



EIGHTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY

DEBATES

(HANSARD)

(UNREVISED)

FIRST SESSION

TUESDAY 02 JUNE 2026

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

Hon. Dhananjay Ramful	Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade
Hon. Darmarajen Nagalingum	Minister of Youth and Sports
Hon. Muhammad Reza Cassam Uteem	Minister of Labour and Industrial Relations
Hon. Mahomed Osman Cassam Mahomed	Minister of Land Transport
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Dr. the Hon. Kaviraj Sharma Sukon	Minister of Tertiary Education, Science and Research
Hon. Sayed Muhammad Aadil Ameer Meea	Minister of Industry, SMEs and Cooperatives
Dr. the Hon. Mahend Gungapersad, PDSM	Minister of Education and Human Resource
Dr. the Hon. Avinash Ramtohol	Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation
Hon. Lutchmanah Pentiah	Minister of Public Service and Administrative Reforms
Hon. Ranjiv Woochit, 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. 13 of 2026

Sitting of Tuesday 02 June 2026

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

The National Anthem was played

(Madam Speaker in the Chair)

PAPERS LAID

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

A. 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 Supplementary Appropriation (2024-2025) (No.2) Bill (No. VII of 2026) (In Original).
- (b) Estimates of Supplementary Expenditure (2024-2025) (No. 2) of 2026.

B. Ministry of Financial Services and Economic Planning

- (a) The Statutory Bodies Pension Funds (Amendment) Regulations 2026. (Government Notice No. 96 of 2026)
- (b) The Financial Reporting (Mauritius Institute of Professional Accountants) (Fees) (Amendment) Regulations 2026. (Government Notice No. 97 of 2026)

C. Ministry of Labour and Industrial Relations

- (a) The Attorneys' and Notaries' Workers (Remuneration) (Amendment) Regulations 2026. (Government Notice No. 64 of 2026)
- (b) The Baking Industry (Remuneration) (Amendment) Regulations 2026. (Government Notice No. 65 of 2026)
- (c) The Banks Fishermen and Frigo-workers (Remuneration) (Amendment) Regulations 2026. (Government Notice No. 66 of 2026)
- (d) The Blockmaking, Construction, Stone Crushing and Related Industries (Remuneration) (Amendment) Regulations 2026. (Government Notice No. 67 of 2026)
- (e) The Catering and Tourism Industries (Remuneration) (Amendment) Regulations 2026. (Government Notice No. 68 of 2026)
- (f) The Cinema Employees (Remuneration) (Amendment) Regulations 2026. (Government Notice No. 69 of 2026)
- (g) The Cleaning Enterprises (Remuneration) (Amendment) Regulations 2026. (Government Notice No. 70 of 2026)
- (h) The Distributive Trades (Remuneration) (Amendment) Regulations 2026. (Government Notice No. 71 of 2026)

- (i) The Domestic Workers (Remuneration) (Amendment) Regulations 2026. (Government Notice No. 72 of 2026)
- (j) The Electrical, Engineering and Mechanical Workshops (Remuneration) (Amendment) Regulations 2026. (Government Notice No. 73 of 2026)
- (k) The Factory Employees (Remuneration) (Amendment) Regulations 2026. (Government Notice No. 74 of 2026)
- (l) The Field-crop and Orchard Workers (Remuneration) (Amendment) Regulations 2026. (Government Notice No. 75 of 2026)
- (m) The Information and Communication Technologies and Other Related Services (Remuneration) (Amendment) Regulations 2026. (Government Notice No. 76 of 2026)
- (n) The Light Metal and Wooden Furniture Workshops (Remuneration) (Amendment) Regulations 2026. (Government Notice No. 77 of 2026)
- (o) The Livestock Workers (Remuneration) (Amendment) Regulations 2026. (Government Notice No. 78 of 2026)
- (p) The Media Employees (Remuneration) (Amendment) Regulations 2026. (Government Notice No. 79 of 2026)
- (q) The Office Attendants (Remuneration) (Amendment) Regulations 2026. (Government Notice No. 80 of 2026)
- (r) The Pre-Primary School Employees (Remuneration) (Amendment) Regulations 2026. (Government Notice No. 81 of 2026)
- (s) The Printing Industry (Remuneration) (Amendment) Regulations 2026. (Government Notice No. 82 of 2026)
- (t) The Private Hospitals and Other Related Health Services (Remuneration) (Amendment) Regulations 2026. (Government Notice No. 83 of 2026)
- (u) The Private Secondary Schools Employees (Remuneration) (Amendment) Regulations 2026. (Government Notice No. 84 of 2026)
- (v) The Private Security Services Employees (Remuneration) (Amendment) Regulations 2026. (Government Notice No. 85 of 2026)
- (w) The Public Transport (Buses) Workers (Remuneration) (Amendment) Regulations 2026. (Government Notice No. 86 of 2026)
- (x) The Road Haulage Industry (Remuneration) (Amendment) Regulations 2026. (Government Notice No. 87 of 2026)

- (y) The Salt Manufacturing Industry (Remuneration) (Amendment) Regulations 2026. (Government Notice No. 88 of 2026)
- (z) The Special Education Needs Institutions Employees (Remuneration) (Amendment) Regulations 2026. (Government Notice No. 89 of 2026)
- (aa) The Sugar Industry (Agricultural Workers) (Remuneration) (Amendment) Regulations 2026. (Government Notice No. 90 of 2026)
- (bb) The Sugar Industry (Non - Agricultural Workers) (Remuneration) (Amendment) Regulations 2026. (Government Notice No. 91 of 2026)
- (cc) The Tailoring Trade (Remuneration) (Amendment) Regulations 2026. (Government Notice No. 92 of 2026)
- (dd) The Tea Industry Workers (Remuneration) (Amendment) Regulations 2026. (Government Notice No. 93 of 2026)
- (ee) The Travel Agents and Tour Operators Workers (Remuneration) (Amendment) Regulations 2026. (Government Notice No. 94 of 2026)
- (ff) The Wage Adjustment (Amendment) Regulations 2026. (Government Notice No. 95 of 2026)

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

SYNTHETIC DRUGS – ROAD TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS – PROLIFERATION

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr G. Lesjongard) (*by Private Notice*) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to synthetic drugs, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to, since January 2025 to date –

- (a) from the Commissioner of Police, the –
 - (i) number of road traffic accidents involving drivers tested to be under the influence thereof and the number of casualties resulting therefrom, and
 - (ii) actions taken to curb the proliferation thereof;
- (b) whether the National Agency for Drug Control has carried out a study on the use thereof and, if so, indicate the estimated number of users thereof identified and the actions taken/being envisaged to tackle the proliferation thereof, and
- (c) the types of synthetic drugs, including newly synthetic drugs analysed by the Forensic Science Laboratory.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Prime Minister!

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I have stated on many occasions in no uncertain terms that the fight against drug trafficking and use is one of the main priorities of this Government. We have started implementing bold measures to end the suffering of families with an unflinching resolve to deal with this major societal scourge.

