avec un sens du travail d'équipe hors pair mais pour moi, un mentor et une figure paternelle.

Madame la présidente, après avoir été au service du pays plus de la moitié de ma vie en tant qu'athlète de haut niveau, je remercie humblement notre Premier ministre, l'honorable Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam et notre Premier ministre adjoint, l'honorable Paul Bérenger, de m'avoir donné l'opportunité de servir en tant que ministre délégué de la Jeunesse et de sport, et d'avoir placé leur confiance en la jeunesse et la femme pour faire avancer le pays. C'est avec intégrité, humilité et ardeur que je me dévouerai au progrès de la nation mauricienne.

Madame la présidente, j'ai aujourd'hui l'honneur de soutenir le programme gouvernemental qui met l'emphasis sur la reconstruction de la démocratie et de la bonne gouvernance, et du développement durable, inclusif et responsable. Madame la présidente, je vais consacrer le temps de parole qui me reste pour parler de la jeunesse.

La jeunesse mauricienne, dynamique et innovatrice, a toujours été le moteur de transformation sociale et économique de notre pays. Les jeunes représentent l'avenir du pays ; ce sont eux les bâtisseurs de demain, ce sont eux les décideurs de demain. Cependant, Madame la présidente, les 10 dernières années, cette jeunesse a été délaissée et aujourd'hui, nos jeunes sont confrontés à des défis sans précédent – un manque de repères, une crise de valeurs, une absence d'opportunité à la hauteur de leurs aspirations.

Sous l'ancien régime, les jeunes ont eu le sentiment d'être des victimes, de voir leur jeunesse dérobée. Sous l'ancien régime, au lieu de bénéficier du développement, les jeunes ont été confrontés à une augmentation des fléaux comme la drogue et la violence. Sous le ciel orange, les efforts investis par les jeunes afin d'obtenir une qualification, les sacrifices des parents investis dans les études de leurs enfants ne servaient à rien puisque les opportunités

allaient uniquement à certains privilégiés, et le succès ne dépendait plus du mérite. Des sentiments se sont installés ces dernières années ; un pays où les libertés étaient réduites, un pays qui ne permettait plus à sa jeunesse de rêver. Sous le ciel orange, nos jeunes ont préféré quitter le pays pour de meilleures opportunités plus justes ailleurs. Notre gouvernement a la volonté politique et la capacité de changer tout cela, Madame la présidente ; ce programme gouvernemental répond précisément à cela.

Le programme qui s'intitule '*A Bridge to the Future*', notre pont vers l'avenir, notre gouvernement, ce gouvernement met l'emphase sur l'avenir tandis que l'ancien régime ne s'est jamais soucié du lendemain. Raison pour laquelle, aujourd'hui, nous avons hérité d'un tel état de notre économie. Nous, nous sommes soucieux de laisser après notre passage un héritage digne à nos enfants. Ce programme est soucieux de notre jeunesse qui est au cœur même de notre vision pour l'avenir. Nous allons non seulement diversifier notre espace économique, mais aussi créer des moyens pour que nos jeunes puissent s'exprimer et devenir des acteurs véritables de leurs avenir.

Ce programme marque ainsi une rupture nette entre l'époque où la voix des jeunes était marginalisée. Et, l'un des axes majeurs est l'autonomisation des jeunes avec le lancement d'un *Youth Empowerment Programme*, l'organisation de festivals culturels et artistiques permettront à nos jeunes de s'exprimer librement et de développer leurs créativité. Le programme inclut des mesures pour faciliter la transition des jeunes vers le marché du travail et de façon réfléchie grâce au *Skills Master Plan* qui pourra mettre fin au *mismatch* entre les formations et les besoins économiques. Le programme favorise l'accès à des plateformes d'apprentissage numérique, donne les moyens à notre jeunesse de s'engager en leur offrant la possibilité de s'impliquer dans des projets écologiques.

Madame la présidente, l'un des aspects les plus troublants de notre époque est le déclin des valeurs au sein de notre jeunesse. Ce programme offre une réponse claire et ambitieuse à ce défi en plaçant la famille, l'éducation et le sport au centre de ses priorités en créant les conditions pour que les familles puissent s'épanouir avec des semaines de 40 heures, le congé parental et le travail flexible après la maternité. Un système éducatif plus inclusif et mieux adapté aux besoins des élèves en ramenant davantage de formations sur les compétences artistiques et sportives. Ce modèle éducatif à visage humain ; c'est une éducation qui inspire et prépare à la vie.

Le sport, Madame la présidente, non seulement améliore la santé de la population mais est aussi vecteur d'inclusion, de cohésion sociale et d'engagement civique. Le sport est un puissant outil de prévention contre les fléaux comme la drogue. Le sport représente la meilleure école de la vie. Il enseigne aux jeunes la valeur du travail acharné, la solidarité, le respect, le dépassement de soi, la persévérance, le fair-play, la camaraderie, le sens de la responsabilité ; il enseigne aux jeunes les valeurs et attitudes dont ils ont besoin pour être des bons citoyens. Et, l'objectif de notre gouvernement est de mettre le sport au cœur de la vie mauricienne.

Madame la présidente, notre gouvernement apportera le soutien approprié pour que chaque jeune soit en mesure de mener une vie saine et satisfaisante, pour que chaque jeune se sente outillé pour apporter des changements positifs pour lui-même et pour le pays, pour que chaque jeune puisse s'épanouir à son plein potentiel et avoir l'occasion de devenir la meilleure version de lui-même.

En conclusion, Madame la présidente, investir dans notre jeunesse c'est croire dans l'avenir de notre nation. Donnons à nos jeunes la possibilité de bâtir une île Maurice avec un avenir meilleur, plus fort, plus juste et plus durable.

Je vous remercie.

Madam Speaker: Thank you. You were well within your time.

Yes, hon. Minister, Mr Gondeea!

(4.22 p.m.)

The Minister of Arts and Culture (Mr M. Gondeea): Madam Speaker, as Nelson Mandela once said –

“May your choices reflect your hopes, not your fears.”

Today, I stand before this august Assembly filled with hope for a brighter Mauritius. It is with immense gratitude and humility that I rise to address this House for the first time, committed to serving our nation with integrity and dedication. Before delving into the core of my intervention, allow me to express my profound appreciation. First and foremost, I extend my deepest gratitude to the hon. Prime Minister, Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, whose unwavering support has been instrumental in my journey.

His trust and resolute leadership have not only shaped our nation's democratic and cultural landscape but have also guided me in assuming this great responsibility. I am equally grateful to the hon. Deputy Prime Minister, hon. Paul Bérenger, for his support and confidence in me. To serve as the Minister of Arts and Culture is both an honour and a solemn duty, one that I embrace with commitment. It is my firm resolve to ensure that our artists, cultural workers and the creative industries finally receive the recognition, respect and support they have long been denied.

To my family, my voters and my constituents, your support has been the foundation upon which I stand today. I also take a moment to pay tribute to my mentor, the late Dr. James Burty David; a political giant whose wisdom, vision and dedication to the people of Mauritius have shaped the person I am today. Madam Speaker, I also extend my heartfelt congratulations to you and the hon. Deputy Speaker on your appointment. Your leadership marks a new dawn for our National Assembly; one of free, vibrant and fair debate. Madam Speaker, I cannot stand here today without acknowledging the real architects of this historic transformation – the people of Mauritius.

On 10 November 2024, they stood united and made their voices heard. They rejected stagnation, broken promises and a government that had been disconnected from their needs. They voted for change; they voted for freedom. They chose a government of action and leadership that listens. The overwhelming victory of the *Alliance du Changement* is not just a political triumph. It is a victory for democracy, good governance and the collective aspirations of our people. A UNESCO expert report identified a major flaw obstructing our cultural economy – a lack of institutional commitment. In a section titled 'A Vicious Circle', the report noted that and I quote –

“The vast majority of those we consulted in cultural industries/sectors thought that whatever we wrote in this report would not be implemented or acted upon in any way by the Ministry of Arts and Culture.”

Madam Speaker and hon. Members, allow me to extrapolate. My observation is not just about arts and culture, it is a symptom of a deeper disconnect between the Government and the people of Mauritius. A disconnect that the electorate sought to eliminate in the last general election. A responsibility this Government has vowed to uphold, real change. *Sanzmen* will only be meaningful if we deliver on it. Madam Speaker, the potential of cultural industries for

Small Island Developing States (SIDS) was explicitly recognised at the Mauritius international meeting for SIDS in 2004. Professor Nurse summarised it best when he stated –

“The cultural sector plays a dual role as an arena for identity formation and an economic sector with growth potential including its role as a key driver of the new digital and intellectual property economy. It is not just a commercial arena, it is an artistic and social space where spiritual values, emotional meaning and bodily pleasures are displayed, enacted and represented.”

Madam Speaker, this summary is two decades old. When the Labour party left government in 2014, major cultural projects were taking shape following these experts reports. The past decade however, has seen stagnation if not, regression in the field of arts and culture. It is now my Ministry’s responsibility to reverse this course with resolve. Cultural policy in Mauritius has historically been viewed as mere expenditure by the Government and as a welfare subsidy by the public. Another UNESCO report highlighted that funding has often been allocated based on ethnic religious considerations rather than strategic cultural development. This has led to fragmented policy making and a lack of urgency in fostering a cultural economy.

Madam Speaker, this Government will change this standard. As outlined in the Government Programme 2025-2029, we will –

- (i) Champion the cultural economy as a pillar of sustainable development. This will require inter-ministerial collaboration beyond Arts and Culture, including business, trade, finance, education, tourism and sports;
- (ii) Conduct an audit of our national heritage and cultural assets. This will evaluate public engagement and infrastructure needs for the cultural economy development, and
- (iii) Establish a national Arts Open Commission. For the first time our creative sector will have a structured, transparent and forward thinking policy aligned with international standards.

Madam Speaker, tourism is evolving. Travelers now seek deeper cultural immersion rather than brief resort experiences. Until now, our tourism model has relied on short cultural showcases like a few minutes of *Sega*. However, a growing segment of visitors desires authentic, immersive experiences, something achievable only with the right infrastructure. By infrastructure, I mean not just heritage sites but also the preservation and transmission of

cultural traditions as highlighted by professor Nurse. While heritage is central to tourism, our sites lack the global recognition like those in Europe, China or India. To change this, we need a holistic approach, one that integrates folk culture, a thriving creative industry and community engagement.

After all, we cannot share what we do not fully embrace. My Ministry will collaborate closely with the Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority to give our cultural tourism sector a *nouveau souffle*. This vision also requires a secure, harmonious social environment demanding cross Ministerial corporation. The previously cited report made a damning statement about our built heritage, and I quote –

“Mauritius is neglecting its cultural tourism potential and allowing its built heritage to disappear. Port Louis, once, among the thousand hemispheres most magnificent cities, may not retain its heritage for another decade.

If cultural tourism is to thrive, Port Louis must be seen as the jewel in the crown, not a crime ridden eyesore. This is a wakeup call. The success of events like the 24/7 festival organised in 2009 by the Municipal Council of Port Louis, under my administration as Lord Mayor, in collaboration with the Human Resources Development Council proved that Mauritians have a deep attachment to their capital city. Yet, our public cultural landscape remains insufficient, calling for urgent revitalisation to meet the aspiration of our people.

Madam Speaker, I need not remind the House that more than 20% of our GDP depends on tourism, a sector that heavily impacts the environment due to its traditional reliance on the sea, sand and sun model. Developing cultural tourism can help reduce this pressure on ecosystems. I will seek close collaboration with the Ministry of Environment to ensure a sustainable approach.

Madam Speaker, museums, theatres and cinemas were once vibrant cultural hubs in our country. However, the rapid shift in technological infrastructures has significantly contributed to their decline, eroding social interactions and diminishing public engagement. Over the past decade, our public-cultural infrastructure has fallen into neglect. Iconic venues like the Serge Constantin Theatre remains inaccessible and in dire need of renovation. The inability of the previous government to revitalise the Mauritius Cultural Centre stands as a glaring failure.

This Government is resolute in its commitment to restoring and modernising these spaces, positioning culture as a central pillar of national development. Our vision is to

establish Mauritius as a cultural leader in the region, and we will take decisive steps to rekindle our cultural identity.

Madam Speaker, this is *l'Alliance du Changement*, this is our vision. It is high time for the arts and culture sector to get back its *lettres de noblesse*. *Pa kouma Rocco ti pe fer avek sa minister la kot boku staff ti pe rodd sove.*

Madam Speaker, this is not a trivial issue. In a nation historically driven by economic pragmatism to the point of cynicism, arts and culture have been, for the past ten years treated, as an afterthought, viewed as a pleasant, but non-essential pursuit. Yet, arts and culture are the very soul of a nation and nurturing this soul requires a collective commitment. The rise of digital isolation is eroding human connection, even fostering incivility.

I believe artistic and cultural education is key to a thriving nation. Public spaces that encourage cultural engagement are not luxuries; they are necessities. While we have cultural infrastructure, its revitalisation demands strategic funding. We must shift from Government dependence to self-sustainability, leveraging public-private partnerships. A structured cultural calendar will enhance visibility and accessibility, ensuring the arts become a vital force in our society.

Madam Speaker, the audiovisual sector holds immense potential for Mauritius. We must invest in training and education to uplift this industry through close collaboration with the Ministry of Education. Additionally, the Mauritius Film Development Corporation will undergo a dynamic restructuring to address two key priorities –

- i. enhancing film literacy and exposure for both Mauritian and international productions, and
- ii. fully unlocking the industry's potential through targeted training and skills development.

As part of the *Assises des artistes* initiative, we will introduce measures such as master classes, compulsory internships, digitalise training materials and increase representation of the Ministry of Arts and Culture and MFDC within the Economic Development Board.

The rich linguistic diversity of our society remains largely untapped in film production. Script writing and translation present significant economic opportunities that remain underdeveloped. These elements must be integrated into our education system at an early stage. The National Arts Open Commission will be tasked with reviewing the existing

framework and implementing necessary reform to meet industry needs. More broadly, media literacy in education is a pressing concern and we will work with the national curriculum framework to address this gap. A thriving creative industry requires more than talent. It requires education, training and professional development. Unfortunately, the previous government neglected capacity-building initiatives, leaving our artists unprepared for global competition.

Under the Government Programme 2025-2029, we will prioritise capacity building by developing specialised training programmes in film production, music, digital media, graphic design and cultural event management. Through international partnership, we will provide mentorship opportunities, world class expertise and global exchange programme for local artists. This programme will foster an investment driven economy, promote innovation and creativity and establish arts and culture as a genuine pillar of national development.

Madam Speaker, a key measure in the Government Programme 2025-2029 is the expansion of the Cultural Rebate Scheme to encompass all artistic disciplines and the creation of a directory of musical heritage in the Indian Ocean. These initiatives will not only support local artists, but also position Mauritius as a vibrant cultural destination on the international stage. Previously, the Rebate Scheme was limited to film production, leaving other artistic sectors without adequate support. By broadening the scheme, we will ensure that musicians, theatre producers and visual artists, among others, receive the necessary incentives to sustain their careers. This will open avenues for monetisation and professional growth.

Madam Speaker, the failures of the past decade are unacceptable. The previous government's policies were poorly designed, ineffective and failed to deliver tangible results. The so-called Status of the Artist Act 2023 was lauded as a landmark reform, but ultimately amounted to nothing more than a failed promise. This will change! Under the Government Programme 2025-2029, we will introduce legislation that aligns with international standards, such as those established by the United Nations for cultural workers. This will provide genuine recognition, legal protection and financial security to artists, performers, event organisers and technical professionals.

Madam Speaker, one of the most pressing concerns for artists today is the inefficiency of the Mauritius Society of Authors (MASA). This institution was intended to protect intellectual property rights and ensure fair compensation for artists. However, it has failed in

its mandate, leaving artists underpaid and frustrated. For years, artists have encountered delays in receiving royalties, faced bureaucratic hurdles and suffered from a lack of transparency in fund distribution.

This Government acknowledges that the status quo is unacceptable. We will review MASA to ensure it truly serves artists rather than acting as an administrative burden. Strong enforcement of intellectual property rights is essential for a thriving, creative industry and we will not allow insufficiencies to stifle artistic growth.

To conclude, this Government Programme is a bridge to the future, a future where arts and culture drive economic growth, where artists are valued professionals and where creativity is an engine of progress.

This is the Government of change. This is the Government of progress. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Thank you. Hon. Members, we will break for 30 minutes for tea!

At 4.43 p.m., the Sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 5.21 p.m. with the Deputy Speaker in the Chair.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Baboolall! You have the floor!

Mr C. Baboolall (First Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. It is with profound humility I rise and stand before this august Assembly today, for my maiden speech.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me firstly congratulate you, and Madam Speaker, for your nominations in this 8th National Assembly Session. May I also take this opportunity to congratulate the Prime Minister, Dr. the hon. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, and the Deputy Prime Minister, hon. Paul Bérenger, who have both led us for this victory where the country can breathe again, *et comme on disait, pour une nouvelle indépendance*. Their visionary leadership and commitment to the nation's progress have been instrumental in our collective success. Let me also congratulate all the elected Members of Parliament, and my two colleagues, Dr. the hon. Ramtohul and hon. Saumtally, for representing the vibrant and diverse Constituency of Montagne Blanche and Grand River South East, our cherished Constituency No. 10.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my journey to this esteemed Chambre has been guided and supported by numerous individuals to whom I am very grateful. I would like to express my gratitude to my leader, to my family, to my parents who instilled in me the values of integrity and perseverance; to my wife whose encouragement has been a constant source of strength and to my children, Karishni and Rishaan, who inspire me to work towards a brighter future for all the children in this country. I also thank all my friends, and especially, the people in No. 10 to have believed in me. I also cannot forget my late brother, Barrister Girish Baboolall. We were called to the Bar in England on the same day, and he has always been an inspiring soul and I know his blessings are with me. I have also lost during the electoral campaign another brother, Josué Dardenne, from Trou d'Eau Douce, who has worked tirelessly for the *Alliance du Changement*, and even when he was ill, he came to the Polling Day to vote, and this was his last visit he paid to Trou d'Eau Douce. He will always be missed and remembered.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Constituency No. 10 holds a unique place in my heart and our country's demography. It is here, in the east, that Mauritius greets the first light of dawn. My constituency is an area of unparalleled natural beauty where we have the Grand River South East Waterfall, Île aux Cerfs and the Thakurbari Temple. This constituency shines as a beacon of cultural richness and historical significance.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am proud to have been born and raised in No. 10, home of a tapestry of faith and history. From the sacred chants of Maheshwarnath Mandir in Médine, to the timeless wisdom of Aroul Migou Kovil in Clemencia; from the holy prayers of Musjid e Noorani in Bel Air to the hallowed hymns of St Esprit Church, we are a living testament to Mauritius pluralism which keeps reminding us that unity in diversity is our greatest strength. I thank you No. 10 and I will always devote myself to the best of my ability.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the father of the nation, Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, was also born in No. 10. He went to school in Bel Air where his teacher, Madam Siris, gave him unconditional support. This Government will make sure we have our Mauritian dream again for the generations to come. Unity in diversity should be our motto.

As we look ahead, the Government Programme 2025-2029 outlines a bold vision for our nation's future. 'A Bridge to the Future' is a blueprint for justice, equity and innovation. Key reforms are on the horizon aiming at enhancing economic resilience, promoting sustainable development and improving the quality of life of all Mauritians.

Today, we stand at the threshold of transformation. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in the next 25 years, a small island state like our country has to aim to become a global leader in sustainable development and innovation, targeting high value-added services sector alongside a sustainable development and political stability for our youth to be willing to stay in the country and come back home.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, one of the key pillars of our economy is the Tourism Sector. Preservation of Heritage Sites as cultural landmarks are engines of sustainable tourism. Our traditional model of the tourism sector is likely to be obsolete in the next 25 years. We need to act now with the collaboration of all stakeholders such that we can ensure that this economic pillar innovates and sustains its development. We will need to leverage our relatively better environment climate to generate returns for our country and our people.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we should also look at education and innovation. Establishing well-classed educational institutions and research centres can foster innovation and attract talent from around the globe. This will drive advancement in various sectors, including technology, health care and environmental sciences, including the blue economy. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we should not forget that our main resource is our people. We have to invest in our people. Nationally, we will need pioneer reforms to combat climate change, empower SMEs and build a digital economy.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the recent 60-0 electoral victory is a resounding mandate from the people reflecting their desire for change and progress. This victory belongs to the unity of our alliance: to hon. Deputy Prime Minister, Paul Bérenger, whose decades of wisdom and courage have shaped Mauritius's political conscience – you are our guiding star; to the Prime Minister, Dr. the hon. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, the *rassembleur*, whose ability to unite diverse voices under one banner is unparalleled – you have reignited hope. Together with our other esteemed leaders of Rezistans ek Alternativ and Nouveaux Démocrates, they have forged a path of inclusivity and shared purpose. The historic 60-0 victory is not merely a number, it is a roar from the people, a rejection of corruption scandals and moral decay that plagued the MSM regime during the last 10 years. The Kistnen murder case, the Silver Bank scandal where public funds were plundered, the MIC shameless distribution of tax payers' money to *petit copain-copine*; these are stains on our democracy. To sum up the last regime, I will say, we had a fake Speaker, we had a fake Prime Minister and we had a fake government. But, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as stated by the Deputy Prime Minister, hon. Paul Bérenger:

'Lepep admirab knew what had to be done'. They sent Pinokio, and all his *chatwas*, in *zanana's* Titanic on a one-way farewell trip.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, now we turn the page. Under this Government, accountability will replace impunity. Transparency will replace secrecy. Our Government is committed to charting a different course. We pledge to uphold the highest standards of integrity and implement ground breaking reforms that will restore faith in our institutions.

In conclusion, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will stand before you deeply aware of the responsibility entrusted to me by the people of Constituency No. 10. As the sun rises each morning in our beloved constituency, let us remind ourselves that we are guided by light, and that this Government will honour the people's trust. Together, we will build a nation where integrity reigns, where every citizen thrives, and where freedom is valued.

Let Mauritius be Mauritius again where the Mauritian dream exists!

Long live l' Alliance du Changement ! Long live the Republic of Mauritius!

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

May God bless Mauritius!

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. Member! You were within your 10 minutes.

Now I call upon hon. Minister Dr. Sukon! You have the floor.

(5.31 p.m.)

The Minister of Tertiary Education, Science and Research (Dr. K. Sukon): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I stand in this august Assembly to share my thoughts on the Government Programme.

First of all, let me thank Dr. the hon. Prime Minister, who, in 2012 entrusted me with the establishment of the Open University, and today, he has given me the responsibility of the entire Higher Education Sector. I thank him wholeheartedly. But I know that the trust of a Prime Minister is not a privilege, it is a responsibility and I can assure him that I am going to dedicate myself to ensure that the sector is taken to greater heights.

I wish to thank the hon. Deputy Prime Minister, my senior colleagues in the Cabinet who are always here to support us, all the MLAs for their support, and for the great victory.

When I look at the Government Programme, it reminds me of what Nelson Mandela had said –

“Education is the most powerful weapon you can use to change the world.”

And this Government Programme, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, indeed has the ingredients to make Mauritius, Mauritius again. The victory that we had, 60-0, is, as my colleagues have said, a historic victory. I would like to relate one story. During the campaign, after returning home around 3 a.m., the next morning very early, I got a call –

« *Doc, j'ai bien besoin de vous parler.* »

« *Qu'est-ce qu'il y a ?* »

« *Non, j'ai bien besoin de vous parler.* »

« *Bien, dis-moi !* »

« *Non, moustass pou rent dan dilait!* »

So, I rushed there, and the person who was in front of me, as if he had seen a ghost, I asked what happened. He showed me a statistic; that of Pulse Analytics, stating that in Constituency No.7, MSM is going to obtain 80% and I started laughing. He looked at me and I said –

“My friend, I have been teaching statistics for 30 years. I have seen very bad statistics but this one is fiction. Scam!”

Later, I came to know that this scam has come up with a price tag of Rs45 million; courtesy of the famous or I must say infamous, MIC, where bad planning meets big money.

So, as has been said by Abraham Lincoln –

“You can fool some of the people all of the time, and all of the people some of the time, but you cannot fool all of the people all of the time.”

I think that this victory is a victory for the people despite the fact that *l'Alliance Lepep* and MSM have been distributing lenses to distort the vision of the people. We have been supporting the people and the people rightly so, decided to change their thoughts in order to see the truth with clarity. The question that I have often been asked – Why join the Labour Party?

I must say that each time the Labour Party has been in government, our education system has been flourishing because we believe that education is not simply accumulating knowledge but it is about igniting the curiosity and the creativity in each one of our students. I, myself, have been from a family of five children. My four elder sisters were sent to star schools. I was the little one. Out of pure love, my father said –

“The little one, he learns, he doesn’t learn, it does not matter. Send him to the primary school of the village.”

The school is in my Constituency – the Plaine St Cloud RCA School. No star school, just a school where I learnt that success is not where you start; it’s how determined you are to rise.

So, if you look at the history that each time the Labour Party has been there – I take the example of 1970. We had the MIE; despite the financial crunch at that time, it was decided to set up the MIE, the MGI. Even the University of Mauritius was officially inaugurated at that time. In 2012, two universities had been established, the Open University and Université des Mascareignes. I can tell you that today, Open University – I was there – has the highest enrolment and is nearly financially independent.

The world today is focusing on inclusive education but let me remind the House that already in the 70’s, we had the Junior Secondary School that provided a balance between academic and technical education. So, I am sure that this government is going to take education to even greater heights. If you look at our tertiary education sector, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, today, we have around 50,000 students enrolled. 60% of them are enrolled in the public universities, one quarter in private and the remaining are studying abroad.

However, the gross tertiary enrolment ratio has stagnated to around 49% over the last decade. And what is worrying is that many of our public higher educations are in financial turmoil. True is it that we have 43 institutions registered with the Higher Education Commission with around 2,800 foreign students but to give you one example, one of the main public universities, if I look at the Annual Report ending 30 June 2023, had a deficit of Rs111 million, making a cumulative deficit of Rs2.1 billion over the last 10 years. This is unacceptable; we will have to turn around this situation. And here, I trust the academics, the non-academics, the researchers, the regulators and the staff working in this sector to turn around the entire situation in the higher education sector.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, when we look at what happened in 2013, Mauritius was the first country that welcomed an IIT outside India. The IIT Research Academy was established

in 2013. What happened in 2015? The previous government sent them back. Can you imagine?

What is more dishonest on the part of the previous government and a shameful act is that on 12 September 2013, the hon. Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, inaugurated a plaque at Bel Air Campus. In 2015, we were told to remove that plaque. Shameful act! Disrespectful, because you never do that! The Bel Air Campus remained closed for several years. In 2015, they asked the University of Mauritius and Open University to close that. There were hundreds of students there; the students had to be displaced.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am not here only to dwell on the past but to talk about our plans for the future as stated in the Government Programme. The Government Programme talks about three important aspects.

Internationalisation – Internationalisation has been proven to play a pivotal role in helping universities worldwide. When you talk about internationalisation, it takes various forms.

First, we are trying to brand the higher education. Mauritius is known for the sand and the sea; we want Mauritius to be known for its higher education. It is peaceful, that is the first thing. Any parent abroad willing to send his child to study will realise that Mauritius is peaceful. That is one of our strengths. We have a good standard of living and a good quality of education. People do not realise that our academics are right among the best. We have academics who are ranked among the best in the world in their field. Only yesterday, I was at the University of Mauritius where we had professors from abroad working together with our academics.

It is well established that enrolling international students is a financially strategic move for universities worldwide. In this context, what we are doing is to have a strategic plan for the higher education sector, have a strong brand for the higher education for Mauritius and hold a higher education summit. To launch the study in Mauritius campaign and websites, forge alliances with leading universities and research centres and facilitate accreditation processes. I must here say previously, if you had a top university coming with the programme, it had to be submitted to HEC and HEC would ask that university to review the curriculum, which they would not do. Many universities lost such programmes and such partnership because of this. So, we are reviewing the accreditation process.

We are also enhancing the quality assurance framework for our courses by forging alliances with quality assurance agencies worldwide. We are encouraging higher education institutions to generate funds. We are asking professors: 'please, there is no harm you are teaching at your wand. But we would like you to use your time to start your centre, to generate revenue, to do consultancy and to bring income to the university.' We are also making an appeal to the industry. Unfortunately, no university in the world can afford to have the equipment that is there in the factories/industry.

Therefore, we are making an appeal to the industry to open the doors so that our students can go there and learn so that they are eventually ready for the job. We are also encouraging our academics to think beyond publication. Very often, our academics are happy, done their research, publish it in a good journal and they are happy. We are encouraging them to move the horizon, transform it into a business, into a patent. We are also developing partnership and innovation hubs to link academia and industry both here and abroad and prioritizing and supporting research for impact in fields such as climate change, food security, AI, water resources and management.

We are promoting incubator system so that we have young talents supported in order to develop their business and employ, create jobs. The future of education is digital, inclusive and lifelong. We are planning to integrate micro credentials, AI powered learning and flexible e-learning pathways. You would realise that most of our public universities do not have a proper Learning Management System (LMS) and a Student Information Management System. So, we are trying to ensure that they have the proper equipment to be able to deliver the programmes.

We are also working to expand technical and vocational educational and create clear pathways to higher education. Unlike the previous government which failed to engage with education leaders on a regular basis, we are taking necessary actions. We are establishing key national committees. First, the National Committee on Research Strategy in order to take research strategy forward. We are inviting researchers. In fact, we had put a bar on it, researchers with high H-Index, but we have opened it now to welcome researchers who have been publishing in good journals to join, in order to take the research strategy forward.

We have a committee on internationalisation of high education. It cannot happen overnight, we are late! Even if we start the branding today, it will not happen overnight. But we have started immediately a committee on internationalisation to look at all the aspects. A

committee to look at the branding and global positioning of our high education sector and a national committee on TVEC advancement. I am also working together with Business Mauritius in order to set up a National Advisory Committee on curriculum development. We have been talking about mismatch between demand and supply of labour. We cannot eliminate that mismatch, but we can reduce it together. So, we will have national committee on curriculum development together with people from the industry.

The question they have to answer is if tomorrow you have to recruit someone, someone who has followed this course, would you recruit that person, yes or no? If no, how can we amend the curriculum. We will also have a common internship platform to allow students from all the universities to apply on that common platform. On this side of the House, I must say that inspired by the hon. Prime Minister and hon. Deputy Prime Minister, we do not want to go where the path may lead; we want to go instead where there is no path and leave a trail as said by Emerson.

So, to conclude, let me express my deepest gratitude to my two colleagues hon. Dr. Prayag and hon. *Me* Pentiah and to all the constituents of my constituency for their support. I would also like to thank my family members, my wife and my sons and all my supporters, all my friends who keep on providing their support. Together, we can build a future of progress, unity and transformation. Finally, to my mom and dad who had the vision to see me here. Thank you for your blessings, I am here.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I commend the Government Programme to the House.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. Minister.

Hon. François, you have 10 minutes!

(5.51 p.m.)

Mr F. François (Second Member for Rodrigues): 13 minutes; 3 minutes from my colleague! Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

La patience, la résilience, le silence et le discernement sont les maîtres mots que nous avons pu mesurer lors des élections nationales de 2024. Le choix du changement ici à Maurice et le choix de la correction à Rodrigues, nous incombent une grande responsabilité collective pour le pays et pour son peuple souverain. *Batiseur linite nou nation, kreolite nou Repiblik, pran to plas!*

M. le président, ceci-dit, je vous félicite pour votre élection au poste de *Deputy Speaker*, ainsi que *Madam Speaker*. Au nom fraternel du peuple de Rodrigues et de l'OPR, je félicite le Premier ministre, le Dr. Ramgoolam ; le *Deputy Prime Minister*, l'honorable Paul Bérenger ; le leader de l'opposition, l'honorable Lesjongard ; les leaders, l'honorable Subron et Duval ; l'*Attorney General*, l'honorable Glover, les ministres, *Junior Ministers*, et à l'ensemble des élus de cette auguste Assemblée. Je remercie l'honorable Dr. Thannoo pour sa motion de remerciement.

Je félicite ma colistière, l'honorable Marie Roxana Collet, deuxième femme élue de l'OPR, après feu Zita Jean Louis en 1987. *What can I say? Let us keep the OPR candle burning forever and dare not let it fade!* Je remercie mon grand leader honorifique, Louis Serge Clair, pour la confiance qu'il a placée en moi, en tant que nouveau leader de l'OPR. Je remercie toute ma famille pour son soutien inconditionnel. Bon travail par le Commissaire électoral, Monsieur Irfan Raman, et toute son équipe.

M. le président, dans la confiance, le peuple de Rodrigues m'a élu pour une quatrième fois, un quatrième mandat consécutif depuis 2010. J'ai écouté, j'ai entendu, j'ai compris et nous avons tiré des leçons. Quelle victoire historique pour l'OPR face à une alliance gouvernementale instable. Un fait sans précédent dans l'histoire politique du Rodrigues autonome. Merci à la force collective du peuple, dirigeants et militants de l'OPR, en particulier *bann madam. Nou inn' koriz l'Alliance Libération.*

L'OPR, fidèle à ses principes démocratiques, travaille toujours avec le gouvernement central du jour dans l'intérêt de la République et de Rodrigues, tout en respectant son autonomie, peu importe le parti ou l'alliance politique au pouvoir. Je tiens à remercier sincèrement le Premier ministre, Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, et le Premier ministre adjoint, Paul Bérenger, pour avoir honoré l'OPR et Rodrigues au sein de ce gouvernement.