It would also be relevant at the very outset to remind the House of the nefarious environment fuelled by drugs, drug addiction, drug trafficking and other drug-related crimes that the previous regime left as a toxic legacy to the nation.

We are now in the process of dismantling this cosy nexus that has been clearly established between the MSM and traffickers of all shades and colours.

Madam Speaker, synthetic drugs have emerged as a rapidly evolving challenge for drug control systems across the world. Unlike plant-based drugs, these substances are manufactured through chemical processes using precursor chemicals and laboratory equipment. Their production can be relatively quick and adaptable, allowing manufacturers to

modify the chemical structures to create new variants that may circumvent existing legal controls. As a result, synthetic drugs are increasingly present in global illicit drug markets and pose complex regulatory and enforcement challenges.

Madam Speaker, the consumption of synthetic drugs was detected in Mauritius in 2013. The first schedule of the Dangerous Drug Act was thereafter amended to include substances which are being used to manufacture synthetic drugs.

Mauritius continues to confront the complex and evolving challenges posed by drug use, particularly the rise in synthetic substances, the associated public health risks, and the need for a more coordinated national response. To address these challenges, Government has embarked on comprehensive reforms centered on the establishment of the National Agency for Drug Control, the implementation of the National Drug Control Master Plan, and enhanced inter-agency and regional collaboration.

The National Agency for Drug Control Act of 2025, which came in force on 15 May 2025, provides for the creation of the NADC as an apex statutory body to coordinate prevention, enforcement, treatment, rehabilitation and harm reduction measures.

With regard to parts (a) (i) and (ii) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that since January 2025 to 01 June 2026, Police have established 1,594 cases related to synthetic drugs resulting in the arrest of 1,650. During the same period, 44 road accidents have occurred involving drivers who tested positive for dangerous drugs, and out of these, six persons lost their lives and another six were injured.

I am informed that the following measures are being implemented by Police to combat the scourge of drugs, including synthetic drugs –

- (i) Identification of drug peddlers through intelligence gathering to disrupt the supply of illicit drugs;
- (ii) Drug Mapping to locate 'Areas of Concern' where drug activities are being carried out and drug addicts tend to loiter;
- (iii) Profiling of 'Persons of Interest' through discreet surveillance to identify their role and involvement in the drug nexus;
- (iv) Arresting drug offenders (dealers and traffickers) and ensuring their successful prosecution;

- (v) Conducting more aggressive Crackdown Operations in drug-prone-areas with specialised Units of the Police Force. The aim is to nab the drug traffickers and keep those areas drug free;
- (vi) Drones are being used for surveillance and reconnaissance missions in hot spots;
- (vii) Additional resources in terms of vehicles and manpower have been provided to ADSU to increase its operational effectiveness. ADSU personnel have also been provided with training and sophisticated equipment to enhance their operational capabilities, and
- (viii) Daily patrols are being carried out with the SSU, SMF and DSU personnel in hotbed areas.

Madam Speaker, as part of the Government's ongoing efforts to combat the plague of synthetic drugs and enhance road safety, crackdown operations have been intensified against drivers under the influence of intoxicating substances. Since January 2025, a total of 1,837,461 vehicles has been stopped and checked, resulting in 1,068 persons being tested positive for synthetic drugs.

From January 2025 to 02 June 2026, Police have carried out 361 crackdown operations resulting in seizure of synthetic drugs for an amount of Rs 957,151,400.

Madam Speaker, with regard to part (b) of the question, the UNODC carried out an assessment on Synthetic Drugs in Mauritius and submitted a report in December 2024 recommending the following actions –

- (i) setting up of an early warning measure system to detect the emergence of synthetic drugs;
- (ii) creating awareness and education of the community, in particular vulnerable groups, on the risks and dangers of synthetic drugs;
- (iii) strengthen access to drug treatment facilities focused on sustained aftercare and follow-up;
- (iv) development of tailored post-rehabilitation based on individual abilities, education and skills;
- (v) evaluation and adjustment of the Drug Users Administrative Panel to ensure that people arrested for drug-use follow a rehabilitation programme;

- (vi) enhance capacity building to frontline law enforcement and border control officials on the latest trends in drug trafficking and identification of new drugs, and
- (vii) greater regional and international collaboration for sharing of information and intelligence on synthetic drugs.

In July 2025, a workshop was held by the National Agency for Drug Control to disseminate the findings of the report to concerned civil society organisations, Ministries/Departments and relevant stakeholders.

Madam Speaker, in addition, the National Agency for Drug Control is launching a study on the prevalence and determinants of synthetic drug use among secondary school students in Mauritius. This study aims to provide up-to-date data and a clearer understanding of the factors influencing the use of such substances among the youth.

Secondly, NADC will undertake an exercise to update the findings of the 2021 Drug Use Survey on People Who Use Drugs, with a view to tracking trends, assessing changes over time, and informing evidence-based policy and intervention strategies.

In addition, Madam Speaker, a Steering Committee on the containment of synthetic drugs has been set up, comprising key stakeholders, including the Anti-Drug and Smuggling Unit, the Forensic Science Laboratory, among others, to ensure a coordinated and effective response to the challenges posed by the synthetic drugs. These include, I should say, also the personnel of the Ministry of Health and the Pharmaceutical Board.

In line with the recommendations of the UNODC report, NADC, in collaboration with Health institutions and laboratories, is implementing an Early Warning System to allow for early detection of psychoactive substances and ensure prompt responses by national institutions to emerging threats relating to synthetic drugs and their precursor chemicals.

I am informed that NADC has instituted a Technical Working Group on the Cannabis Policy Reform to advise Government on the best strategy regarding Cannabis, namely legalisation, depenalisation or decriminalisation. National public consultations were launched last week and are ongoing. Based on the information and views gathered as well as studies and surveys underway by relevant experts, evidence-based recommendations will be submitted.

Madam Speaker, as regards part (c) of the question, the Forensic Science Laboratory has analysed different types of synthetic drugs and new psycho active substance submitted by law enforcement agencies. These include mainly synthetic cannabinoids as well as synthetic cathinones and synthetic opioids. Synthetic Cannabinoids remain the main synthetic drug category detected by the FSL. In 2025, the FSL recorded 1,110 cases of Synthetic Cannabinoids. In addition, 252 cases were classified under other dangerous drugs, including synthetic opioids, synthetic cathinones, benzodiazepines, cocaine, and methamphetamine. Since the first synthetic drug case was reported in Mauritius in 2013, approximately 60 new psychoactive substances have been identified. These substances are of concern as their chemical structures – as I explained – change rapidly. They may be present in very small but potent quantities. They may be concealed in various forms, including leaf matter, paper, strips, powder and liquid. New molecules have been identified in FSL casework. FSL has already detected heroine-related mixtures and adulterated exhibits involving substances such as xylazine, nitazenes, diazepam, synthetic cathinones and synthetic opioids, indicating a trend towards poly-drug mixtures and market substitution.

The FSL continues to monitor emerging substances through the identification of new psychoactive substances, the development and updating of analytical methods, forensic intelligence support to law enforcement agencies, and the provision of expert reports and testimony before courts.

I should add, Madam Speaker, that FSL is being totally restructured under the new management. They are also, I should add, contemplating outsourcing because of a backlog of around 8,000 cases which are still there.

Madam Speaker, the drug scourge, especially the proliferation of synthetic drugs, is a matter of national concern that should transcend partisan politics.

All those who have at heart the interest and welfare of our citizens should join forces in the daunting challenges that we are facing and that is dangerously tearing the very fabric of our society.

Let me quote anew what the American journalist David Schrieberg said, a few years ago in an issue of the Newsweek Magazine. I quote –

“The largest, richest and deadliest criminal enterprise in history is penetrating deeply into civil structures that make democracy what it is: justice systems, police forces, political parties, legislatures, electoral campaigns, government ministries and presidential palaces.”

Madam Speaker, this is a clarion call for all of us to ensure that the criminal drug empire does not have an upper hand on our nation.

Madam Speaker: Thank you. Yes, your first supplementary, Leader of the Opposition!

Mr Lesjongard: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, the situation is catastrophic with regard to drugs in the country. The hon. Prime Minister made reference to the National Drug Control Master Plan. Can the hon. Prime Minister inform the House why is it that if Government is reconsidering cannabis policy as a deterrent to synthetic drugs, this is not reflected in the Master Plan?

The Prime Minister: It is reflected in the Master Plan. I just said, Madam Speaker, that they are actually looking at this. They are looking at all the opinions that have been expressed. They are also looking at experts' opinion, and also, it will be based on what evidence they get.

Madam Speaker: Okay. Second question!

Mr Lesjongard: It is not in the Master Plan, Madam Speaker.

(Interruptions)

With regard to treatment of drug addicts, the UNODC Report noted that Mauritius has limited public rehabilitation capacity. Therefore, again, why is it that the Master Plan does not offer any immediate strategy concerning the treatment of drug addicts in the country?

The Prime Minister: I get the impression the Leader of the Opposition has not read it properly. It does address this question as well. It does!

Mr Lesjongard: No, it is not...

The Prime Minister: You are reading the wrong report then.

Madam Speaker: Your third question!

Mr Lesjongard: Again, with reference to the same Master Plan. Now given that Mauritius has been identified as the leading user of synthetic drugs in the region of East Africa, can the hon. Prime Minister inform the House why, again, the National Drug Control Master Plan does not provide specific rapid response mechanisms for new synthetic drugs? You should read the report, the Master Plan.

The Prime Minister: You should read the report, and you should read what it says. It says since the last 10 years. This is the toxic legacy that we have inherited from the MSM.

Ms Anquetil: Exactly!

The Prime Minister: You cannot expect what you did not do in 10 years to be done overnight! But they are doing what has to be done.

Madam Speaker: Fourth question!

Mr Lesjongard: Le Premier ministre vient de faire référence à ce sujet comme un sujet national et, à chaque fois, il met de l'avant la politique.

Madam Speaker: No statement!

(Interruptions)

No statements!

Mr Lesjongard: Can the hon. Prime Minister confirm, Madam Speaker, if the FSL currently has the necessary equipment and personnel to proceed with analysis of samples and the detection of new drugs?

The Prime Minister: I have just explained, Madam Speaker. They have all the equipment – modern equipment.

There is a new Director at the FSL at the moment. He has come from London, well equipped, well qualified, and he is doing a lot of changes. They have the equipment – most of the equipment, not all. But what they do not have is enough personnel, which we are looking into.

Also, it was identified before as well, that, very often, the people, who are supposed to do their analysis in the labs, are spending their time in court. This is something that we have to correct because they do not have to go to court unless they are specifically asked to be in court. So, we are losing a lot of manpower, spending time in court, instead of doing the analysis at the FSL.

Madam Speaker: Yes!

Mr Lesjongard: With regard to the new Director of the FSL, can the House be informed of the qualifications and experience of the new Director?

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, he is one of the most experienced and qualified persons that we have. We should be thankful that he agreed to leave the UK to come here to work; because of personal reasons, he wanted to come back to Mauritius. We are very grateful that he has actually come.

Madam Speaker: Do you actually...

The Prime Minister: He is very qualified. If you want a detailed...

Mr Lesjongard: My question is direct, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: One moment!

The Prime Minister: If you want a full list of his qualifications, I will table it.

Madam Speaker: Yes.

Mr Lesjongard: His experience?

Madam Speaker: Qualifications and experience.

The Prime Minister: I have just explained; he worked in that department in the UK. What else do you want?

Mr Lesjongard: ... in the UK? Okay.

Madam Speaker, we regularly see on social media people in acute distress in public places under the influence of synthetic drugs. May I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether there is a protocol in place at the level of the NADC for rapid intervention in such situations?

Madam Speaker: Yes!

The Prime Minister: It is for the Police to do the rapid intervention; not for them, Madam Speaker.

Mr Lesjongard: Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister to inform the House how many such intoxicated persons, which I made reference to earlier, have been put on a rehabilitation programme?

The Prime Minister: Whenever they get persons that they feel have to go through rehabilitation, they do. I do not have the exact figures of how many people, but I know that the Police and the NADC are doing what has to be done.

Madam Speaker: Okay, next question!

Mr Lesjongard: Yes, thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, a widely circulated video depicted a transaction involving synthetic drugs through a residential window. Can the hon. Prime Minister confirm whether the individuals featured have been identified, arrested and charged? And if not, Madam Speaker, what investigative hurdles have been encountered? This was...

The Prime Minister: Does the Leader of the Opposition realise that it is an old video which pre-dates the election?

(Interruptions)

Mr Lesjongard: My second question refers to that video you are mentioning, not the first one.

And I put my second question, Madam Speaker. Reports have leaked a public performer known as Raquel – you made reference to him – and he has performed, everybody knows, in public gatherings of *l'Alliance du Changement*.

(Interruptions)

And this went viral, Madam Speaker.

Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether this person has already been questioned by the Police and what has been the outcome?

The Prime Minister: In fact, Madam Speaker, to allay the fears of the Leader of the Opposition, he actually has.

Mr Lesjongard: Madam Speaker, given that press reports describe infinite queues at suspected drug markets, and the population, in certain regions, have themselves identified those places, why has Government not deployed specialised Units such as MARCOS trained teams for precision interventions in those areas?

Madam Speaker: Yes, Prime Minister!

The Prime Minister: I wonder why it was not done 10 years ago. I have just explained that they are doing crackdown operations, that they have special teams doing this. I have just explained.

Mr Lesjongard: Where?

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: *Be partou!*

Mr Lesjongard: Madam Speaker, we don't hear crackdown in those areas.