L'OPR souligne les contributions des différents gouvernements nationaux au développement de Rodrigues. Cependant, de nombreux défis demeurent et des investissements considérables sont indispensables. Mais avec qui à la tête de Rodrigues ? Le gouvernement central et Rodrigues autonome, conformément au respect du principe de subsidiarité territoriale, doivent inspirer la confiance mutuelle. Le manifeste électoral 2024 de l'OPR s'engage à faire avancer la République et l'île Rodrigues autonome, affirmée et respectée, car, il y a urgence de –

- Sauver Rodrigues et son autonomie,
- Redonner espoir au peuple, en particulier à la jeunesse, et
- Rétablir la confiance et la dignité de Rodrigues.

Nous souhaitons orienter Rodrigues vers une autonomie fiscale, énergétique, une souveraineté alimentaire, la modernité et l'innovation. L'OPR propose de grands projets nécessitant un engagement ferme du gouvernement central, notamment –

- Améliorer la connectivité avec la construction de l'aéroport de Plaine Corail et la modernisation du port de Port Mathurin.
- La construction de deux barrages à Fond Anse Baleine et Pavé La Bonté ; un deuxième câble optique, et un projet complet de traitement des eaux usées.
- Renforcer la complémentarité économique entre Rodrigues et Maurice, par exemple, en instaurant un marché préférentiel.
- Assurer l'inclusion de Rodrigues dans les principaux projets de développement nationaux, notamment, la santé et la lutte contre le changement climatique.
- Réformer la loi sur l'autonomie et le système électoral en adoptant une représentation proportionnelle améliorée pour garantir la stabilité.
- Présenter trois candidats pour Rodrigues aux élections législatives.
- Réduire le coût de la vie et de créer l'égalité. *Enn sase lanti a Port-Louis bizin mem pri a Port Sud-Est ek Rivière-Coco dan Rodrig, et*
- Un « Projet de loi et un Plan spécial d'égalité pour Rodrigues – Horizon 2050 », visant à équilibrer le développement économique et progrès social.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, now, allow me to comment on a few aspects of the Government Programme that inspire a realistic direction, vision and optimism for our Republic, alongside special attention to the needs and aspirations of Rodrigues.

With the advent of e-politics and e-democracy, I appreciate that the Republic will transition to a people-centric system – e-citizen governance. This could be through a virtuous cycle – by eliminating bureaucracy and fully digitalising services. I commend hon. Minister Dr. Ramtohul’s speech, in spearheading a new AI strategy and identity to transform our Republic across key sectors, based on the principles of e-inclusion and e-democracy. Dr. hon. Ms Thannoo also highlighted the need for a system change. I will refer them to the insightful book by a Mauritian scholar in Australia, my friend, Dr. Soobhiraj Bungraz, entitled ‘Upgrading Political Systems with Purposive Technology: A Performing Democracy – 2024th Edition’. The book suggests that purposive assistive technology can enhance political systems, democratising and upgrading them through productive and collaborative engagement. The framework leverages technology to create e-democracy and e-politics, enhancing the productivity of parliamentarians – we, here, parliamentarians –, the effectiveness of parliamentary decision-making, and promoting democratic sustainability.

In 2019, we proposed an e-democracy preparedness with an e-politics framework to enhance Rodrigues’s political system through a Political Intelligence Application. A prototype of the application has already been developed for a pilot test by NDU and the then Rodrigues-CAB Office, recently closed.

The proposed constitutional amendments and nature rights amendments align with our, as I said, OPR manifesto 2024, and the visionary proposals made by hon. Joanna Bérenger, and myself, during the 2020 Climate Change Bill debate.

Since 2022, no major drainage projects have been implemented in Rodrigues, despite approvals by LDA and financial clearances obtained. There is urgency to address this issue.

Hon. Dr. Gungapersad, we are looking forward to the *Assises de l’éducation*, as Rodrigues seeks an educational reform and model that align, and adapt with our socio-economic realities.

The Government should prioritise strengthening Rodrigues' public health services by first of all, redeveloping Queen Elizabeth Hospital (QEH) existing master plan, providing essential equipment like a CT-Scan, emphasising cancer prevention, and training for health personnel. I will also urge for a health service and clinical audit for Rodrigues.

Hon. Nagalingum and hon. Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha, our youth, as a driving force of our Republic, should be prioritised and constitutionally institutionalised, for all government actions and initiatives in their favour, and also to cultivate a new generation of patriots.

Rodrigues requires the construction of a new police headquarters and a modern courthouse. Mr Sam Lauthan and also, hon. Dr. Gungapersad, this morning, appealed that the rise of synthetic drug trafficking must also be urgently addressed by all stakeholders to protect Rodrigues. *Kiltir lamor napa so plas dan Rodrig!*

An hon. Member: *Ni à Maurice !*

Mr François: *Ni à Maurice ! Très bien !*

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, since 2022, water distribution frequencies in Rodrigues have worsened, from at least once a month to twice a year. The way forward is water production to sustainably substantially produce at least 10,000 m³ daily, rather than just 3,000 m³. OPR projected a comprehensive potable water production plan through the Rs1 billion from MIC.

Avant de conclure, permettez-moi d'aborder brièvement la situation socio-politique actuelle de Rodrigues – je ne vais pas être long – en lien avec son autonomie et le discours programme, en me référant aux paragraphes 6, 10 et 39, en matière de confiance, d'éthique, de bonne gouvernance, et de l'utilisation judicieuse du budget. Je partage certaines préoccupations pour Rodrigues mais, je constate la non-cohérence et des contradictions diamétralement opposées entre certains discours et la réalité des actions locales – une médaille à deux faces. Mon peuple souffre gravement, M. le président. Nous ne pouvons rester silencieux, car cela serait complice de cette souffrance. *OPR – nou le seki bon e bien pou Rodrig.* Rodrigues va mal. Rodrigues est en déclin : népotisme, désordre, l'instabilité, boycottage et chantage politique interne, démantèlements et menaces dans la fonction publique, dégradation de l'utilisation de la finance publique, contrairement à l'OPR qui a beaucoup accompli avec des ressources limitées. Un audit complet de la gestion des finances est nécessaire.

Rodrigues traverse des crises sans précédent : *lake partou*, pénuries d'eau, carburant, alimentation animale, l'insécurité d'emploi, l'injustice sociale – aucune maison sociale n'ayant été construite ces trois dernières années.

C'est une insulte à l'intelligence du peuple et une haute trahison envers notre autonomie, pour laquelle nous avons lutté pour montrer la capacité de Rodrigues. L'OPR dit non à la voyoucratie politique.

M. le président, messieurs le Premier Ministre et Premier ministre adjoint, en âme et conscience, *bizin met enn frin. Governman rezional pe krisifie lavenir Rodrig. They have to go!* Le peuple de Rodrigues et l'OPR, nous demandons la dissolution de l'Assemblée Régionale de Rodrigues le plus vite possible afin de convoquer des élections anticipées pour la confiance, la stabilité et la sérénité. Donnons au peuple l'opportunité de corriger ce qui est corrigé – Correction épisode 2.

Le gouvernement central a un rôle protecteur pour garantir l'avenir de Rodrigues. L'OPR assume sa part de responsabilité et fait appel à toute la population. L'espoir pour Rodrigues réside dans un grand retour de l'OPR comme voie de la confiance, nécessitant un nouveau pacte d'engagement vers un nouvel horizon.

Pour conclure, M. le président, je dis, dans l'unité, rétablissons la confiance, préservons nos acquis, renforçons notre autonomie pour une Île Rodrigues autonome, affirmée et respectée. *Nou pei, nou pep, nou destin.*

Je vous remercie.

The Deputy Speaker: Merci! Can I call upon the hon. Juman!

(6.03 p.m.)

Mr E. Juman (First Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East): Merci, M. le président. Je remercie l'honorable Dr. Ms Thannoo pour la motion. Cela me donne l'occasion cet après-midi de participer au débat. Je vous félicite pour la présentation et *for your maiden speech.*

Je remercie le Premier ministre pour m'avoir témoigné sa confiance, me donner l'occasion de se présenter pour la deuxième fois à la Circonscription No. 3 comme candidat et je dois vous dire, M. le président, il y avait un certain moment, le PMSD était allié avec nous. Le PMSD voulait à tout prix avoir un ticket au No. 3, mais le Premier ministre m'a dit

–

« Pas de question de te bouger du No.3 et *si fale pena* l'alliance. »

Et je dois remercier le *Deputy Prime Minister* et le ministre Dr. Sukon, le ministre R. Duval pour la confiance qu'ils ont placée en moi, me donner l'occasion de représenter l'Alliance du Changement dans ma circonscription. Et je dois dire, M. le président, c'est avec beaucoup de fierté que je m'adresse à la Chambre au nom de la Circonscription No. 3 et je peux vous dire, M. le président, sur dix électeurs qui ont voté aux dernières élections, plus de huit électeurs ont voté pour moi et mes collègues. Vous réalisez, plus de huit électeurs ont voté pour l'Alliance du Changement alors que les représentants du gouvernement sortant n'ont pas même eu deux électeurs sur dix qui ont voté pour eux. C'est un vote du changement massif.

Je dois dire que la responsabilité aussi est énorme sur nos épaules mais avec le Premier ministre et le *Deputy Prime Minister* et tout le monde ensemble, je suis sûre qu'on va atteler au travail et on va réussir. Mais je dois dire aussi, M. le président, pendant la campagne électorale, on a beaucoup parlé. Moi j'ai fait campagne, moi-même j'ai dit et mes collègues ont souhaité, parce qu'on sentait qu'il y avait un problème dans le pays. Ici, je vous dis qu'on a voté pour le changement. Le changement maintenant ça se sent, ça se voit. C'est palpable. Grâce à vous, M. le président et Madame la présidente, vous avez restauré la démocratie au sein de cet auguste Assemblée. C'est cela le plus important. Le changement ça commence ici et c'est visible. Et aussi je dois dire que pendant la campagne, j'ai dit qu'on va baisser le prix parce qu'on sentait il y avait un problème. On va baisser le prix de l'essence, le prix de diesel, on va faire beaucoup de choses pour alléger, pour soulager la population.

Mais malheureusement, M. le président, je ne savais pas, nous ne savions pas ce qui nous attendait. On croyait vraiment, sincèrement, moi je disais sur tous les médias, meetings, partout je disais – on est au bout du précipice. Le pays est au bout du précipice mais après le 09, on se retrouve au fond du précipice. Ce n'est pas au bout, c'est au fond du précipice, non plus au fond du précipice mais on est recouvert de débris. Maintenant, on doit déblayer le débris. On doit sortir du précipice. On ne savait pas ce que nous attendait.

Vous réalisez, M. le président, R 5,300 millions investies pour écouter nos conversations téléphoniques. Vous réalisez R 5.3 milliards ? Rien pour la maintenance de ces équipements, R 350 millions par mois ? Est-ce que vous réalisez, M. le président, CWA – on a entendu ce matin, pour un contrat d'un milliard de roupies, on a alloué, on a donné les petits copains de gauche à droite, on a dépensé R 1.8 milliards et aujourd'hui un an après, on

n'arrive même pas à payer les contracteurs. On n'arrive même pas à payer les fournisseurs de matériaux à la hauteur de centaines de millions de roupies.

Et eux, ils posent des questions. Posez des questions sur *pipe replacement*, sur *SME*, des centaines, des milliards de roupies dépensées, pas de compte. Voilà où nous en sommes aujourd'hui ! Cluny, l'exemple vivant R 75 millions. Vous voulez que je continue, M. le président ?

Overtime – aujourd'hui, *overtime* au ministère de la Santé – voilà le ministre peut nous confirmer – R 1.2 milliards. Des médecins, les personnels hospitaliers qui ont travaillé pendant la Covid pendant six mois, un an, n'ont pas encore eu leur *overtime*, leur dû. Voilà ! Et *we expect them to give us service*. Un an, deux ans, trois ans *overtime* dû.

NPF, *NSF*, vous savez il y a quatre mois de cela, ici, on m'a traîné de force, on a demandé à tous les policiers de venir me retirer de cette Chambre ? On m'a traité –

“Carry him away! He is dangerous! Too dangerous for this House. Carry him away!”

On m'a humilié!

“Collect this man!”

Yes, I was dangerous. I was dangerous for the then Prime Minister. I was dangerous for the then Speaker. I told them that they all will be swept away very soon and today we all know where they are. Hope they are listening to me. The then Prime Minister had said –

« *Li ti dir li servi larzan lepep kumadir so kas. Li depans kas lepep kuma so kas* ».

M. le président, si c'était son argent, est-ce qu'il aurait loué un bâtiment à la hauteur de R 4.6 millions par mois, laissé vide pendant des mois, pendant six, sept, huit mois à Monsieur N. G. Si c'était son argent, aurait-il fait ça ? Si c'était son argent, est-ce que la *SBM* aurait *buy back loan from SBM* pour Maradiva ? Et si c'était son argent, est-ce qu'il aurait donné 1 milliard de roupies de gauche à droite de la *MIC* ?

M. le président, il y a 2-3 semaines de cela j'ai posé une question à l'honorable ministre, mon collègue, l'honorable Shakeel Mohamed. R 2 milliards dues – des personnes qui ont loué terrains à bail avec l'État, pas géométriques – R 2 milliards qui auraient dues être dans la caisse de l'État aujourd'hui, ne sont pas là. Et de ce R 2 milliards, R 900 millions due plus de deux ans. R 475 millions Pack & Blister, aujourd'hui cinq ans après, on n'a ni respirateur, on n'a ni l'argent. Les respirateurs sont stockés en Italie et on est en train de

payer des millions de roupies par mois, on est en train de payer des avocats pour des frais légaux en Italie – ni respirateurs ni l’argent. R 300 millions, médicaments périmés, voilà le ministre peut nous confirmer après. R 300 millions, médicaments périmés. R 20.2 milliards manipulées sur la dette publique, R 20. 2 milliards. Aujourd’hui la dette publique est arrivée à R 608 milliards. Le Premier ministre nous avait promis ‘*one trillion economy*’, avec eux c’est *one trillion debt*.

Voilà, ça c’est la réalité. Je peux continuer, ça c’est l’argent...

The Deputy Speaker: You got only two minutes left!

Mr Juman: *Only two!*

M. le président, aujourd’hui, à *lekol gourvernman* Emmanuel Anquetil à Roche Bois, les factures de téléphone n’ont pas été payées depuis 2015. Il aurait fallu que l’honorable Dr. Gungapersad vient au poste pour les payer. Maintenant, les enfants ont accès à l’internet et ils ont leur téléphone. Vous réalisez, le taux de réussite dans l’école de Roche Bois est à 15 %. Voilà le crime qu’ils ont commis contre leur peuple. Voilà !

On a un grand chantier, M. le président. Le Premier ministre et le *Deputy Prime Minister* sont en train de travailler. La drogue est en train de ravager notre pays. Il faut redonner confiance à nos institutions. C’est ce qu’on fait aujourd’hui. Il faut redonner confiance à nos institutions. Il faut booster la morale de nos fonctionnaires pour rehausser le niveau de service au sein de notre fonction publique.

Partout, c’est gangrené, M. le président. On a un gros travail à faire. Mais ce n’est pas impossible avec le soutien de tout le monde. Derrière le Premier ministre et le *Deputy Prime Minister*, derrière nous, ce n’est pas un 60-0. J’en profite pour dire merci à mon électorat et merci à la population. Il faut nous faire confiance ; il faut nous soutenir ; il faut être derrière nous. On est en train de jeter les bases, pas pour demain, pas pour cinq ans, mais pour les prochaines 25-30 ans. Peut-être moi, peut-être beaucoup parmi nous ne serons pas là. Mais ce n’est pas cela qui est important. C’est l’avenir de ce pays qui est important.

On est en train de travailler dans cette direction. Que Dieu nous bénisse ! Je suis sûr qu’on va réussir. Merci, M. le président !

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you! Hon. David!

(6.14 p.m.)

The Junior Minister of Agro-Industry, Food Security, Blue Economy and Fisheries (Mr F. David) : M. le président, je me joins naturellement à l'élan de félicitations qui ont entouré votre élection ainsi que celle de la présidente de notre Assemblée nationale.

Notre nouvel hémicycle sous votre présidence a retrouvé ses lettres de noblesse après que ce temple a été souillé par un régime autocrate soutiré par un arbitre arbitraire, qui, au lieu d'être le gardien de ce temple, s'était transformé en gardien de but pour protéger le roi soleil et sa cour !

Fort heureusement, M. le président, la monarchie est tombée et la démocratie a été restaurée. J'aimerais rappeler à cette Chambre et à celles et ceux qui m'écoutent, comment le Monarque a été renversé. Le roi soleil a été détrôné grâce à cette arme : un stylo, une plume !

Le 10 novembre dernier, des milliers de Mauriciens se sont rendus dans les 305 centres de vote avec leurs propres stylos dans la poche, dans les sacs, parfois autour du cou, au bout d'une chaîne. Avec ce stylo, ils ont tiré un trait sur le règne MSM. Avec ce stylo, ils ont décidé d'écrire une nouvelle page de notre histoire avec notre Alliance du Changement !