Mr Jhummun: *Kombien zot ti pe fer zot?*

Mr Lesjongard: Madam Speaker, the hon. Prime Minister stated in this House that vehicles of persons driving under the influence of drugs will be seized. May we know where matters are, hon. Prime Minister?

The Prime Minister: Are you talking about the previous cases of ...? I am not quite sure what was the question. Can you repeat the question?

Madam Speaker: Can you please repeat?

Mr Lesjongard: Yes, of course, Madam Speaker.

Hon. Prime Minister, you made a statement in this House that vehicles of persons driving under the influence of drugs will be seized. May we know where matters are?

The Prime Minister: I know that the vehicles that have been identified are taken care of. The vehicles are taken away from them and examined, if that is what the question relates to.

Mr Lesjongard: ...come forward to seize those vehicles, Madam Speaker.

Now, hon. Prime Minister, is a person arrested for drug impaired driving currently permitted to retain his licence and continue driving pending trial? And if so, does Government consider this compatible with public safety imperatives?

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Prime Minister!

The Prime Minister: When they go to Court, Madam Speaker, I cannot interfere in the Court. Somebody has to go through the Court system. If they decide to allow him to continue – actually, for very few, this is happening. But it can happen. It has happened. I cannot control what happens in the Court.

Mr Jhummun: *Banla ti pe fer li selman!*

Mr Lesjongard: Madam Speaker, is the hon. Prime Minister aware that a product known as Fentanyl, which is, I understand, hundred times more potent than heroin, is being used to prepare those deadly cocktails of synthetic drugs?

Madam Speaker: Are you aware?

The Prime Minister: I just answered that question, Madam Speaker. I do not know what you want me to say more. They are being analysed. I explained that these new substances, their chemical molecules can be changed very quickly. It takes time to identify. We are identifying. I think, I mentioned sixty, or so, have been identified.

Madam Speaker: Yes. I already have two waiting. So, you will be the third if we have time. Okay? Yes. Would you give way to some other Members?

Mr Lesjongard: Yes, and I will come back with my two last questions, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Okay, then you will come back.

Mr Lesjongard: Yes.

Madam Speaker: Okay, hon. Duval.

Mr A. Duval: Thank you, Madam Speaker. May I ask the hon. Prime Minister, there are an estimated 50,000 drug users in Mauritius. The latest figures available for the National Drug Observatory Report 2024 states that 500 only, less than 1%, have been through the Government Rehabilitation Programme. We do not have the figures to-date. I will ask the hon. Prime Minister: what is being contemplated to urgently ensure that we can rehabilitate those estimated 50,000 people who are drug addicts in Mauritius?

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I just explained in my answer what actually NADC is doing to identify them. Or, I can go through them again if you want.

They are identifying the drug peddlers to start with through the intelligence gathering that they get. They are doing drug mapping of local areas of concern; they are profiling persons of interest, again, through discrete surveillance. They are arresting drug offenders, that is, dealers and traffickers, and ensuring that they are successfully prosecuted. And, they are conducting more aggressive crackdown operations and we are using drones to identify these hotspots.

Madam Speaker: Yes, Chief Whip!

Ms Anquetil: Je vous remercie, Madame la présidente. Le Premier ministre peut-il informer la Chambre si un laboratoire clandestin de fabrication de drogues synthétiques a été démantelé à Flic en Flac en 2025, ayant conduit à l'arrestation de trois personnes et la saisie de drogues d'une valeur de 47 millions? Merci, Madame la présidente.

The Prime Minister: The hon. Chief Whip is well informed; that is so.

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

Mr Quirin: Merci, Madame la présidente.

Le rapport du Premier ministre peut-il dire à la Chambre si au niveau de la police, s'il y a eu des enquêtes qui ont été initiées afin d'identifier les réseaux d'importation, de fabrication et de distribution de ces drogues à Maurice? Si tel est le cas, y a-t-il des actions fortes qui sont prévues afin de démanteler ces réseaux?

The Prime Minister: We depend a lot on intelligence report that we get and we get help especially from two countries, that is, France and India. President Macron was here recently. We went to visit the mapping that they are doing for that area, I mean, in the Indian Ocean. This is that kind of collaboration we are getting through our friends from abroad.

Madam Speaker: Yes, you have two questions and I think...

Mr Lesjongard: Yes, again with regard to products being used for the production of synthetic drugs, there is another product called Ketamine. Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister to confirm if the sale of this product is restricted? And if its availability on the local market has been investigated?

The Prime Minister: The answer is yes. The short answer is yes.

Madam Speaker: It has been banned in all pharmacies.

The Prime Minister: It is restricted.

Madam Speaker: It is restricted.

Mr Lesjongard: Okay.

Madam Speaker, last question, apart from that laboratory in Flic-en-Flac, are there any other laboratories in the country producing synthetic drugs which have been dismantled?

The Prime Minister: I am not aware of this, whether there are other laboratories operating at the moment. But the Police are doing what they can do.

Madam Speaker: Okay. Thank you very much, everybody.

Hon. Members... I am sorry. *J'ai un chat dans la gorge. Excusez-moi.*

The Table has been advised that PQ B/877 will be replied by hon. Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection. I am waiting to know who else will be replying to other questions for Ministers who are absent. I am waiting to know.

Okay, for the moment, I am calling hon. Second Member for Rodrigues.

RODRIGUES – DRIVING TEST CENTRE – LICENCE ISSUANCE

(No. B/859) Mr J. F. François (Second Member for Rodrigues) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the Driving Test Centre at Port-Mathurin, Rodrigues, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the –

- (a) average daily number of persons sitting for driving tests;

- (b) number of driving licences issued over the past five years, on a yearly basis, and
- (c) expected timeframe for the proposed relocation of the practical driving tests site to the reserved site at Jean Tac/SMF Compound.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, as regards part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that an average of 13 persons daily undergo practical driving tests at the Driving Test Centre in Port Mathurin, and around 40 persons sit for oral tests which are held only on Saturdays.

With regard to part (b) of the question, the number of driving licences issued in Rodrigues over the past five years are as follows –

- (i) 1,011 in 2021;
- (ii) 676 in 2022;
- (iii) 1,008 in 2023;
- (iv) 1,188 in 2024;
- (v) 1,230 in 2025; and
- (vi) 688 as at May of this year.

In regard to part (c) of the question, I am informed by the Rodrigues Regional Assembly that land has already been earmarked at Jean Tac, near the SMF compound for the setting up of a new Driving Test Centre.

Consultations as well as site visits were held by the Commission for Public Infrastructure with the Traffic Management Road Safety Unit, the Road Development Authority, the Police and other stakeholders for the design and implementation of the project.

The detailed design and cost estimates of the project are being worked out at the level of the Commission for Public Infrastructure of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly.

Madam Speaker: Thank you. Yes.

Mr François: Thank you, Madam Speaker. May I ask the hon. Prime Minister with regard to the Driving Centre at Port Mathurin for oral test, whether he is aware that the room is inappropriate, where questions are being put on whiteboards, in Creole only, non-computerised? Will he agree with me to request the Commissioner of Police to see to it for necessary upgrade thereat, and also to provide the choice of languages in both English and French as well to applicants for oral test thereat?