Je comprends enfin et mieux aujourd'hui l'expression – *The pen is mightier than the sword.*

Avec le soutien de la population, M. le président, nous avons brisé la dictature. *BLD.* Nous avons *BLD.* Et, aujourd'hui, M. le président, alors que je me tiens debout devant vous dans cette Assemblée, alors que pendant les cinq dernières années, avec mes 24 collègues de l'opposition de l'époque, nous sommes restés assis. J'étais, pour ma part, assis à la place de l'honorable Apollon. Nous étions assis, mais nos idées et nos valeurs étaient debout. Et, aujourd'hui, M. le président, permettez- moi, en tant que président de l'aile jeune du Parti travailliste, de dire ma joie, de dire ma fierté, de voir 10 membres du *Young Labour* aujourd'hui devenus membres du Parlement.

Et, avec les membres de la jeunesse militantes, membres de la jeunesse résistantes, membres de la nouvelle jeunesse démocrates, nous mesurons la chance qui est la nôtre aujourd'hui que de cheminer aux côtés des géants de la politique comme le Premier ministre, le Dr. Ramgoolam, comme le Premier ministre adjoint, l'honorable Bérenger, comme l'honorable Bhagwan, comme l'honorable Dr. Boolell. Ces grandes figures de la politique ont marqué l'histoire de ce Parlement alors que plusieurs parmi nous, et moi y compris, nous étions encore sur les bancs de l'école. Et, aujourd'hui, expérience et jeunesse cheminent ensemble pour écrire une nouvelle histoire, pour construire un pont vers l'avenir. *A bridge to*

the future ! Thème de notre programme gouvernemental pour les cinq prochaines années. À vrai dire, M. le président, il nous reste 56 mois.

Mais avant de développer rapidement un ou deux points de notre programme, débattre sur la motion de l'honorable Dr. Mme Thannoo que je félicite, permettez-moi, M. le président, de saluer et de remercier les électeurs de ma circonscription, la première circonscription du pays, la circonscription N°1 Port Louis West/Grande Rivière Nord-Ouest, pour la confiance qu'ils m'ont accordée en faisant de moi pour la deuxième fois consécutive leur premier député.

Avec humilité, je mesure ce que cela représente comme responsabilité. Je sais aussi à quel point leurs besoins sont immenses, que leurs attentes sont nombreuses. J'ai envie de leur dire à travers la caméra qu'avec mes deux collègues, la ministre Navarre-Marie et le ministre délégué Parapen, nous avons déjà commencé à travailler ensemble pour changer votre quotidien, pour changer votre environnement, pour changer votre avenir.

M. le président, notre programme gouvernemental, dans son volet '*A New Economic Model*' précise à la page 11 que notre vision inclut '*Better Exploring and Exploiting the Potential of the Ocean Economy*'. Et là, je dois vous dire, M. le président, que l'ancien régime MSM s'est noyé dans un océan de néant. Alors que le gouvernement Travailleurs avait déjà, en 2013, sous le leadership du Premier ministre de l'époque, Dr. Ramgoolam, qui est à nouveau Premier ministre aujourd'hui, et ses alliés, avaient produit après plusieurs concertations, après un travail de fond, en décembre 2013, ce document : *The Ocean Economy – A Roadmap for Mauritius*. Et, dans ce document, les dirigeants de l'époque avaient déjà détaillé, présenté les *Ocean Economic Clusters*, comme la recherche des minéraux sous-marins, les projets d'aquaculture innovants, les biotechnologies marines, les *deep ocean water applications*, ou encore les énergies renouvelables de la mer.

Le gouvernement MSM aurait très bien pu avoir repris ce document, mettre de l'orange partout, mettre du soleil aux quatre coins, s'approprié le projet et faire comme s'il s'était intéressé à l'économie bleue, à l'économie de notre océan. Mais, M. le président, même cela, ils n'ont pas été capables de le faire. Aujourd'hui, après plus de 10 ans de retard accumulé, c'est notre gouvernement du Changement qui va développer ce nouveau secteur économique grâce à la vision du Premier ministre, avec la détermination du ministre de l'Économie bleue en collaboration avec d'autres ministères et sur la base de nouvelles consultations avec toutes les parties prenantes : la société civile, les ONG, les partenaires sociaux, le secteur privé, les

universitaires, les scientifiques, les experts internationaux notamment à travers des Assises de l'océan qui seront tenues au cours du deuxième trimestre de cette année.

M. le président, il est impensable, aujourd'hui, de se dire qu'alors que nous sommes entourés de 2,2 millions de kilomètres carrés de zone économique exclusive, notre population mauricienne n'a toujours pas un accès équitable et durable aux poissons. Un mauricien, M. le président, consomme en moyenne 28 kg de poissons à l'année, ce qui fait une consommation annuelle pour la population d'environ 30 000 t, et tenez-vous bien, M. le président, sur ces 30 000 t, la production locale n'est que de 10 000 t. Nous sommes contraints, alors que nous avons la mer, un océan, des poissons tout autour de notre pays nous sommes contraints d'importer 20 000 t de poissons chaque année de la Chine, de l'Indonésie, de la Turquie ou encore du Sri Lanka.

Nous ne produisons qu'un tiers de ce que nous consommons alors que nos bancs de pêche à Saya De Malha, Nazareth ou encore Albatross, parmi tant d'autres, regorgent de plusieurs milliers de tonnes de poissons non exploités. Aux Seychelles, où je devais me rendre la semaine dernière pour la signature d'un accord sur un plan régional de pêche avec les autres pays de l'océan Indien jusqu'à ce que Garance en décide autrement, c'est précisément l'inverse. Les Seychelles produisent deux tiers de ce qu'ils consomment. En ligne, M. le président, avec notre discours programme, nous allons changer cela, notamment en démocratisant la pêche semi industrielle, et en priorité pour les pêcheurs et les opérateurs mauriciens. Quant aux bateaux de pêche étrangers qui pêchent dans nos eaux sur une licence mauricienne délivrée par notre ministère de la Pêche, nous allons leur imposer qu'ils débarquent tous leurs poissons à Port-Louis, et pas ailleurs. Comme l'a rappelé l'honorable ministre, le Dr. Boolell, dans son intervention le 7 février dernier, nous prévoyons la construction d'un véritable port de pêche et la mise en place d'un grand marché aux enchères des produits de la mer.

M. le président, le temps m'est bientôt compté et je vois le regard pesant...

The Deputy Speaker: You are already out of time!

Mr David: ...et bienveillant de la *Chief Whip*, je termine !

À travers ce méga ministère de la terre et la mer, M. le président, avec l'honorable ministre, le Dr. Boolell, nous avons la responsabilité des pêcheurs, des planteurs, des éleveurs, nous nous occupons des fruits de la mer, de la pomme de terre, de l'importation du bétail, de la production de miel, du développement de l'industrie cannière, de la lutte contre

la pêche illégale, du carbone bleu des océans, de l'énergie vert de la biomasse, de la conservation des parcs et forêts, de la problématique des chiens errants et du combat contre la maltraitance animale.

Une dernière phrase ! Un immense changement nous attend, attend le pays. Ce changement longtemps rêvé par notre nation, aujourd'hui incarné par nous, le gouvernement du changement. Soyons donc, les catalyseurs de ce changement, les accompagnateurs de cette transition écologique, énergétique et numérique. Soyons les bâtisseurs de ce pont vers l'avenir. Un avenir pour réussir, un avenir pour unir et un avenir pour grandir.

J'en ai terminé, M. le président.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Dr. the hon. Minister Gungapersad! 20 minutes!

(6.26 p.m.)

The Minister of Education and Human Resource (Dr. M. Gungapersad): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

In a testament of hope, Martin Luther King Jr. said –

“You know my friends, there comes a time when people get tired of being trampled over by the iron feet of oppression. There comes a time my friends, when people get tired of being plunged across the abyss of humiliation, where they experience the bleakness of nagging despair.”

Prior to 10 November 2024, the country was facing the situation of despair. This country was being trampled over by the iron boot of the MSM government. Whether it was inside this Parliament or outside, whether it was in day-to-day life or, whether it was on social platforms, on Facebook, this MSM government oppressed the population. Then, two leaders of this country, they put their heads together, their hearts together, in order to unlock the destiny of this country. I have named the present Prime Minister, Dr. the hon. Navinchandra Ramgoolam and the present Deputy Prime Minister – two stalwarts, two great leaders of this country.

For five years, as a Member of this Assembly, under another Speaker who was a loud speaker. This man, each time we had a session, literally humiliated us. Leave aside young Parliamentarians, new Parliamentarians like me, but stalwarts like hon. Paul Raymond Bérenger, stalwarts like hon. Rajesh Bhagwan, hon. Dr. Arvin Boolell! What did they not do in this Parliament to communalise this country? Sitting accommodation so that on MBC you

will see only a few faces – myself thrown at the back purposely; hon. Ritesh Ramful sent somewhere; hon. Wochit sent somewhere else. Understand what I am not saying. What picture they wanted to project to this country? They wanted to demonise certain people. What message were they sending outside to this country? Like this Prime Minister, Dr. the hon. Navinchandra Ramgoolam often says: imagine for one minute – forget one minute it is too long, 60 seconds – for one second, if that government was inside this Parliament today and we were a few again, what would they not have done? What had they not done to us to break our morale?

And it is important. At this point in time, I read one of the most famous verses of Rabindranath Tagore to this House. Earlier, I would not have done it that much because there were not enough people in this Parliament during last mandate so that you could talk about philosophy, literature, and great minds. Who would listen to you? *Laptop eklate? Karo sab? Karo sebo? Savat dodo? Rocco? Serf?*

(Interruptions)

You heard a Prime Minister, the previous Prime Minister – I am not going to name him – *inculte* as compared to the present one, cultured man, man who reads, man who knows what is international diplomacy, who is constructing a bridge with the world. This is what we want, this is the change we are talking about. You just listened to few orators' today. Hon. Fabrice David, it was 03 February 2020 – that is not a coincidence – you and me, we had our maiden speeches on day, and again today, one after the other like two brothers, destiny bringing us again.

Let me read what Rabindranath Tagore wrote in the 35th stanza of his Nobel-winning Gitanjali. You know it, the well versed of this House will know it but I am reading it for the new generation, I want it to be in the Hansard for the future, and let us meditate on what Tagore said. Having been the previous rector of Tagore, this is a book I carry since then, and I do not know how long –

“Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high;

Where knowledge is free;

Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls;

Where words come out from the depth of truth;

Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection;

Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into dreary desert sand of dead habit;

Where the mind is lead forward by thee into ever-widening thought and action –

Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake.”

This is what we want for Mauritius. We do not want a Mauritius which is fragmented, which is ‘broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls’ of communalism. This is what was happening in this country.

The way hon. Ehsan Juman, the way hon. Shakeel Mohamed, the way hon. Patrick Assirvaden were treated or ill-treated – I do not know, by that government – when they were coming and unearthing scandals in this House, it took a communal touch. Just like hon. Reza Uteem would come and talk about figures, they would give that a touch of communalism.

What didn’t they do to the ladies who were hon. Members of that time? Four days before International Day of Women which we are going to celebrate, let me congratulate Madam Speaker for being a lady who has poise and the way she presides over the affairs of this Assembly. In absentia, if we could applaud that lady for the way she is handling the affairs. That said, let me put a comma. What about the lovely ladies, hon. ladies of this House? *Vous êtes la fierté de l’île Maurice.*

Ms Anquetil: Merci, Mahend!

Dr. Gungapersad: What hasn’t hon. Stephanie Anquetil bore and endured; hon. Mrs Navarre-Marie, hon. Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha and hon. Ms Joanna Bérenger? What didn’t they do to break their morale? I salute you, ladies because you stood a loud Speaker; you stood oppression. In spite of being trampled over, you resisted and you showed the way and today, you are here. What were they not saying during their speeches – the different Members of that government? They thought that at one point, they were going to be eternally here.

We understand our friends are leaving for *Iftaar*. We wish them all the best and to pray for all of us, for humanity.

An hon. Member: Thank you.

Dr. Gungapersad: What were they not saying – humiliating, session after session, those who were present but, especially the present Prime Minister. I was named on several

times. 13, I have counted. A person like me! I come 7th, I think, in the list after hon. Bhagwan, hon. Bérenger, hon. Shakeel Mohamed, and hon. Patrick Assirvaden. An unruly, uncultured person trying to monitor us. Can you imagine what it is, all the education goes to dogs, inside this Assembly at one moment? What were they teaching the population outside? Somebody today asked me, ‘why couldn’t you be a bit harsher towards the former Minister of Education?’ The culture I come from, the education I have, I know how to respect women, and I will do that.

Ms Anquetil: Bravo Mahend!

Dr. Gungapersad: Jean Anouilh said something and it is good for those who are involved in domestic violence to note it. Jean Anouilh said, *il ne faut pas battre une femme – même avec une fleur*. I am a disciple of Jean Anouilh.

How come this country, this Parliament, when the former Prime Minister, peeping Tom – I do not know what type of pleasure he was getting in order to see what the present Prime Minister had or did not have. I cannot understand. I was saying, he had placed a radar, surveillance camera, opposite the house of my good friend, hon. Osman Mahomed, and you imagine with *Moustass Leaks*. He was trying to peep, to hear; I do not know what was happening in this country.

For this, posterity, the future will recognise these two leaders who stood against the tide of time, who stood against all adversities and they rallied their soldiers, and we said: yes, let us get into that journey. I commend hon. Richard Duval; he looked at the interest of the country and he came forward; the interest of the country came before the family ties. I commend the members of *Rezistans ek Alternativ*, you had to stand the test of time and you said yes to this alliance. And together, experienced ones and young ones, we stood as candidates.

In my Constituency – the mention was made by hon. Patrick Assirvaden – one Mr Prakash Maunthrooa, in Petit Raffray, said, ‘*Nou pou détruire le mythe Gungapersad.*’ Humbly, I am saying it. Humbly, I am standing here. Come on, destroy! You are destroyer, we are builders! *On est des bâtisseurs!* I said it during the campaign, my two co-candidates, *colistiers*, everywhere I would have political meetings, I said, I have one dream and that dream is to hold in my right hand, the hand of hon. Nitish Beejan and on the left, hon. Ram Etwareea. *Parole donnée, parole sacrée et c’est réussi grâce à la circonscription no. 6. Merci*

à la circonscription no. 6 pour m'avoir élu pour la deuxième fois. Mersi sirkonskription nimerò 6 pour avoir fait confiance a trwa zanfan sirkonskription, a de zanfan Goodlands e enn zanfan Fond du Sac. Merci l'île Maurice pour nous avoir fait confiance. When I am saying it, definitely like some of you, I also, I am missing my father today, my hero figure who left us four days after the elections.

Now, this MSM thing, c'est important de comprendre son fonctionnement. Et ça n'a pas terminé, avez-vous écouté la conférence de presse du présent leader de l'opposition ? Je ne sais pas quel poste il occupe au MSM. Qu'est-ce qu'il dit ? Letan margož inn' vini. Popilasion aksepte manz margož me pa pou manz fos koze MSM !

This is what this population wants. This population, *c'est une population aguerrie. Une population qui a compris ce que ce gouvernement, l'ancien gouvernement MSM, a fait.* Can you imagine how many people's lives have been destroyed? Can you imagine how it operates? Can you imagine how it has toyed, it has played, with institutions? Can you imagine how it has sullied the reputation of people? Can you imagine how it has humiliated great professionals? Hon. Dr. Farhad Aumeer is not here in this Assembly. You come and try to attack a professional like him and many others? It is important for this population not to forget the multiple wounds inflicted on the soul of Mauritians.

What we now want is a new Mauritius. What we want is a new tryst with destiny, like Nehru would have said it. What we want is a real change. The best change comes inside our heart, whether it is the heart of the MMM, whether it is the heart of Labour Party, whether it is the heart of *Nouveaux Démocrates*, whether it is the heart of *Rezistans ek Alternativ* or whether it is the heart of anyone. We want a change. We want humility to be restored in this country. We want to marry Artificial Intelligence and emotional intelligence. Aristotle rightly said it –

“Educating the mind without educating the heart is no education at all!”

That government had a Rs1,000 note for every problem of this country. He had different Rs1,000 notes to distribute in order to quell any resistance you had against him. They were just spreading; they were sharing money everywhere. The real problems were swept under the carpet. Today, each Minister, each Junior Minister, each MP, when we move the carpet, we realise tons of dust that have accumulated. Name a Ministry where there is no problem! Name an institution where we don't have problem! For ten years, that little,

diminutive Prime Minister asked the question *kot monn fote ? Kot tonn fote ?* History will tell you! I hope he has enough time to sit back and reflect what harm he has done.

One week before the 57th Independence Day, let all of us reaffirm our faith in our motherland, our brotherhood, those walls that they had built against brothers of different communities, let us trample those walls. Let us embrace each other in love! This is what is the new vision of the educational policies of this Government. We are not only going to feed or to educate the brain; we are going to look after the heart also.

The children of this country, whether they form part of the elite or whether they are slow-learners, we want to embrace them as our kids. This is why some people outside are not understanding it when we came with this philosophy of three credit. We are not saying go and get three credits. Some of our kids will not be able to get five or six credits. Some of our children are not endowed. That is why we were so much against the Extended Programme. We have brought in its place the Foundation Programme.