The Prime Minister: I can pass on that to the Commissioner of Police.

Madam Speaker: I am sure.

Yes, hon. Third Member for Grand' Baie and Poudre d'Or!

BUDGET SPEECH 2026-2027 – STAKEHOLDERS – CONSULTATIONS

(No. B/860) Mr R. Etwareea (Third Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or) ask 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 forthcoming presentation of the Budget Speech 2026-2027, he will state the stakeholders with whom/which his Ministry has held consultations.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, the Ministry of Finance launched the consultation process for the 2026-2027 Budget early in the year, that is, from February of this year.

First, on 24 February 2026, the Ministry of Finance issued a communiqué inviting all stakeholders and the public at large to submit their proposals in the context of the Budget preparation exercise.

Stakeholders were informed that the Budget would focus on boosting GDP growth potential, raising productivity and competitiveness, creating quality jobs, improving living standards for all Mauritians, while strengthening climate resilience and restoring sound public finances.

On 27 February 2026, the Ministry of Finance issued the Budget Circular to Ministries and Departments requesting them to submit their Budget proposals.

Ministries and Departments were informed that Government would give priority to spending that delivers the greatest development impacts, while minimising pressures on public finances.

However, Madam Speaker, the day after we issued the Circular, the war in the Middle East started, increasing global economic uncertainty and causing major disruptions in the supply chains, especially of energy, food, and fertiliser. Since then, for example, the price of crude oil has been surging, reaching a peak of 126 US dollars per barrel. This is having a negative impact on both growth and inflation worldwide.

The situation is adding significantly to an already tight budgeting exercise. It calls for building greater resilience to such external shocks while pursuing our efforts to consolidate public finances.

Consequently, the Ministry of Finance has asked the various Ministries and Departments to factor in these developments in the formulation of their budget proposals.

I am informed, Madam Speaker, that in the course of preparing the submissions, Ministries and Departments have also engaged with relevant stakeholders at their respective levels along the same lines.

The Ministry of Finance has had an extensive discussion with Ministries and Departments on the budget proposals through various Estimates Committee meetings, emphasising the difficult situation we are in.

Third, Madam Speaker, the Ministry of Finance has had meetings with different stakeholders across key sectors of the economy and society. These include –

- (a) business, trade, women and environment associations;
- (b) professional bodies;
- (c) trade unions;
- (d) artists and youth groups;
- (e) civil society organisations;
- (f) planters;
- (g) livestock breeders;
- (h) fishermen;
- (i) academia, and
- (j) SMEs and private sector representatives.

Fourth, the Ministry of Finance is currently conducting Policy Dialogue meetings with all Ministries. More specifically, discussions are being held with the relevant ministers and their senior staffs on key policy reforms within their respective ministries.

The Policy Dialogue meetings will continue over the coming days to allow for further engagement and constructive exchanges ahead of the finalisation of the Budget.

Madam Speaker, one can appreciate the considerable efforts being deployed by all stakeholders, Ministers and Departments, as well as the Ministry of Finance through this consultation process.

I would, therefore, like to express my sincere appreciation to all those who have contributed their time, expertise and valuable inputs towards the preparation of the Budget.

I would also like to reassure all stakeholders that the proposals and recommendations submitted are being carefully and thoroughly examined and will be taken into account when we formulate the budget.

Madam Speaker: Yes. You are alright?

Next question. Hon. First member for Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East.

MRA – VALUE ADDED TAX – REVENUE COLLECTED (JULY 2025-APRIL 2026)

(No. B/861) Mr E. Juman (First Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) 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 Value Added Tax, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Revenue Authority, information as to the total revenue collected in terms thereof over the period July 2025 to April 2026.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Mauritius Revenue Authority that the total value collected in terms of Value Added Tax amounts to Rs52.2 billion over the period 01 July 2025 to 30 April 2026.

Madam Speaker: Yes.

Mr Juman: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Hon. Prime Minister, can you indicate whether, the reduction of the VAT registration threshold from Rs6 million to 3 has generated the additional revenue expected, if not, whether you will review it in the next budget?

The Prime Minister: No, we will not review it because it has actually brought more people into the formal process.

Madam Speaker: Okay. Good. Hon. Second Member for Rivière des Anguilles, now.

**COVID-19 PROJECTS DEVELOPMENT FUND – SILVER BANK – SUM
INVESTED/WITHDRAWN**

(No. B/862) Mr R. Jhummun (Second Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the then COVID-19 Projects Development Fund, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the date on which the sum of Rs 2.5 billion, invested at the Silver Bank in 2022, was withdrawn therefrom, indicating the reasons therefor, further indicating why the remaining sum of Rs 500 million was not withdrawn.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, the then Minister of Finance approved the investments of Rs3 billion in fixed deposits at Silver Bank Limited despite the fact that they were known to have a dubious management.

These investments were made on three occasions –

- (i) Rs500 million in April 2022;
- (ii) Rs500 million in August 2022, and
- (iii) Rs2 billion in September 2022.

All the investments were made in fixed deposits at Silver Bank Limited on the condition that they can be withdrawn at any time, without penalty, after providing one-week notice to the bank.

Madam Speaker, out of the Rs3 billion invested at Silver Bank Limited, the COVID-19 Projects Development Fund has withdrawn Rs2.5 billion on different occasions.

First, Rs500 million were withdrawn on 17 February 2023 to pay 20% advance payment to contractors for the implementation of Social Housing Project.

Second, Rs500 million were withdrawn on 07 March 2023 to meet urgent commitments associated with the implementation of the Social Housing Project. In other words, Rs1 billion already.

Third, on 09 March 2023, the Fund requested the bank to transfer the remaining Rs2 billion again to meet its commitment up to June 2023, including advance payments to

contractors for the implementation of the Social Housing Project and the National Flood Management Programme to mitigate frequent flash floods. Following this request, Silver Bank Limited transferred Rs1.3 billion as follows –

- (a) Rs500 million on 17 March 2023;
- (b) Rs550 million on 27 March 2023,
- (c) Rs250 million on 07 September 2023, thus leaving a balance of Rs700 million.

Madam Speaker, on 18 January 2024, the Fund requested Silver Bank Limited to settle the outstanding balance of Rs700 million together with all accrued interest.

Subsequently, on 19 January 2024, Silver Bank Limited informed the Fund that it would pay Rs250 million by the following week and the remaining balance, including interest, by early April of 2024.

Accordingly, on 24 of January 2024, Silver Bank Limited transferred Rs250 million to the Fund, of which Rs50 million were interest. Thus, leaving a capital balance of Rs500 million at the bank.

Silver Bank Limited paid a total interest of Rs67.7 million to the Fund after taking into account the early withdrawal of deposits.

Madam Speaker, on 13 February 2024, the Bank of Mauritius placed the Silver Bank under Conservatorship.