After three years, these kids are going to get a certificate. You imagine how many children have suffered because of the MSM government? Let me tell the population. Over the past three years, 5,927 students have failed the Extended Programme and have left the system without a PSAC or an NCE Certificate. Congratulations to this Government, to the Prime Minister, to the Deputy Prime Minister and everyone who has supported this project.

Give me a few more minutes just to mention the figures.

The Deputy Speaker: You are already over...

Dr. Gungapersad: 5,824 students...

The Deputy Speaker: One more minute to conclude, please!

Dr. Gungapersad: ... did not get the opportunity to get into Lower 6, thanks to that government. This year, we have around 2,500 students who are joining Lower 6. This is the vision of this Government. We have to care for one and all. This Government definitely has a lot of challenges. We know people outside want results. But a tree does not bear fruits overnight, especially over a land that has been mercilessly destroyed by the toxicity of the MSM government.

We have faith in this population. We have faith in everyone. We say thank you to everyone who has supported. More will join us when they will know that we are genuine in our mission.

Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Hon. Members, we are going to break for one hour. This is what has been arranged.

At 6.48 p.m., the Sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 7.52 p.m. with Madam Speaker in Chair.

Madam Speaker: Please be seated. I think we have the quorum, we can start.

So, now, hon. Bachoo!

The Minister of Health and Wellness (Mr A. Bachoo): Madam Speaker, to start with, let me congratulate you, and the Deputy Speaker for having been elected in the House.

The late Jugnauth's government damaged our economy to such an extent that we were nearly on the verge of bankruptcy and on the verge of obtaining junk credit rating status. The least mistake we commit will lead us towards the slippery slope of economic chaos.

Madam Speaker, during the electoral campaign, we were campaigning against the high cost of living, we were campaigning against the depreciation of the rupee, we were campaigning against the purchasing power which was going down day by day. We were campaigning against the rupee which was depreciating day by day. From December 2019 onwards, the rupee was depreciated up till 22% followed by the cumulative inflation rate of 33% from December 2019 to September 2024; that was a massive loss in the purchasing power of the public. To add to it, the decision of the Bank of Mauritius, at that time, to print billions of rupees, that also, led to the decline of our economic situation. The situation was so bad that today we have to pay for the consequences.

Madam Speaker, what did we inherit from the previous government? We have inherited a coffer which is empty; they have left practically nothing! We have inherited fraud, corruption, nepotism, and at the same time, oppression at all levels – unlawful arrests. They were looking for all those who were against them – even if you are not against them, if you are not with them, it means you are against them. Those were the days when people could not sleep at rest. I still remember those days; we were out of power; we were in the Opposition

and we were harassed unnecessarily. There was not a single day that passed that, as former members of government, we were not harassed. They did not spare anybody, whether they were Parliamentarians, trade unions, lawyers, *Facebookers* or even the internet users – none was spared!

To get the favours of the government, one had to crawl before them. I still remember there were a few ministers at that time, they were having meetings at night, holding meetings in Quatre-Bornes, and particularly three of them hitting at and blackmailing officers, compelling them to make statements against the former Ministers, and they were even blackmailing service providers. I still remember those difficult days. Madam Speaker, but everything was not lost though we knew that was a dangerous moment, a dangerous period. I still remember, again, those turbulent times when you had no right to speak to any other person. You were scared because if they happened to catch you talking to anybody, they can suspect you, and make allegations against you.

Those were the difficult, hard and dangerous days but everything was not lost because, as we know, there were people who stood against them. A person, no less than the Leader of our own party, Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, who was then not the Prime Minister, he was not in the Opposition; he was not even a Member of Parliament, but he stood against overwhelming odds. We still remember those difficult days when he had to go to Casernes centrales, repeatedly – heaps and heaps of allegations were levelled against him – but, still, he was able to stand against those overwhelming odds. We remember that these turbulent times gave us, at times, incredible opportunities in order to prove ourselves. In all adversities, there is in its depths a treasure of spiritual blessing secretly hidden. He did not run away from his responsibilities; he did not hide in his shells, he did not go underground, he did not retreat in bunkers but he came out forcefully, he strove, he sweated and ultimately, he succeeded. Today, he is the Prime Minister of this country, and this is an example that we can all follow.

That reminds me of Tagore he says –

“Give me the strength never disown the poor or nor to bend my [head] before insolent might.”

and, in fact, he did not bend his head before insolent might.

Madam Speaker, today, we have got two leaders in this House. Both of them have gone through difficult times, hard times, and today, they are here; they are the trust of the national cause, they are the symbol of the nation, and we are proud to have two such persons who are

leading this country. Because of this, we are going to prosper, we are going to do very well in the near future. Though we had difficult times, we had hard times, I still remember those days, those horrible hours, terrific hours when even I was being harassed – my parents, my relatives, my own family, the way we were being harassed.

I still remember the day when I was almost dragged to *Casernes centrales*, not one, two or three, but many times. At times, forcefully, I was compelled to make certain statements in *Casernes centrales*. I have not yet forgotten that evening, at around 4:50, when I was supposed to be put behind in Moka Detention Centre, but I had told them that there is no power on earth that can touch me because I had not committed any mistake, and by the grace of God, they could not touch me.

Four allegations, four charges were levelled against me, but the DPP struck out the case. The then Commissioner of Police appealed against the decision of the DPP to the Supreme Court and the Supreme Court struck out the case. Those were the difficult days and when we go down the memory lane, at times we shudder when we think about those difficult moments. Madam Speaker, as we say, it is better to be a lion for a day than to become a sheep for whole life. We have a lion among us.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker, it is better to die standing rather than live your whole life on your knees. Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam has not done that, and for that, he deserves all the praises that he merits because he did it, he worked for it – nobody expected. Whenever you talk to people, in those days, nobody even dreamt that a day will come when Labour Party will be back to power, and today, we are back to power. We have good leaders.

Good leaders are those who lead the country; bad leaders are those who mislead the country. Good leaders are those who guide the people; bad leaders are those misguide people. Good leaders are those who serve the nation; bad leaders are those who make then nation serve them, and who amass wealth and they fatten themselves. This is what they have done, and that is why today they are out of power.

Madam Speaker, 2014 to 2024 was the darkest period of Mauritian history, and automatically, after darkness the dawn follows, and this is what we have seen today. They have looted they country that is why they have been booted out. These people have used political power to amass wealth, climb the social ladder and they have fattened themselves; they have built their fortune on the misfortune of the common men. I can say, on this issue,

that that is why we say the lesson that we have learnt is: power is poison, it corrupts our conscience, it hardens our heart and it confounds our understanding. We have to exercise power with vigilance. This is a lesson that we have learnt in our life. When we go through memory lane, we think of the 10 years that have passed; this is a lesson that we have learnt: to never be so arrogant in life because one day you will have to pay for the consequences.

Madam Speaker, we are free today. The day when we got elections' results, something strange happened. Everybody at that time felt that we are free; they did not get anything in return but they felt the freedom. That is why I am going to quote the same quote that my hon. friend had quoted a few hours ago, about Tagore, the way he describes in what atmosphere our country should come up –

“Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high;

Where knowledge is free;

Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls;

Where words come out from the depth of truth;

Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection;

Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the dreary desert sand of dead habit;

Where the mind is led forward by thee into ever-widening thought and action

Into that Heaven of Freedom, my Father, let my country awake.”

This is a prayer to the Lord to let our country awake; where there is freedom, there is no restriction. This is what we have given to the nation, and that is why, today, we are proud that we have got a nation, we have got a country where there is freedom; we can express ourselves.

Madam Speaker, we have to say, being given that now we are in power, we must have courage and conviction, we must have superb values. We have to be firm in our conviction but we have to be friendly. We have to be tough in our work but we have to be tender towards those people who are *laissés-pour-compte*, those who deserve our attention and our care. We have to be courageous but we have to be compassionate towards our countrymen who are, in fact, passing through difficult economic moments today in our country. We have passed through difficult days; we should stop believing in failures. We now have to believe in

results. We should forget about prejudice; we should learn lessons from them. We should stop talking about problems, we have to look at possibilities about how we are going to help our nation. Let us not be a prisoner of the past, let us be an architect of the future. That is what I believe.

Madam Speaker, we have got a caring Government because as I said, we have got two good leaders, those who have passed difficult moments. We have learnt as I say –

“In all adversities, there is always in its depths, a treasure of spiritual blessings secretly hidden.”

Let us care for our children. We have to care for our babies, we have to care for our youth, we have to care for our mothers and fathers our *laissés-pour-compte*, those who are deprived of the basic necessities of life and since we have taken over, we have to provide them with a clean environment amidst the dangerous viruses which are spreading everywhere. Even amidst difficulties, amidst hardship, we have to provide them with a clean environment.

Madam Speaker, we are born to serve and to share but not to grab and grieve. That is why we say we have to help each and every one, everybody who deserves it. Since, I have taken over as Minister of Health, I have left no stone unturned to help those who are at the lowest strata of society, those who need our care, those who need our support in health matters. We are not disregarding anybody. We are trying to support each and everybody. The last ten years were the most fateful years in the history of our country, particularly as far as the health problems were concerned because the legacy that they had left is alarming.

The legacy is shocking, horrible and appalling to say the least. Madam Speaker, we have got a herculean task to perform. No new doctors were recruited, no new nurses were recruited. No training was provided to doctors, to our nurses; no activity in the training school. There was no activity and yet, one of their own kith and kin was chosen to sit and to fatten herself in that training centre. Their relatives are there.

We lack 1500 nurses in our hospitals. Only a handful was taken in the last 10 years. Today, the legacy, as I told you, is catastrophic. No money was left. They have spent all. They have dilapidated all money which was in the Ministry. There is no money, not even to pay petrol. We have no money. We did not have money to pay for foreign hospitals where our people, our patients were getting treated. And the then Minister of Finance was talking of economic boom but he was claiming his foolishness to be wisdom.

We have practically nothing in the Ministry of Health, they have left the Ministry bankrupt. There was nothing, no change. Yes, we do agree – new buildings were constructed. Yes, foreign funds which were available were mismanaged! Yes, millions of rupees were looted! They had made improper planning; that is true. The New cancer hospital they have given, there was no surgery, nothing was done and equipment are lying idle and all the consumables have already expired. The Ministry I can say, the health and medical services is in Intensive Care Unit (ICU).

Madam Speaker, on one hand, the public hospitals are dwindling while the private hospitals are flourishing because as they say, make hay while the sun shines. Those who were close to 'The Kitchen' are constructing private hospitals one after the other whereas our public hospitals have been deliberately disregarded. They have been weakened and the attempt was made to push public from the public hospitals down to the private sectors. This is what we call the betrayal of trust.

Madam Speaker, the saga of Molnupiravir and Pack and Blisters is known to everybody. Millions of rupees have been wasted. Up to now, we have to pay Rs575 million for all our vaccination. They have not paid. They have done nothing. They have destroyed us; they have finished us. They have looted the wealth and they have bled the country white. This is what I can tell you. Madam Speaker, the traumatic and horrible experiences of our elders who had gone for dialysis in those days, are known to everybody. How can we forget – they were left to die, confined in a place and they almost suffocated. I just cannot understand in what situation they died. Nobody cared for them. Nothing was given to them; they were starved to death. Can we forget those traitors for the crimes they have committed?

That is what we call murder in broad daylight. Our own kith and kin were murdered by that government. We cannot forget them. Even for years to come, this will keep on haunting them because these people were killed deliberately, I can say because when you go through the reports, you find how those patients were helpless. One could not see with his eyes; another one was crippled but still he was left in a corner to die. Nobody cared for them. That is why I say that they will be punished. They can never come back.

Madam Speaker, if you look at the health indicators, the Health Statistics Report of 2023, the average expectancy life for male and female in 2015 was 74.5 years and in 2023 it has gone down to 73.5. This means we are going to die earlier.

Secondly, HIV/AIDS should have been zero by 2030. Unfortunately, it is increasing. In 2014, it was 333; in 2023, it was 405. Our target always was for HIV/AIDS to be completely eliminated by 2030. Unfortunately, it is rising. The death due to non-communicable diseases has gone up by 20%. It is shame for our country. In 2014, it was 6809; in 2023, it was 8129. This could have been avoided. They have practically done nothing. Money was voted but money was looted. They have robbed us; they have finished the country.

Madam Speaker, it is not mere statistics. This is the naked truth of mismanagement, failure of our system, the result of neglect, corruption and nepotism. Madam Speaker, the health workers in our country need our support. They are our assets. Do you know how many cases of assault has been noted? But one thing I can assure on behalf of the Government – I say we have to be pitiless against those rascals who were hurting our health workers. We have to be without pity because two days back, there were two cases where our nursing officers, doctors were assaulted. I think this has to stop and we have to see to it that this does not happen again. When it comes to overtime, they have not been paid. Up till now, we owe Rs500 million. We are not at fault. I do not know how they have managed. How is it possible to pay for almost Rs2 billion overtime? Now, we are left with Rs500 million but we have to give guarantee to our workers that we are going to pay them all the overtime and we have to recruit trained officers in the Ministry of Health. The school of nursing has to be active over again. We have to have transparency and accountability everywhere.

Our focus, Madam Speaker, is on prevention, prevention and prevention. We have started a nationwide campaign in order to improve the health of our public. For example, non-communicable diseases, communicable diseases, HIV/AIDS and substance abuse. Here, I have to thank the hon. Deputy Prime Minister for the support that he is extending to us. Madam Speaker, the Moka Eye Hospital is already saturated. Every day you have about 400 to 500 people queuing up. That is the reason why we have started decentralising. Now in Flacq Hospital, we have started one wing and we are carrying about 300 eye cataract operations monthly. We have a similar case in Souillac Hospital. We are going to move towards Jeetoo Hospital as well. We are going to decentralise so that there will not be any need for our people, our patients to travel and they will not have to queue up the whole day. This has to stop because we are now in a modern country. We have to provide them with all amenities.

Madam Speaker, the mental department is completely neglected. Nobody cared for the Brown Sequard hospital and it a shame for me to say in the House that we have got a report

that many of the wards are full of *punaises* (bedbugs) and we have to remove all those beds now. We have to provide them with better conditions and new beds. Proper resources will be put and we are going to start a new emergency service, similar to SAMU but here, it will be manned by the Psychiatrist. This is what we have promised because we have to help those desperate people. Madam Speaker, we have to give a fresh look to overseas treatment to prevent abuse and to ensure sustainability, strict criteria have to be imposed.

As far as the cancer hospital is concerned, it is already operational. DEXA scan and PET scan will be operational in about two months' or three months' time because certain components have already been ordered from abroad. We are getting the support of oncological experts from India. We have to thank the Indian authorities for having providing us with all types of support, particularly a few hospitals of Chennai. They have also decided to provide space for our patients to stay in Chennai because, previously, parents who were accompanying the patients were having difficulties. I have to thank my friend, hon. Rajen Narsinghen, for the support that he has given me. Through him and through our representative in Chennai, we were able to make certain arrangements.

Madam Speaker, diabetes is devastating our nation. The Prime Minister, himself, is personally concerned and he contacted Professor David Owens, a renowned professor in diabetology, to enlist his support. I hope that we are going to get his support. We have already started diabetes centres in all our hospitals. Yesterday, I met one Professor Rajesh Kesavan, an expert in diabetic foot from Chennai. We have also retained his services and he has accepted to come and to give us free support.

Madam Speaker, as far as cardiovascular disease is concerned, our Prime Minister has established contact with Professor Derek Yellon and Professor Malcolm Walker from University College London. An international conference will be held towards the end of this year on diabetes, renal diseases and cardiovascular. This will be held around October this year.

I am also pleased to announce that we have also set up a Renal Transplant Unit at Jawaharlal Nehru Hospital. For the time being, it is at Victoria Hospital. We have recruited an international expert to set up the unit and to train our staff and also to conduct the renal transplant.

In our Government Programme, we have to set up a hospital specialised in obstetrics, gynaecology and one in paediatrics. The Public Health Act dates back to 1925, it has to be reviewed. The Pharmaceutical Board, Pharmaceutical Council, Medical Board, Dental Council, Mauritius Institute of Health, Trust Fund for Specialised Medical Care, all these will be relooked and we have to give a new look and reform them.

In conclusion, I would like to remind the House of a stark failure that symbolises 10 years of stagnation, that is, the e-project – computerisation. I remember earlier in 2014, under the Labour Government, we secured the support of the Government of India through the intervention of our Prime Minister. They would have helped us in setting up the e-project. Unfortunately, when we were out of power, the new government that came rejected the proposal of the Government of India and they have left everything as it was. There is a saying which goes: ‘They slept beneath the moon; they bath beneath the sun; they led a life of going to do and they died politically without doing none’. This is what they have done. They promised; they have not done it. I can assure the House that we are going very fast with it.

In conclusion, I have to quote our Father of the Nation. I cannot end without quoting him because whenever I deliver speeches, I have the habit of quoting him. Before 1982, I remember his words and I am going to quote it as conclusion, he said –

“The Labour Party is not a perfect political party. The Labour Party may not be a perfect political party. For that matter, no party is perfect. Yet, we have practiced the virtues of tolerance and patience, of understanding those who are against us, of reverence for life, of compassion for the sick and needy, of concern for our youth. We have protected the weak and humbled the pride of enemies of people. We have paid our dues. We have honoured our obligations. We have exerted ourselves for the welfare of our country. We have imparted momentum to economic activities and social programmes. That is why Mauritius is held in high regard as a stronghold of democracy in a world where unemployment is endemic, famine is rampant and misery is widespread.”

“Let us make our lives sublime. And, departing, leave behind us footprints in the sands of time.”

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Thank you very much. Hon. Minister Gunness! Try to keep an eye on the time!

(8.17 p.m.)

The Minister of National Infrastructure (Mr G. Gunness): Yes, sure! That is why I put my watch here.

Madam Speaker, allow me, first of all, to congratulate you on your election as Speaker of the House as well as my good friend, hon. Baloomoody as Deputy Speaker, and to all hon. Members who are here, who have been elected in their respective constituency, to the Prime Minister and to the Deputy Prime Minister. So, we are here, *l'Alliance du Changement* with a 60-0.

We must reflect on what happened to our country. Why did we make this alliance? Before the elections, we must remember the last five years that the MSM government was in power. It is good to remind that they were in power with only 37% of the suffrage. Only 37%, which means the majority of the people was against them. Despite that, what did we see? Arrogance! *L'arrogance du pouvoir était là*. When we saw the former Prime Minister answering questions, it was as if we were disturbing him if you asked him a question. He would take a whole 30 minutes to give you an answer with all the arrogance that you can imagine. We know how they were dealing with the affairs of the country.

It is true when they were saying – some of their *chatwas* and some who left our party – that the MMM has been in Opposition; the MMM is a party for Opposition. Yes, true it is! We have been in Opposition for a long time. I am here, myself, for my fourth mandate after 14 years out of this Parliament. I still remember, I was there for my first mandate. I am proud that for my first mandate, I was here with the same alliance – the Labour Party and the MMM in 1995. I was sitting there next to my brother, late Zeel Peerun. We were two brothers. I was in this House and I had three mandates. After 14 years, I am back here. But what is more important, be it in Opposition or in Government, the MMM has not deviated from its principles and ideals. Our principles and ideals have remained the same which is, first of all, the consolidation of the national unity. This is one of our principles which we cherish and we will never let anybody put in danger the unity of this population.

The previous regime, the MSM government, what didn't we hear with *Missie Moustass*? It was even as if the National Anthem was reserved for them! Such community

cannot sing the National Anthem! They have tried to divide the population into segments and they have paid this crime because this population lives like brothers and sisters from different communities. See the beauty of Mauritius: we just celebrated Cavadee; we had Maha Shivratri; we are now having Ramadan, and we will be having the Christian fasting. This is beauty of Mauritius! These people have tried to put this in danger. We can get into any problem, the biggest problem that we can have, but if we have national unity in the country, we will get out of any problem. We can face any type of problem if we have national unity in this country.

This is the one of the principles that, in the MMM, we were born for – to consolidate our national unity. Our principle for consolidation of democracy. Every time we have been in power, we did everything to consolidate our democracy. Just recently, what they tried to do with DPP, we restored the power of the DPP. This is what we do with the 60-0. We will bring back Municipal Elections soon. We will put it in the Constitution, not like what they were doing with the majority that they had – trying to take all the powers of the DPP, bring the Prosecution Commission and when they failed, by the back door when introducing the FCC Act, tried to curtail the powers of the DPP, this is what they did with their majority.

But here, we are in a government with a 60-0, the population can rest assured that on each occasion the Labour Party and the MMM are two parties with their allies, with the Rezistans ek Alternativ and Nouveaux Démocrates, we are parties who have been born to consolidate democracy. We have been born for the wellbeing of the population, for a better distribution of wealth in the country, to manage the economic affairs of the country with all the rigidity, with all the seriousness that a country deserves in the management of its economic affairs. We are here to bring a balance between development, nature and the environment. This is what we are here for, not like the MSM government was.

Madam Speaker, I think that this alliance is a God-sent alliance because if we imagine for one minute that they had come in power, the MSM regime, what would have been the fate of this country, today? We know how they managed the economy. They destroyed the economy so much so that today we are on the watch list of Moody's. We know now how they dilapidated all the funds; the MIC, what they did with the Rs18 billion, how they gave to *petit copain, petite copine* – we know what they did with our economy. Fraud and corruption were as if *à la mode*. ICAC was a white washing machine in the hand of the MSM government.

We know when Sobrinho was coming in the country, *get lizie dan lizie*. This was in Mauritius, *get lizie dan lizie Sobrinho...*

The Deputy Prime Minister: *Lizie dan lizie me lame dan pos!*

Mr Guinness: *Lame dan pos!* We know what happened in the case of MedPoint. How the Director of ICAC, Dr. Beekarry, went to London...

The Deputy Prime Minister: *Pa zoure!*

Mr Guinness: No, Beekarry *pa zoure sa!* Beekarry *ve dir miserab!*

The Deputy Prime Minister: *600 mil so lapay!*

Mr Guinness: *Ein!* Salary Rs600,000, went to London – turncoat! Madam Speaker, the population, up to now, does not know how the evaluation of that MedPoint from Rs77 m. came to Rs144 m. This the population does not know. He can have turncoat there, but I am sure that in the near future, the population will know. Angus Road, how money was paid by cash, receipt we have seen in the papers. Money coming from London for which ICAC did not see anything. Stag Party, ICAC did not see anything. This was how ICAC was dealing because they were under the supervision of *Lakwizin*. They were taking orders from *Lakwizin* and it was *Lakwizin* – kitchen-Cabinet – which was managing the affairs of the country. How can a country where you get people democratically elected but they are taking directives from a kitchen-Cabinet? This was Mauritius under the MSM regime. It is good that the population of this country – I always say, hon. Paul Bérenger, Deputy Prime Minister, was right in 1982 when he said *lepep moris ce enn pep admirab* – and really, this country has a *pep admirab*. They know what to do. They will not go on the street. They wait for their time. I have never seen in an election, early in the morning, people queuing up with their pen in their hand. At 6 o'clock, – when I started for 7 o'clock – people were already queuing up and at that time I knew that *les carottes sont cuites pour le MSM* because people were with their pen. These are the two messages that we sent to the people during the campaign: you go and vote early or else they will send people to vote in your place, and take your pen because we do not trust them. People went early and went with their pen, and did what they had to do at that time and this is the *lepep admirab de l'île Maurice* and I am proud as a Mauritian that our citizens have done what had to be done for this country, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I come to another topic which is flash floods. We know that we cannot predict flash floods. Since I took office, I had several meetings with the technical staffs of my

Ministry and carried out numerous site visits because we are very much concerned, as a small country, with flash floods and we know what happened in our country. I must say that I have been very much surprised on the extent of works which have not yet been completed or even started. Since 2019, that is, six years now, projects qualified under emergency and budgeted for an amount of Rs11.7 billion were not implemented despite these projects were considered to be emergency projects. 62 projects listed as priority by the Land Drainage Authority are incomplete or even yet to be started – either they do not have drawings or there is no wayleave, that is, no follow-up have been done to see that the drains are put in place.

Madam Speaker, we already know the distress that many people faced during the flooding of 2023 and 2024. We saw many vehicles being carried away and heavy damages caused to infrastructure, particularly in Port Louis and Vallée des Prêtres. Any reasonable government would have immediately implemented mitigating measures to prevent the recurrence of such events. Sad to say that this never materialise in reality. For Port Louis, eight projects were listed as top priority to mitigate the impact of flooding from Ruisseau du Pouce and inside Port Louis, La Poudrière and the other streets.

Rs1.9 billion project value funds were earmarked for supposedly emergency projects; none of these have been implemented to date. And, yet, you remember what their motto was at that time, they said ‘putting people first.’

I am sure you can bet who they were putting first.

An hon. Member: *Maitresse!*

Mr Guinness: In the same line, Madam Speaker, the Drain Infrastructure Construction Ltd was set up. This company was supposed to act faster than other implementing agencies like RDA, NDU and local authorities. It was created with an envelope of Rs12 billion. We all know who was chairing the DICL. Projects exceeding cost estimates for which financial clearance were not obtained were being awarded and today, the DICL is sitting on claims worth millions of rupees to consultants and contractors.

Madam Speaker, with a view to ensuring that drainage systems are robust, regularly cleaned and properly managed, to minimise the damage caused by flash floods and protecting both lives and property, the Land Drainage Authority has been mandated to spearhead the National Flood Management Programme. Cabinet has just set up a technical committee to review the Land Drainage Masterplan and a report is expected in the shortest delay possible.

Madam Speaker, this government has not forgotten Rodrigues. Some 11 drain projects are being considered for implementation in Rodrigues. Four projects are at the level of Central Procurement Board for selection of contractors. A Land Drainage Masterplan for Rodrigues will be commissioned by the LDA; this will serve as a basis for attenuating the impact of flooding and achieving an integrated management of flood risk to reduce the vulnerability of the population to heavy rainfall.

Madam Speaker, the availability of these infrastructures ensures that communities thrive, businesses operate efficiently and citizens enjoy a better quality of life. In essence, the development and upkeep of roads, drains and amenities are integral to a country's growth, stability and prosperity.

Madam Speaker, over the recent years, the government of India has financed several projects under the G2G Agreement. These projects, including the New Flacq Hospital, the New Cancer Hospital and ENT are of great significance to the people of Mauritius for which we are deeply grateful to the Government of India.

However, I have been informed that the previous government did not involve my Ministry at any stage of the project. My Ministry is now called upon to provide technical support because we have to provide the technical support for these assets which the Government of India has offered us but we have no plan, no design; nothing, because the Ministry of National Infrastructure was not involved in any stage of the project under the previous Government.

Now, we are trying several mitigating strategies at the level of my Ministry so that we can follow up. We are trying to conduct a comprehensive building audit for all building constructed within the last two years under G2G Agreement. We are developing a building maintenance manual including updated layouts and system details. We are implementing a Preventive Maintenance Programme in close collaboration with the project consultants.

As far as construction sector, my Ministry will support and empower SMEs by implementing targeted measures to enhance their capabilities and ensure their sustainable growth. We will facilitate access to public contracts for SMEs in the construction sector, ensuring that they have fair opportunities to participate in government projects. Additional support will be given to help small contractors invest in modern equipment and innovative construction technology.

One of the critical challenges facing our economy, particularly in the construction sector, is the skill mis-match and labour shortages. To bridge this gap in the construction sector, my Ministry and the Construction Industry Authority will work closely with training institutions, technical colleges and industry stakeholders to develop tailor-made programme that will equip individuals with the skills required in the construction sector.

Madam Speaker, with regard to the Road Development Authority, I must point out that since its inception, the RDA has been committed to improving mobility and guiding transport investment in the Republic of Mauritius. My mission is to create a sustainable, resilient and efficient road network that supports the socio-economic growth of our nation. However, as we face an increasing unpredictable environment, we must adopt a new dynamic and holistic approach to transport planning. I have noted that up to now, we have spent Rs342.8 million excluding cost of land on constructing cycle lanes which, unfortunately, are not used and left in an abandoned state. I consider it to be a wastage of public funds. No sensitisation campaign has been carried out and blanket policy decision was taken by the previous government to build bicycle lanes on all new roads.

Madam Speaker, *l'Alliance du Changement* promises to do things differently. We will ensure that money is spent where it is most deserved. We are completely reviewing the policy for provision of cycle lanes to ensure that public money is spent diligently and the Mauritian public are able to benefit from these infrastructures. In fact, we will look into several possibilities in collaboration with the Traffic Management and Road Safety and the police. Some proposals being looked include the extension of existing cycle lanes to connect the neighbouring villages and towns to promote more ridership.

Furthermore, taking into consideration the rising number of accidents involving motorcycles, there is a growing consensus that the traffic flow of two-wheelers should be segregated from other vehicular traffic in a bid to reduce risk of collision and accidents. Dedicated lanes will be considered for two-wheelers wherever possible. As a real caring government, we will leave no stone unturned in this endeavour.

Madam Speaker, I will go directly to the conclusion. Madam Speaker, the future is an ever-shifting landscape, full of both of uncertainties and opportunities. Every day we are confronted with new challenges and decisions that shape the path ahead. As we build the bridge to the future, we must remember that it will take time. It will require patience, perseverance and resilience. We, citizens of Mauritius, are the architects of this bridge and it

is our responsibility to ensure that it is well built, inclusive and forward-thinking. Madam Speaker, when historians will write of this era, let them say this –

‘When Mauritius faced its darkest hours, its people chose light. They chose justice, they chose to believe once more in democracy, in a new government – the *l’Alliance du Changement*.’

Our pledge must be that no child will grow in fear, no grandmother will whisper secrets glancing at the walls, no citizen will doubt that their voice matters.

Madam Speaker, the future is not a distant dream; it is something we shape. Together we can lay the first stone of that bridge today and continue to build it for generations to come. The future is for us to shape. The bridge to the future is for us to create and it begins now. We are Mauritians, we are resilient, we are free. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Thank you. I realise that you all have more interesting things to say, but you will get other occasions to speak.

Hon. Minister Duval!

(8.43 p.m.)

The Minister of Tourism (Mr R. Duval): Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madame la présidente, permettez-moi d’exprimer l’honneur qui est le mien de prendre la parole pour la première fois en tant que ministre et de surcroît à la tête du ministère qui fut, autrefois, confié à mon père, Sir Gaëtan Duval.

Cet honneur est d’autant plus grand, Madame la présidente, que je me tiens aujourd’hui devant vous dans une Chambre qui a retrouvé sa sérénité. Ayant siégé dans cette auguste Assemblée de 2019 à 2024, je peux vous assurer qu’il n’y a aucune comparaison, alors là aucune comparaison, avec le calvaire que nous subissons lorsque nous étions dans l’opposition.

La démocratie, fort heureusement, après tant d’injustices, de grossièretés sous le régime Jugnauth a été réinstaurée. Madame la présidente, je voudrais d’abord féliciter l’honorable Dr. Mme Thannoo pour sa motion. Je saisis l’occasion pour vous féliciter pour votre élection comme présidente de cette Chambre, ainsi que votre adjoint, l’honorable Veda Baloomoody.

Je tiens également à saluer et à féliciter tous mes collègues élus, mes camarades de cette équipe gouvernementale. Une équipe dirigée par l'honorable Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam qui, en bon général, a su rassembler des gens de bonne volonté et galvaniser ses troupes pour les mener vers une écrasante victoire au côté de l'infatigable leader du MMM, l'honorable Paul Bérenger.

Je n'oublie pas mes amis évidemment de *Rezistans ek Alternativ*, notamment mon ami, l'honorable Ashok Subron. Mes deux camarades de Nouveaux Démocrates, l'honorable Kushal Lobine et l'honorable Véronique Leu-Govind. Je tiens à dire un grand merci enfin aux habitants de Curepipe/Midlands qui m'ont fait confiance ainsi que mes deux colistiers, l'honorable Michaël Yeung Sik Yuen et mon ami, l'honorable Ajay Gunness. Je rappelle que la circonscription numéro 17 est la seule à avoir trois ministres. *Enn ti pe vantar !*

Madame la présidente, nous avons assisté le 10 novembre dernier à une révolution pacifique et démocratique. Aucune effusion de sang, aucun affrontement, cette révolution s'est faite avec un simple stylo ! La victoire de 60-0 a entraîné dans son sillage un sentiment de liberté, voire une confiance retrouvée au sein de notre population. Mais les chantiers devant nous restent immenses.

Madame la présidente, je veux simplement souligner qu'on n'a jamais été autant en symbiose avec les vœux et les aspirations de notre peuple. Notre gouvernement n'a pas choisi la facilité ; nous avons choisi de faire les choses en respectant la loi.

Permettez-moi maintenant de parler de mon ministère dont j'ai la responsabilité. Le tourisme, Madame la présidente, est un pilier essentiel de notre économie. Sa contribution directe et indirectement tournerait, selon les estimations, autour de 21 à 24 % de notre produit intérieur brut. Il faut savoir qu'un emploi sur 10 est directement ou indirectement lié au tourisme.

Madame la présidente, comment se porte le secteur ? Si l'on croit à certains chiffres, plutôt bien, mais cela, d'après moi, aurait pu être beaucoup mieux en termes d'arrivée. Je peux dire que nous ne sommes qu'à 97 à 98 % du niveau de 2019. Mais l'ancien gouvernement se targuait de pouvoir retrouver, voire dépasser, ce seuil en avançant les chiffres de 1.4 million de touristes.

Quant aux recettes du *gross tourism earnings*, la Banque de Maurice a publié un chiffre de R 93 milliards pour 2024, mais ce que l'histoire ne dit pas, c'est que ce montant est artificiel, gonflé par la dépréciation de la roupie et de l'inflation à Maurice, comme dans la

zone du dollar. Je ne dis pas cela de gaieté de cœur. Comparé à 2019, les recettes touristiques n'ont que légèrement augmenté. Je ne suis pas économiste, mais R 93 milliards avec un dollar de R 47 et l'inflation que nous subissons aujourd'hui, valent peut-être moins de R 66 milliards avec un dollar à R 36 dans le contexte économique de 2019.