In this context, on 19 February 2024, the Fund informed the Conservator of the remaining balance at Silver Bank Limited and requested the latter to transfer the remaining capital amount and the outstanding interest at the earliest.

On 21 February 2024, the Conservator informed the fund that *inter-alia*, he will not accede to any request to withdraw funds from accounts maintained with Silver Bank Limited until further notice.

The Bank of Mauritius on the 30 March 2026 terminated the Conservatorship of Silver Bank Limited and appointed a Receiver.

The Fund had, on 09 April 2026, informed the Receiver of the outstanding balance and requested the latter to transfer the capital and the outstanding interest at the earliest possible.

Madam Speaker, it is, to say the least, extremely disturbing that when quotations were sought from commercial banks for the Project Development Fund to invest its surplus funds, the quotations received from Silver Bank Limited was surprisingly way above the quote obtained from other banks. To give you an example, the State Bank of Mauritius quoted 0.75% for 12 months. Bank One quoted 1.25% for 12 months. However, Silver Bank quoted an amazing figure of 4% for 12 months. You can see what was happening.

Yet, Silver Bank was awarded funds at a remarkable rate. Despite a banking system awashed with cash and near record excess liquidity, we are still dealing with this problem now, such a glaring disparity could have prompted immediate scrutiny from the Project Development Fund Committee which had experienced members, among them, the former Finance secretary, Mr Manraj, the former First Deputy Governor of the Bank, Mr Kona, and Mr Jean-Paul Arouff, former Senior Economic Adviser to the then Minister of Finance.

The decision, therefore, is difficult to justify on any objective financial basis. You cannot just explain it. No prudent assessment of market conditions should support a rate of nearly four times higher than competing offers. The most plausible explanation is that the investment was not only intended to artificially strengthen the Silver Bank's financial position and its balance sheet. We are speculating, but that is the only thing we can think of.

Its acceptance by the Committee raises serious concerns and serious questions about the decision-making process. The Project Development Fund Committee interests were subordinated to those of a particular institution.

Thus, circumstances suggest that the outcome was effectively predetermined with a – I should say – not-so-invisible hand guiding a decision that defied both logic and sound financial management. The result was a costly breach of fiduciary duty and a failure to safeguard public funds with the care and diligence that taxpayers are entitled to expect.

Madam Speaker: Yes!

Mr Jhummun: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I understand that there will be an inquiry on all these. Will the board members also be called upon and will they be brought to task?

The Prime Minister: They will be called upon. I can guarantee that to the House. They will be called to explain.

Madam Speaker: Okay. The hon. First Member for Port-Louis North and Montagne Longue!

**MAURITIUS BROADCASTING CORPORATION – TELEVISION LICENCE FEE –
PROPOSED ABOLITION**

(No. B/863) Ms A. Savabaddy (First Member for Port-Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the proposed abolition of the monthly television licence fee of Rs 150 imposed by the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to where matters stand, indicating the timeframe set therefor, if any.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, in December 1984, the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation (Collection of Licence Fees Act) was enacted to provide for the licensing of television sets and the payment of licence fees. Under this Act, every person who is liable to pay an electricity bill for domestic consumption must, at the same time, pay the Television Licence Fee unless he does not possess a TV set.

Furthermore, under the First Schedule of the MBC (Collection of Licence Fees) Act, domestic consumers with an electricity consumption of not more than 396 kilowatt hours in a year are exempted from payment of the monthly TV licence fee. I am informed that as at the end of April 2026, some 28,560 domestic customers are exempted from paying the MBC TV licence fee.

Madam Speaker, the abolition of the monthly television licence fee remains under consideration by Government, and any such decision must naturally take into account the financial sustainability of the MBC and the need to ensure uninterrupted delivery of its public broadcasting mandate.

However, the current precarious financial situation of the MBC is such that the abolition of the monthly television license fee is being deferred for the time being.

It is important, Madam Speaker, for me to point out that when this Government assumed office in November 2024, we took cognizance then of the serious financial situation of the MBC, like everywhere else, which included an accumulated deficit of around Rs1.5

billion, a total debt of Rs165,500,000, as well as pension obligations estimated at Rs1.8 billion.

In December 2024, the new management of the Corporation, together with the MBC Board, embarked on a major transformation plan aimed at strengthening the Corporation's operation, financial and public service performance. The plan focuses on –

- (i) To improve the relevance and quality of content;
- (ii) To try to increase revenue generation projects;
- (iii) Improve viewership and audience reach;
- (iv) Enhance the corporate image of the MBC;
- (v) To strengthen employee engagement, and
- (vi) A people, technology and processes audit with a view to enhancing internal resources, skills and operational capabilities.

As part of this transformation roadmap, the MBC has undertaken a revamping exercise based, on, *inter alia*, the rebranding of radio channels, the conceptualisation of new TV programs aimed at better meeting the expectation of the Mauritian population and technological modernisation.

Madam Speaker, these transformation initiatives require continuous funding and a stable financial framework. It also needs to be accompanied by an appropriate and sustainable funding mechanism in order to safeguard the Corporation's operations, its modernisation programme and its essential public service role.

Madam Speaker: Yes.

Ms Savabaddy: *Thank you, Madam Speaker.* Je remercie l'honorable Premier ministre pour sa réponse. Y a-t-il un comité ministériel ou autre qui travaille sur ce dossier? Y a-t-il aussi une étude au niveau de la MBC pour trouver des sources de revenus alternatives au lieu d'appliquer cette taxe de R 150 sur la population? Merci.

Madam Speaker: Ça fait deux questions!

The Prime Minister: Yes, they are actually doing this.

Madam Speaker: Deux questions que vous avez là.

The Prime Minister: They are actually doing this. They are looking to increasing the source of revenue, mainly through advertising. But they are looking at this, Madam Speaker. It had gone down. It is going up again.

Ms Savabaddy: One last, please.

Madam Speaker: Okay. *Mais une seule, pas deux à la fois.*

Ms Savabaddy: One last, I mean. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Puis-je demander à l'honorable Premier ministre si le dossier de libéralisation des ondes et l'arrivée de la télévision privée progressent ?

The Prime Minister: They are looking into the matter. This is a commitment we have taken during the election campaign and we intend to, actually, oblige on this. It will happen. They are looking at it at the moment.

Madam Speaker: Okay. Yes!

Mr Juman: Madam Speaker, can I know from the hon. Prime Minister the total revenue the TV Licence Fee generates yearly?

The Prime Minister: I do not have the figures of the total revenue with me, but all I know is that it is not enough at the moment to be able to contemplate the abolition of the TV licence.

Madam Speaker: Okay. Yes, hon. A. Duval!

**INDEPENDENT BROADCASTING AUTHORITY – BOARD COMPOSITION &
DIRECTOR’S APPOINTMENT**

(No. B/864) 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 Independent Broadcasting Authority, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the –

- (a) composition of the Board thereof, indicating, in each case, the qualifications held and remuneration and allowances drawn, and
- (b) terms and conditions of appointment of the Director thereof, indicating the date of appointment, qualifications held and salary drawn and other allowances and benefits payable thereto.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, in line with Section 6 of the Independent Broadcasting Authority Act, the Board of the Independent Broadcasting Authority was reconstituted on 22 December of last year.