Madame la présidente, je ne peux évoquer le ministère du Tourisme sans parler des scandales qui ont éclaboussé la *Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority* sous l'ancien régime. C'est du vol, Madame la présidente ! Des centaines de millions de roupies parties en fumée. La liste des malversations, des magouilles est longue. Mais, permettez-moi, Madame la présidente, d'en citer quelques-uns.

Tout d'abord, il y a le cas des *white parties*, Madame la présidente. *White parties* organisées par Maradiva auxquelles la *MTPA* a contribué. Et là, je parle de l'édition 2024, à quelques mois des élections générales. Les services de quatre *coco girls* originaires des pays de l'Est ont été sollicités.

Madame la présidente, ces danseuses exotiques ont été présentées comme des journalistes et des influenceuses. Mais qui a payé le déplacement au coût de R 450 000 ? Évidemment, la *MTPA*, bien sûr ! Autrement dit, l'argent des contribuables ! C'est une véritable honte, Madame la présidente ! Grâce à l'actualité, les photos de ses *white parties*, ou devrais-je dire des *wild parties*, ont refait surface avec certains participants pour les moins louches. Après les *Pinokio parties*, les *pool parties* et les '*douk*' *parties*, laissez-moi vous parler de l'affaire de *Snow Polo* que personne ne connaît peut-être.

(Interruptions)

C'est un événement annuel en Suisse auquel la *MTPA* et Maradiva participent conjointement. Concernant l'édition de 2024, l'organisateur a servi une mise en demeure à la *MTPA* pas plus loin que janvier 2025, il y a quelques semaines, pour des dettes impayées de R 2.8 million plus les intérêts et la TVA. Il s'avère, Madame la présidente, que la *MTPA* avait réservé un espace et n'a finalement pas participé à l'événement. Plus grave encore, Madame la présidente, c'est qu'après une enquête interne, il a été découvert que l'ancien directeur aurait signé l'accord avec l'organisateur sans l'aval du *board* et sans la signature du président.

Ce n'est pas tout, Madame la présidente. Selon l'enquête, l'ancien directeur a signé l'accord pour le compte de Maradiva et de la *MTPA*. N'est-ce pas, Madame la présidente, un cas de conflit d'intérêt ? Laissez-moi évoquer encore un autre scandale qui a provoqué un

tollé parmi les internautes. Il s'agit de deux supposés *gentlemen* à la prestigieuse course hippique du *Royal Ascot*. Enfin !

La *MTPA* et le Maradiva sont présents à cet évènement de 2016 à 2024. Et il faut dire que cette participation a coûté un total, attendez, Madame la président, de R 8.8 millions à la *MTPA*, dont R 8.1 millions ont été versées directement à Maradiva – directement à Maradiva. Pire, Madame la présidente, pour contourner toutes les procédures, certains paiements ont été faits à travers le représentant de la *MTPA* à Londres. Et je ne serai pas étonné que la *MTPA* ait financé jusqu'à la redingote et le chapeau haut-de-forme, appelé *sapo kankrela*, porté par ces deux du jour. Qui sait, peut-être aussi que les sous-vêtements de *Ton George* aussi ont été sponsorisés par...

An hon. Member: *Dir nom la!*

Mr R. Duval: Et ce n'est pas terminé, Madame la présidente, je dois également évoquer l'affaire des cartes de crédits – cartes de crédits mises à la disposition de l'ancien Directeur de la *MTPA*. De 2018 à 2024, ce monsieur, Madame la présidente, aurait dépensé la coquette somme, tenez-vous bien, Madame la présidente, de 14.6 millions en achat personnel – 14.6 millions ! Il a dépensé 528 000 en 2018 ; en 2019, il a dépensé 1.5 ; en 2020, il a dépensé 1.277. Le montant grimpe encore, Madame la présidente, 2 361 000 en 2021 ; 2 798 000 en 2022. Puis cela monte encore, 3 487 000 en 2023. Et, enfin, pour terminer, 2 585 000 en 2024. Et je rappelle à la Chambre, Madame la présidente, que les frontières étaient fermées en grande partie dans les années entre 2020 et 2021.

(Interruptions)

Mais, j'insiste, Madame la présidente, que c'est du vol à grande échelle. Ils n'ont eu aucune, alors là, aucune pitié pour les contribuables de notre pays.

An hon. Member: *Kot li'nn fote !*

Mr R. Duval: Je m'arrête là, Madame la présidente, car les dépositions ont été consignées par l'officier *in charge* de la *MTPA* auprès de la *Financial Crimes Commission* et les enquêtes sont en cours. Mais, je peux vous assurer, Madame la présidente, que nous sommes loin d'avoir découvert sur tout ce qui s'est passé à la *MTPA*.

Je profite toutefois de cette occasion, Madame la présidente, pour affirmer haut et fort que cette époque est révolue. La *MTPA* redeviendra la *Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority* et non la *Maradiva Promotion Authority*. J'adresse également une mise en garde claire, nette et ferme que le gouvernement du Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, le Premier ministre de ce pays, sera intransigeant envers ceux qui confondent leur poche avec les fonds publics.

Madame la présidente, l'urgence de renforcer notre contrôle sur les opérations des bateaux de plaisance dans nos eaux est plus pressante que jamais. Ces embarcations sont devenues des instruments silencieux du réseau de trafics de drogues, particulièrement le corridor entre Maurice et l'île de la Réunion. Pour faire face à cette situation, nous allons rendre obligatoire l'installation d'un système d'identification automatique, *AIS*, sur tous les bateaux de plaisance. Ce dispositif permettra un suivi réel des déplacements des embarcations. J'ai eu l'occasion d'avoir une réunion avec le Commissaire de police, et j'espère ne pas commettre d'impair en indiquant qu'il était très enthousiaste à l'idée.

Nous allons aussi créer des zones de mouillage, dédié un système d'attributions de bouées individuelles. Ce projet permettra une surveillance plus efficace, avec une détection rapide des activités suspectes. Nous ne voulons pas que des bateaux de couleur bleue quittent le nord pour revenir de couleur orange et chargés à ras bord, si vous voyez où je veux en venir.

Madame la présidente, je profite de cette opportunité pour annoncer, avec l'aval du Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, du PMO, que nous allons bientôt nous doter d'un système de reconnaissance qu'on appelle, *Iris Recognition System*. Fini les longues attentes à l'aéroport, fini les procédures administratives lourdes à l'immigration. Ces *smart gates* permettront d'accélérer le passage des visiteurs aux contrôles et soulager le personnel affecté aux différentes procédures aéroportuaires. Et l'installation de ces portiques intelligents n'est pas qu'une simple question d'infrastructure mais, c'est un impératif stratégique pour notre secteur touristique.

De plus, Madame la présidente, les cas de vols et d'agressions contre les touristes constituent un véritable fléau qui mine le secteur et porte atteinte à l'image de notre destination. J'ai eu encore l'occasion de parler au Commissaire de police et il m'a assuré que le personnel de la Police du tourisme sera renforcé dans un avenir proche.

Madame la présidente, le discours programme met un accent particulier sur l'écotourisme et le tourisme durable. Aujourd'hui, ce n'est pas une option mais, c'est une nécessité, et c'est également ce que souligne le *blueprint* de 2024 à 2033, élaboré par une mission de conseil de la Banque mondiale. Ce plan directeur, commandité par le ministère du Tourisme, est prêt depuis 2024, Madame la présidente, et je m'étonne que mon prédécesseur, l'ancien ministre, n'ait pas trouvé le temps ou alors n'ait pas jugé utile de le finaliser et de le publier. C'est tout simplement aberrant, Madame la présidente. Le plan directeur 2024-2033 rejoint ma philosophie, qui est le modèle *Sea, Sand and Sun*, qui a bien servi le pays et qui va continuer à le faire, mais doit, aujourd'hui, être épaulé et soutenu par d'autres concepts.

Madame la présidente, aujourd'hui, de plus en plus de touristes privilégient des expériences authentiques, loin des grands complexes hôteliers. Ils veulent rencontrer des mauriciens, découvrir des facettes de notre culture et de notre histoire, et vivre une expérience immersive. Tant mieux, Madame la présidente, car, quel autre pays au monde, malgré sa petite taille, peut se vanter d'être un véritable carrefour de cultures, de religions, de traditions et de gastronomies. Nous devons nous adapter à cette nouvelle réalité, et c'est pourquoi, Madame la présidente, notre nouvelle stratégie mettra l'accent sur le tourisme intérieur. Nous allons aussi, ensemble avec le ministre des Arts et de la culture, valoriser l'identité culturelle et le patrimoine unique de l'île Maurice et, en parallèle, cela va créer des nouvelles opportunités pour les petites entreprises locales et contribuer à une véritable démocratisation de notre économie.

Madame la présidente, notre stratégie de développement touristique s'orientera vers plusieurs segments prometteurs, notamment le tourisme de santé et de bien-être, le tourisme culturel, patrimonial, enrichi par la création des circuits thématiques, le tourisme sportif, le tourisme médical, le tourisme communautaire favorisant la participation active des habitants.

Le secteur *Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions (MICE)* représente un potentiel considérable pour les marchés accessibles et c'est à travers ça et avec l'émergence du dynamique et de l'économie africaine et la montée en puissance de ces grandes entreprises que ce sera une opportunité stratégique qui s'offre à l'île Maurice.

Nous sommes idéalement positionnés à seulement quatre à six heures de vol pour attirer les Africains en plein expansion et leur proposer une destination d'excellence pour leurs événements professionnels.

Madame la présidente, le discours programme met à juste valeur l'accent sur un tourisme durable, plus inclusif, participatif, grâce à un engagement accru et davantage d'initiatives communautaires. Aujourd'hui les voyageurs ne se contentent plus des plages paradisiaques. Ils jugent une destination selon les critères environnementaux éthiques et ce profil des voyageurs éco-responsables est en constante augmentation et il pourrait représenter 40 à 50 % des visiteurs d'ici 2050.

Ignorer ces évolutions, Madame la présidente, c'est condamné notre industrie touristique...

Madam Speaker: Time is up!

Mr R. Duval: I am finishing. I am trying. *Nous allons obtenir la certification de prime...*

Madam Speaker: Il faut garder un peu. M. le ministre, excusez-moi ? Je suis sûre que vous avez encore de choses intéressantes à dire...

Mr R. Duval: Trop beaucoup !

Madam Speaker: Mais il faudra trouver d'autres occasions pour nous le dire.

Mr R. Duval: Définitivement. Je vais probablement passer près de la conclusion, Madame la présidente. Et en vous disant que c'est autant plus crucial que l'Europe, notre principal marché traverse actuellement à des difficultés économiques susceptibles de faire augmenter le coût des voyages. L'Allemagne, par exemple, est frappé par une récession alors que la France vient tout juste à partir du 1^{er} mars, augmenter la taxe sur les billets d'avion. Nous devons diversifier nos marchés et étendre notre connectivité aérienne vers des nouvelles destinations.

Et autre chose, un autre défi majeur, c'est la basse saison. C'est l'une de mes principales préoccupations depuis mon arrivée au ministère. C'est pour cette raison que j'ai confié ce dossier au *Junior Minister*, l'honorable Sydney Pierre afin qu'ensemble avec les partenaires, nous puissions prendre des mesures appropriées pour la période creuse de mai à septembre.

Madame la présidente, vite fait, je vais parler de l'École Hôtelière Sir Gaëtan Duval...

Madam Speaker: M. le ministre, excusez-moi ?

Mr R. Duval: J'ai fini, okay. Je conclus, Madame...

Madam Speaker: Non, rien ne vous empêche de venir la prochaine fois avec un *statement*.

Mr R. Duval: Oui, certainement Madame. Je conclus alors. Le travail commencé, nous sommes en train de revoir notre stratégie de marketing, de revitaliser l'identité de Maurice, de cibler les segments spécifiques tels que les amateurs de nature et explorateur culturel, d'attirer davantage de profils de voyageurs.

Et, Madame la présidente, le secteur du tourisme fait aujourd'hui face à une terrible compétition. Pour survivre, nous devons arriver à vendre notre pays comme une destination de premier plan attractive et compétitive. Une destination d'excellence et ça, c'est ma vision et c'est à quoi je m'attelle depuis mon arrivée à ce ministère mais aucun ministre du Tourisme ne peut atteindre de tels objectifs, seul. Pour y arriver, il faut la coopération et la collaboration de tous, c'est-à-dire des acteurs du secteur et de la population. Ensemble, Madame, relevons le défi. Vive l'île Maurice ! Vive la République !

Je vous remercie.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Minister! Please keep an eye.

Mr R. Duval: I will try. Thank you.

(9.07 p.m.)

The Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity (Mr A. Subron): Madam Speaker, I am speaking in front of you because as rightly stated in the opening sentence of the Presidential Address, the people have spoken. Indeed, I am here as a Member of the National Assembly and Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity because of the votes of the people of Mauritius, including the people of my Constituency, Port Louis North and Montagne Longue. So, my whole-hearted thanks go first and foremost to the esteemed and enlightened people of Mauritius, from villages to towns all around Mauritius. Then my special thanks go to the women, men, workers, poor people, small scale producers, traders, pensioners of Constituency No. 4, from St Croix to Congomah, from Montagne Longue to Cité la Cure, from Vallée des Prêtres to Notre Dame, from Terre Rouge to Les Mariannes, from Riche Terre to Crève Coeur, from Bois Marchand to Ti Rodrigues and all other regions.

I finally wish to thank hon. Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, Prime Minister and hon. Paul Bérenger, Deputy Prime Minister, for having proposed to me to stand as candidate in Constituency No. 4 which is a perfect snapshot of Mauritius with its rural and urban characteristics. The people on No. 4 are now part of my life and family as are the workers, the poor and citizens of Mauritius.

Madam Speaker, I am here standing in this prestigious House because the people of Mauritius overwhelmingly voted for the *Alliance du Changement* in which my party, Rezistans ek Alternativ is the humble partner together with the Labour Party, the Mouvement Militant Mauricien and the Nouveaux Démocrates. It is worth detailing for Members of this Assembly, for the people of Mauritius and for the record of history, the genesis of the Alliance du Changement and the present Presidential Address being debated by this Assembly where fundamental constitutional changes are at its core.

It was in August 2022 when Rezistans ek Alternativ considered a red line was crossed with the *mafiosisation*, an autocratic characteristic of the previous regime started to unveil by the Kistnen assassination that our Party called for the unification of all parliamentary and all extra-parliamentary forces to form an electoral front, to change the previous government and elect a new transition government to bring both regime change and system change. When the *mafiosisation* expanded in wider tentacles with the sniffing episode of Baie-Jacotet and the planting operations against political opponents of the regime, we intensified our initiative. Then follows a conversation process of nearly one and a half years with Rezistans ek Alternativ meetings, all Opposition forces for the establishment of the common front and the transition government to bring in constitutional changes.

Subsequently a constitutional conference was organised by Rezistans ek Alternativ on 31 March 2024 in which almost all the Opposition Parties participated. A consensus towards constitutional reform to decolonise and mauritianise the Constitution emerged.

Afterwards, some extra parliamentary forces decided to pursue separate pathways in the coming elections, opting instead for a three or four-cornered electoral fight. Rezistans ek Alternativ did not share this view, given that we firmly believe that it would matter and make a difference for the people of Mauritius if the MSM Regime not be returned to power. The *mafiosisation*, and institutional crisis developed should be stopped.

Secondly, our Party was of the view that to enable system change, a three-quarter majority would be needed in the National Assembly. Rezistans ek Alternativ continued the

unification process and amidst the electoral heat-up, the Leader of the Labour Party, now the present Prime Minister, called for a meeting with him and the Leader of the MMM, now Deputy Prime Minister, after the PMSD separated from the PTr/MMM/PMSD Alliance. From this point onwards, some ten meetings were held at Riverwalk.

The core of the constitutional reform in the present Government Programme stems from these fruitful deliberations between the Labour Party led by the hon. Prime Minister, Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, the MMM led by the Deputy Prime Minister, hon. Paul Bérenger and *Rezistans ek Alternativ* team, and ultimately led by its teams of spokespersons.

The core of the present Government Programme is a product of, and at the same time, complimentary to the electoral agreement of PTr-MMM-MD-ReA, signed on 13 September 2024, and the electoral manifesto rendered public on 29 October 2024.

Madam Speaker, the last election will be one to be remembered in history. The *mafiosation*, authoritarianism and even fascistic characteristics of the previous regime were exposed, vindicated and confirmed during the last two weeks of the electoral campaign by *Missie Moustass Leaks* and the Facebook social media ban. The people then decided to act like vigilante of the electoral processes. They supervised ballot boxes process, organised massive vigilante in front of the polling stations. They organised their pens and scrupulously scrutinised the whole electoral process. The people of Mauritius not only ejected the previous government, but also said never again, and charted the destiny of a new Mauritius.