With your permission, I am tabling its composition, including the qualifications of the Chairperson and members, as well as the remuneration allowances drawn.

With regard to part (b) of the question, Section 11 of the Independent Broadcasting Authority Act provides for the appointment of a Director on such terms and conditions, as it thinks fit.

On 20 January 2026, Mrs Marzeenah Bibi Hossenally was appointed as Director of the IBA on a contractual basis for a period of two years and she assumed duty on 02 March 2026.

Mrs Hossenally holds a BSc (Hons) in Computer Science and Engineering from the University of Mauritius and a Masters in Business Administration in Innovation and Leadership, awarded with distinction by the Ducere Global Business School of Australia. The Director of the IBA is paid a monthly salary of Rs163,250, plus a monthly extra duty allowance of Rs25,000. The other terms of conditions of her appointment are in line with the recommendations contained in the PRB report.

Madam Speaker: Yes.

Mr A. Duval: May I ask for three supplementaries?

Madam Speaker: Do one. Let us start by one.

Mr A. Duval: The first, Madam Speaker, is with regard to Section 11. Is the hon. Prime Minister aware – he has quoted from section 11– that the IBA is to independently appoint its Director? Contrary to ICTA, for example, where the hon. Prime Minister has a say, it is not the case. Does he find it, therefore, proper that this independent appointment has been done on 20 January 2026, following a memo from the Cabinet Secretary proposing that person be appointed? Is that proper in upholding the independence of that institution?

The Prime Minister: If we do not remind them, there is going to be no one. Then, they will say there is delay. We had to ask that they proceed with the appointment.

Mr A. Duval: May I ask another question?

Madam Speaker: Yes!

Mr A. Duval: Madam Speaker, it is again the question of independence. Is the hon. Prime Minister aware that one of the board members, Mr G. V., is presently involved in a litigation with two licensees of the IBA and sits on the board? Does he find it proper to uphold the independence of the IBA?

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

Madam Speaker: Are you aware?

The Prime Minister: No. But it is the board which decides, not me! It is the board.

Mr A. Duval: He is a board member, and he is presently sitting on a board where there are two licensees of the IBA involved; him as well...

Madam Speaker: Do not repeat!

Mr A. Duval: ...as a defendant in a Supreme Court case.

Madam Speaker: Yes, do not repeat! Can you have a look into this?

The Prime Minister: I will ask the Board to have a look at it.

Mr A. Duval: Madam Speaker, I have a last one.

Madam Speaker: Yes. Allez-y!

Mr A. Duval: Madam Speaker, the last question. And this, I am not making it personal. But there was a decision in 2016 for certain qualification to be held by the Director; it seems that this Director and this was confirmed in the 2022 Salaries Commissioner Report that the person, the incumbent should have a Master in Law, as well as five years' experience in a senior position in either journalism or broadcasting journalism. May I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether this has been reviewed and if so, can we have the date?

Madam Speaker: Are you aware of all this?

The Prime Minister: All I know, Madam Speaker, is the Board decided that she is qualified to act as Director.

Madam Speaker: Okay, next question.

Yes, hon. Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière.

Mr Quirin: B/865, please.

(Interruptions)

Mr Mohamed: That was personal.

Madam Speaker: *Chut!* Let the hon. Prime Minister reply, please.

HORSE RACING INTERGRITY DIVISION – STAFFING – REMUNERATION & BENEFITS

(No. B/865) 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 Horse Racing Integrity Division, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Gambling Regulatory Authority, information as to the number of officers employed thereat, indicating in respect of each post –

- (a) whether it is on a full-time or part-time basis, and
- (b) the salaries, allowances, bonuses and any other emoluments and benefits attached thereto.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, during the period 2015 to 2024, our country has witnessed a gradual decline of the horse racing industry, lack of trust and public confidence, allegations of race fixing, cases of doping, animal mistreatment, the pitiful state of the race tracks, infrastructure and other amenities, and finally, dwindling in the number of people attending the races at Champ de Mars. This situation has been created because of the *main mise* of the MSM Government and its cronies.

As I have said in my previous replies, the Gambling Regulatory Authority, which was supposed to ensure that gambling is conducted in a fair and transparent manner, had also lamentably failed in its mission and objectives as spelled out in the Gambling Regulatory Authority Act. It had developed an incestuous relationship with the gambling mafia.

As the House is aware, Madam Speaker, under the previous Government, the Gambling Regulatory Authority Board had delegated its powers and functions.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: *Chut! Chut!*

The Prime Minister: I wish hon. A. Duval would listen. Look at this – the Gambling Regulatory Authority Board delegated its powers and functions regarding horse racing to the Horse Racing Division, which was engaged in the process of organising the racing activities. The latter had failed categorically to perform its functions, rendering the horse racing sector to become prone to corruption and malpractices. As such, the reputation of the sector was tarnished, making it less prominent, and this has resulted in the lack of public confidence in the integrity of the horse racing industry.

The Horse Racing Integrity Division was created after recommendations made by the Committee on Revamping of the Horse Racing Industry in 2025. The Horse Racing Division was consequently dismantled and the Gambling Regulatory Authority Act was amended and a new Division, namely the Horse Racing Integrity Division, was set up for horse racing.

I am further informed, Madam Speaker, that the Horse Racing Integrity Division, as per its mandate, is dedicated to regulate and monitor the organisation and activities of horse racing in Mauritius and to ensure not only integrity and transparency, but also to protect the public at large.

I am informed, Madam Speaker, by the Gambling Regulatory Authority that 23 officers are posted to the Horse Racing Integrity Division. There are five officers employed on a pensionable and permanent basis. Two officers are under employment contract, and the remaining 16 officers are under service contract.

According to the Workers' Right Act, a full-time worker is defined as someone who works at least 45 hours per week.

I am informed by the GRA that on that basis, out of the 23 officers, 15 are full-time and the remaining 8 are part-time.

I am tabling, in respect of each post, whether it is full-time or part-time, the associated salaries, allowances, bonuses, and any other emoluments.

Madam Speaker: Yes!

Mr Quirin: Merci, Madame la présidente. L'honorable Premier ministre peut-il dire à la Chambre si le ministère des Finances compte procéder à un audit ou une enquête interne concernant l'efficacité, l'intégrité et la gestion financière de la HRID et dans l'affirmative, les conclusions seront-elles déposées sur la table de l'Assemblée ?

The Prime Minister: This, what you mentioned, the HRID falls under the Board of the GRA. It is for them to do.

Madam Speaker: Yes!

Mr Quirin: Une dernière question, Madame la présidente. L'honorable Premier ministre peut-il préciser à la Chambre si certains employés de la HRID occupent simultanément des fonctions dans d'autres institutions publiques ou privées et si c'est le cas, de préciser qui ils sont ?