I must stress that never in the history of Mauritius have such extensive constitutional reforms programmes obtain such an overwhelming and absolute democratic mandate from the people of this country. Indeed, the opening chapter of the Presidential Address says, I quote –

“Government has received a clear and overwhelming mandate for a drastic change of course (...).

The very first mission of Government is to reconstruct our democracy, restore good governance and implement constitutional reforms.”

The 10 November 2024 and the unfolding new period are indeed defining a pivotal moment in the history of our country. What we do or not do now will have consequences far beyond the current coming five years. We are at the end of several interlinked short and long-term time cycles both in relation to Mauritius socio-politics and in relation to the history of

humanity, life of species and the planet itself. The 2024 General Elections marked the end of Jugnauth's regime of 10 years cycle. Year 2024 marked the end of post-independence cycle. The operating system inherited at the time of independence, the Constitution, has made its time, and now needs to be reviewed.

In terms of human society history, we are now facing a crisis of this so-called civilisation itself. An existential crisis never known in the history of human kind. A long millennial cycle is ending and another one is yet to be born. In terms of biological time, the time of life of living species on earth, we are amid the sixth extinction crisis, threatening various species and many forms of life on the planet. A cycle of millions of years is ending. In terms of geological time, we were in the middle of fundamental change in the time of earth system whereby planet Earth itself is in crisis, in a state of fundamental change due to the climate and crisis of crossing of the limit of ecological boundaries.

According to many scientists, Earth is dangerously moving from stable Holocene epoch to enter into new unstable and crisis epoch which has now been coined Anthropocene. Any person who will look back to Mauritius after 50 years will definitely realise that this country was at a historical decisive and defining moment of socio-ecological change in 2025 after the people have spoken and elected a new government in 2024.

This defining moment will mark a significant forward leap in history with the major shift in societal norms, structures or behaviours driven by the present political actions which we will be taking by adopting the Presidential Address and hon. Dr. Ms Babita Thannoo's motion. The Constitutional Reform Agenda proposed by this Government Programme aimed at, *inter alia*, an interrelated socio-ecological and democratic transformation.

The Government Programme proposes to recognise the right of every citizen to stand as candidate in elections as citizens without any compulsory community classification. The Government Programme carries a panoply of democratic reforms from the introduction of the right of recall an electoral reform with a dose of proportional representation to ensure more equitable political and ideological streams as well as ensuring a better gender representation in the National Assembly.

The Government Programme will guarantee local elections within the Constitution. The Government Programme proposes to enshrine the right of nature coupled with public interest litigation and class action judicial concepts within the Constitution, making Mauritius a vanguard country in terms of socio-ecological sustainability. The Government Programme

will enshrine social, economic, cultural rights as recognised by the United Nations within the Constitution. Thus, promoting a socio-economic right based society, offering additional constitutional protection against social discrimination in terms of housing, education, health care access, employment, social security as well as languages and cultures.

The Government Programme aims at consolidating section 16 of the Constitution by adding new categories of people to be protected, for example, to protect people with disabilities. The proposition of enshrining the values of peace, justice and liberty, within section 1 of the Constitution, marks a qualitative elevation of fundamental core values of the republic and its people.

The Government Programme recognises the digital time we are into and proposes to integrate digital rights and protections of citizens against any form of surveillance by the State or corporate entities. Again, placing Mauritius among the pioneers in this domain. The institution of a new Constitutional Appointment Committee would ensure more independence of our institutions. To top it all is the creation of a Constitutional Division of the Supreme Court.

Madam Speaker, the Constitutional reforms will create a new set of socio-ecological and democratic boundaries when compounded with the restoration of civil and political rights and will redefine the boundaries within which social organisation, the new economic and the new social order will be organised. I think this precision is of key importance.

The hoarse immediate Constitutional change in the pipeline is the concretisation of the signed electoral agreement between the Labour Party-MMM-ND and *Rezistans ek Alternativ*. It aims, I quote –

« ... [at recognising] *le droit aux citoyens de la République de se présenter aux élections comme tels sans aucune obligation faite à ces derniers/dernières de se classifier de façon communale. L'Alliance du Changement s'engage ainsi dans les premiers six mois au pouvoir à rendre permanent le mini-amendement constitutionnel temporaire de 2014 ayant permis aux candidats de ne pas se classifier. Ceci en attendant la proposition de réforme électorale en bonne et due forme que présentera l'Alliance du Changement. En ce faisant, l'État mauricien sera conforme à l'avis du Comité des droits humains des Nations unies sur la question.* »

The Government Programme consolidate this agreement and proposes that to promote national unity and nation building, constitutional amendments will be brought to remove the

mandatory declaration of community affiliation thus allowing candidates to stand for the National Assembly Elections without being required to make any declaration as to their community. By so doing, Government will ensure that all citizens have the right to stand as candidates for elections even if they do not wish to declare their community affiliation.

This fundamental amendment to come is beyond electoral systems and the rights of citizen to stand as candidates. It is the product of long historical struggles fought by generations on this issue but, more fundamentally, it is at the heart of the making of every child born on this land, and every Mauritian. The mini amendment proposed to be translated in the next two months will be the litmus test of the whole constitutional reform programme of our Government as it will act as the launching pad of the major constitutional reform programme. I am sure the Office of the hon. Attorney General will work hard and present shortly to the Cabinet and the Government an updated version of the 2014 mini amendment.

Our country, Mauritius, we must always remember, is one of the latest born nations on planet earth. We are both a nation of immigrants who brought the richness the of their traditions, cultures and beliefs, and a product of colonisation, slavery system and bondage labour. What we are today, through our living together, through our harsh but rich history, through our struggles against oppression in colonial and post-colonial Mauritius, through our moment of joy and tragedy, make us whole. All these features define us; our common history has forged and shaped our multiple and indivisible identity. It has shaped our most precious dynamics commons, our Mauritianism. We are one and all, we are all and one.

Our nation building process, our multiple and indivisible identities, our Mauritianism emerged at a very early stage when the first child was born on this land during Dutch colonisation. He was named Simon Van der Stel, born from the marriage of the then Dutch governor and his slave originated wife. The first Mauritian society was born in 1710 when the Dutch left Mauritius, and before French colonisers came in 1721.

From this moment on, during 300 years our common destiny has been harsh, painful, but a rich one too. For example, from the cultural genocide which slavery system represented, were born, from the children of the time, our common mother tongue, our Creole language now spoken by more than 95% of the population. Social bonds were built through struggles against oppression in 1937; 1943, during independence time, in the workers and youth struggles of the 70s.

During colonial time, with neighbourhood solidarity in villages and urban areas, we faced common poverty and shared a little of what we had. We understood the lives and the reality of the people of the same social class with our diversities. In moments of joy like the *Jeux des îles de l'océan Indien* or whenever our fellow Mauritians are abroad, we can feel our Mauritianism within our body. In moments of tragedies such as the flash floods of Canal Dayot of 2013 or more recently, during the ecological tragedy of Wakashio in 2020, our Mauritianism erupted in Mahébourg and the whole of the country.

It was the same Mauritianism which erupted during the recent elections. So, it is the duty of all of us to bring in this first constitutional amendment and pave the way of the great leap of fundamental constitutional transformation our nation and the new generation aspire. I had a whole section on social security, I will follow your advice, I will skip it and have a statement later in the Assembly and I will conclude.

Madam Speaker: Yes, thank you.

Mr Subron: Madam Speaker, let me conclude by this quotation –

“There are decades where nothing happens and there are months where decades happen.”

We are exactly in this situation, when history is being accelerated. The Government Programme has captured the *profond* aspiration of the people. This Government led by three parties, the Labour Party, the MMM and Rezistans ek Alternative which originates from emancipatory and enlightenment have the historical mission and cannot afford to fail. We will fulfil our duty with our partner of the Nouveaux Démocrates. Indeed, some conservative forces, some economically powerful forces, the usual profiteurs, the cronies will try to block the great leap forward agenda of the Government Programme, but then, it is our duty to remind them that the people have indeed spoken on the 10 November 2024 in their *pacific printemps mauricien*.

Change and transformation are conscious acts for the betterment of the many. For life systems of our habitat, for our commons but change always shakes the privilege of a few. To those forces, I would simply repeat and say a slogan used by the Prime Minister, Dr. the hon. Navinchandra Ramgoolam in 2010 – ‘*pa grat ledo maler*’. Let me also say, the forces who tried to block the sociopolitical emancipation have all failed, from the abolition of slavery to independence time.

Madam Speaker, my party is proud to be part of the long historical transformative journey towards to the socioecological and systemic transformation of Mauritius.

Madam Speaker, allow me to raise my fist there to say let Mauritian be Mauritian forever, with our multiple and indivisible identity. *Dan mwa ena tou. Viv nou morisianism ! Viv mama later !*

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

Mr Bhagwan: Madam Speaker, I beg to move for the adjournment of the debates.

Dr. Boolell rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Debate adjourned accordingly.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Prime Minister!

ADJOURNMENT

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Friday 07 March 2025 at 3.00 p.m.

The Deputy Prime Minister rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Madam Speaker: The House stands adjourned!

Adjournment time! Yes, one! I will allow one.

MATTER RAISED

(9.31 p.m.)

DRUG PROLIFERATION – FOREIGN EXPERTISE

Mr R. Jhummun (Second Member for Riviere des Anguilles & Souillac): My question is addressed to the hon. Prime Minister. Given the proliferation of drugs over the last ten years like never before, I am afraid to say that if we do not act firmly and forcefully, the situation may become irreversible. With all due respect to our police service, without undermining the police service, I would like to ask the hon. Prime Minister whether the Government is contemplating having foreign expertise to assist us in our fight against drugs and drug trafficking. Thank you.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, yes. Thank you for reminding us; we all know what the problem with drugs is. We are renaming what was NATReSA, as you know; we will have like a czar in the person of Mr Sam Lauthan, who knows how to deal with these, but we will also have expert advice from abroad. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Thank you. Thank you everybody.

At 9.32 p.m., the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Friday 07 March 2025 at 3.00 p.m.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

SSR INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT – NEW AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL TOWER – CONSTRUCTION DETAILS

(No. B/81) 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 construction of a New Air Traffic Control Tower at the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam International Airport, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Civil Aviation Department, information as to the –

- (a) list of contractors shortlisted for the project;
- (b) current status of the project, indicating the amount of fund disbursed so far, and
- (c) expected completion date thereof.

(Withdrawn)

MAURITIUS PRISON SERVICE – PRISON POPULATION RISE

(No. B/83) 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 constant rise in the prison population, he will –

- (a) for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Prison Service, information as to the –
 - (i) name of the actual Commissioner of Prisons;
 - (ii) official capacity of the prison system, and

- (iii) actual total prison population including pre-trial and remand detainees, and
- (b) state if he has been made aware of recent incidents occurring in the prisons due to the overpopulation thereof and lack of staff, indicating the measures being taken to alleviate this problem.

(Withdrawn)

MAURITIUS FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION – ELECTIVE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

(No. B/113) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the Mauritius Football Association, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom information as to –

- (a) whether all procedures were followed with regard to the Elective General Assembly thereof held on 27 November 2024, indicating the –
 - (i) names of the candidates for the post of President of the Association, and
 - (ii) the reasons as to why the candidature of Mr E. R. for the post was rejected, and
- (b) the composition of the newly elected managing committee of the Association.

(Withdrawn)

BABY S. – FACT-FINDING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

(No. B/114) Ms S. Anquetil (Second Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to Baby S. admitted at the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit of the SSRN Hospital on 21 October 2022, she will state if consideration will be given to making public the recommendations of the Fact-Finding Committee set up to look into this case.

(Withdrawn)

LA SOURCE FOOTBALL PLAYGROUND – CLASSIFICATION – SAFETY MEASURES

(No. B/117) Ms S. Anquetil (Second Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to La Source Football playground, he will state –

- (a) if he has been made aware of –
 - (i) the non-compliance thereof to be classified as a football field, and

- (ii) the construction of a concrete barrier at the playground, and
- (b) the measures being envisaged for the safety of the players thereat.

(Withdrawn)

PAS GÉOMÉTRIQUES – STATE LAND – SMALL RESIDENTIAL LEASEHOLDERS

(No. B/118) Mr M. Seeburn (Second Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle)

asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to small residential leaseholders of State land on Pas Géométriques around the island, he will state if his Ministry will consider amending the relevant legislations to grant freehold title for those having occupied those lands for more than 30 to 40 years at a given price and, if not, why not.

Reply: I wish to refer to the reply I made in response to supplementary question to PQ B/38 on 04 February last to the effect that *Pas Géométriques* is inalienable.

As a matter of fact, reserved lands along the sea coast, commonly called the *Pas Géométriques* and referred to in the *Arrêté of General Decaen* of 05 May 1807, form part of the *domaine public* and are, according to section 2(1) of the Pas Géométriques Act, inalienable and imprescriptible.

It was during the French Colonisation that the *Pas Géométriques* were specifically established for defence of the island and public utility and thus being of *domaine public*.

Following the passage of cyclones Alix and Carol in the early 60s, building site leases were granted to low-income families whose houses were destroyed for the construction of a residential unit. These leases were on State land, including *Pas Géométriques*.

Moreover, the ex-Central Housing Authority (CHA) constructed some 19,442 housing units to rehouse cyclone victims. Out of the 19,442 housing units, 897 are located on *Pas Géométriques*.

Since then, it has been the practice for subsequent governments to grant building site leases to low-income earners to enable them to construct a house of their own. To date, some 22,000 building site leases have been granted across the island, out of which some 4,000 are located on *Pas Géométriques*.

Today, it is a matter of pride for me to remind that it was during the period from July 2005 to December 2014 when the Labour Party was in government that those successive amendments were brought to the State Lands Act to enable these building site lessees to purchase the plot of land on which stand their houses for the modest sum of Rs2000.

Such measure has enabled 14,678 low-income earners to become land owners. The sale of land to the remaining building site lessees under this measure is still ongoing. At present, some 5,189 applications for purchase of State land are under process at my Ministry.

As I mentioned earlier, such measure is, by virtue of existing legislation, not applicable to some 4,897 building site lessees, whose housing units are on *Pas Géométriques*.

To consider amending the present legislation to enable sale of State land on *Pas Géométriques* would require a major policy decision by government. This will require prior thoughtful and in-depth discussions which go far beyond the remit of my Ministry alone.

My Ministry has already started having brainstorming sessions and will be consulting other concerned ministries and departments. It goes without saying that the Attorney General's Office will have a prominent role in these discussions.

LIVERPOOL FOOTBALL ACADEMY – PROJECT COST – OUTCOME

(No. B/119) Mr T. Apollon (Second Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the Liverpool Football Academy Project, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the sum invested into the academy up to December 2024, indicating the outcome derived under this project for Mauritius.

(Withdrawn)

MONKEYS' EXPORTATION – YEARLY GENERATED REVENUE

(No. B/120) Mr R. Jhummun (Second Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac) asked the Minister of Agro-Industry, Food Security, Blue Economy and Fisheries whether, in regard to monkeys, he will state the number thereof exported, yearly, since 2014 to date, indicating the –

- (a) average selling price thereof, and
- (b) the annual revenue generated yearly, since 2014 to date.

(Withdrawn)

SICOM – PENSIONS FUND STATUS

(No. B/121) Mr R. Jhummun (Second Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac) asked the Minister of Financial Services and Economic Planning whether, in regard to the pension funds managed by the State Insurance Company of Mauritius Ltd., she will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom information as to –

- (a) the status of the funds from 2014 to 2024, indicating the qualifications and benefits drawn by those managing same, and
- (b) whether any case of mismanagement has been reported in relation thereto and, if so, the actions taken to remedy the situation.

(Withdrawn)

BUS & TAXIS – PUBLIC SERVICES LICENSES

(No. B/123) Mr T. Apollon (Second Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Land Transport whether, in regard to the issue of temporary public services licenses for bus and taxis, he will –

- (a) for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Land Transport Authority, information as to the number of such licenses delivered from 2015 to 2024, indicating the procedures adopted to award these licenses, and
- (b) state if consideration will be given for the setting up of an inquiry to look into the circumstances for the granting of these licenses.

(Withdrawn)

MR P. U. – SLOVAKIAN NATIONAL – EXTRADITION

(No. B/124) Mr R. Jhummun (Second Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac) asked the Attorney-General whether, in regard to Mr P. U., a Slovakian national, he will state the circumstances that led to the removal of the Slovakian despite pending extradition proceedings before the Port Louis District Court (3rd Division) and an interim order from the Supreme Court, duly served on the relevant authorities, indicating the action taken and/or being envisaged to prevent any such occurrence.

(Withdrawn)

NTC – SPARE PARTS – BIDDING EXERCISES

(No. B/127) Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Land Transport whether, in regard to the National Transport Corporation, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the bidding exercises launched by the Corporation for the procurement and award of contracts for spare parts since January 2023 to date, indicating –

- (a) the names of the suppliers thereof, further indicating in each case the –
 - (i) contractual value thereof, and
 - (ii) amount paid to the suppliers, and
- (b) if he has been aware of any irregularities and/or malpractices regarding the procurement thereof.

(Withdrawn)