The Prime Minister: I am not aware of this, Madam Speaker, but I will have to look into that.

Madam Speaker: You will find out?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I will find out.

Madam Speaker: Yes. Good. I will have a last question. Hon. Second Member for Rivière des Anguilles and Souillac!

AIR MAURITIUS LTD – STRATEGIC PARTNER – SHORTLISTED PARTNERS

(No. B/866) Mr R. Jhummun (Second Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac) to ask the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to Air Mauritius Ltd., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from Airport Holdings Ltd., information as to whether a strategic partner is being sought therefor and, if so, where matters stand, indicating the names of any shortlisted partners.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I wish to point out that Air Mauritius Ltd is a subsidiary company of Airport Holdings Ltd, and as such, it is for the Board of Directors of Air Mauritius Ltd to decide on all strategic options, which aim at strengthening the long-term sustainability, competitiveness and financial resilience of Air Mauritius Ltd.

I am informed, Madam Speaker, by the Chief Executive Officer of Air Mauritius Ltd that the company is currently undertaking a network and fleet review, which will determine its future direction. At this point in time, the company is not envisaging any strategic partnership. Although, I must say, way back, I think it was in 2010 or 2005, there was an audit done by a very reputable firm called Sea Breeze from Canada, which suggested that Air Mauritius should contemplate a strategic partner.

Madam Speaker: Okay. Thank you.

Now, we move on to questions to Ministers. Yes, hon. Third Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or!

**CHINA INTERNATIONAL IMPORT EXPO – GOVERNMENT TRADE
DIVERSIFICATION POLICY – MAURITIAN EXPORTERS**

(No. B/879) **Mr R. Etwareea** (Third Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to Government policy to enhance and diversify our export markets, he will, for benefit of the House, state whether Mauritian exporters will participate in the 9th China International Import Expo scheduled for 05 November to 10 November 2026, at the National Exhibition and Convention Center in Shanghai and whether they will benefit from support from his Ministry in terms of export promotion.

Mr Ramful: Madam Speaker, as mentioned in the Government Programme 2025-2029, the Government will consolidate existing export markets through more targeted marketing and promotion campaigns, as well as focus on boosting productive investment and export promotion across all sectors of the Mauritian economy. My Ministry regularly receives invitations for participation in international expositions and trade fairs abroad, and an in-depth assessment of the potential benefits of our participation is undertaken at the level of the relevant ministries and institutions prior to confirming attendance at such events.

The China International Import Expo is a major international trade exhibition hosted annually by the Government of the People's Republic of China in Shanghai. It was first announced in May 2017 and has been held every year since 2018. The Expo *inter alia* aims to

–

- (i) promote trade and economic globalisation;
- (ii) facilitate the access of foreign companies to the Chinese market;
- (iii) encourage imports into China;
- (iv) strengthen international economic cooperation and partnerships, and

- (v) showcase China's commitment to further opening up its economy to the world.

It is jointly hosted by the Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China and the Shanghai Municipal People's Government.

The Expo is also supported by international organisations including World Trade Organisation, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, and United Nations Industrial Development Organisation.

It is reported that the China International Import Expo is regarded as a strategic platform for countries and businesses seeking access to the Chinese market, a venue for launching new products and technologies, and a mechanism for promoting global supply chains and international commercial partnerships. Over the years, it has attracted participation from more than 100 countries and thousands of enterprises, including numerous Fortune Global 500 companies.

Madam Speaker, I am informed that the Economic Development Board has led the participation of Mauritian exporters in Shanghai in 2024 and 2025. These participations were intended to assess the potential of the Chinese market for Mauritian products and to broaden our export footprint in Asia. It is also worth noting that during previous editions of the Expo, in which Mauritius participated, our mission in Beijing liaised with the relevant Chinese authorities to ensure that the necessary assistance was extended to the EDB.

Furthermore, representatives of the mission attended the 2025 edition of the Expo. With respect to the 9th edition of the Expo, scheduled to be held from the 05 to 10 of November 2026, I wish to inform the House that the invitation from the Embassy of the People's Republic of China was received at the level of our Ministry on 01 April 2026 and forwarded to EDB in April itself for consideration. The possibility of participation is presently under detailed examination by the EDB. The EDB is consulting with private sector operators to gauge commercial interest and to assess the economic viability of such a mission.

Should this assessment confirm clear commercial value, the EDB will consider coordinating a targeted Mauritian participation with the relevant private sector stakeholders. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Thank you. Yes, one question.

Mr Etwareea: Can the hon. Minister tell the House if his Ministry is taking benefit of the Free Trade Agreement which Mauritius has with China?

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Minister?

Mr Ramful: I did answer a question last week on this Madam Speaker. Just to come back to the answer that I gave, I will just inform the hon. Member that under the FTA, China has committed to eliminate tariffs on 8,547 tariff lines on goods over a period of seven years, and in return, Mauritius provides China with duty-free access on 192 tariff lines. It is important to also note that trade flows have fluctuated over the years and exports to China under the FTA have recently shown an increase from some 126 million in 2024 to 449 million in 2025. Therefore, to conclude and to answer to your question, definitely the private operators here in Mauritius are taking advantage of the FTA.

Madam Speaker: Yes, a second one? Yes!

Mr Etwareea: What are the measures taken by the Ministry of International Trade to inform the Mauritian traders and exporters of the possibilities existing in China?

Mr Ramful: The Minister should know that the export promotion falls under the mandate of the EDB, not my Ministry.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: The hon. Member! The hon. Member!

Il est devenu ministre avant l'heure.

Yes, hon. Beejan!

STATE LAND – LEASES – ANNUAL RENT – CABINETS' APPROVAL

(No. B/880) Mr N. Beejan (Second Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to leases of State land granted over the period 2015 to 2024, he will state, in each case, the –

- (a) location and extent thereof;
- (b) purpose therefor;
- (c) duration and annual rental payable therefor, and
- (d) whether prior approval of the Cabinet was sought and obtained therefor and, if so, when.

Mr Mohamed: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The information requested is being compiled. It is quite extensive and is being placed in the Library of the National Assembly.

The Speaker: Okay, thank you, hon. Minister. One question? okay.

Mr Beejan: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Will the hon. Minister inform the House whether, for the sake of transparency and since we are dealing with Government property, will he take a policy decision to seek Cabinet's approval and publish all leases given to individuals unlike the previous Government?

Mr Mohamed: In actual fact, the issue is very simple, Madam Speaker. If I understand the question correctly, is there the need to go to Cabinet before each lease is given? I refer to what dictates the powers of the Minister and the Minister of Housing and Land has to comply with the relevant statute, and the relevant statute is the State Lands Act. The State Lands Act says that the hon. Minister of Housing and Land is the Minister that decides who to grant a lease to. The terms and conditions that are provided by the schedule in terms of value, that is not the Minister. However, there are two situations when one has to go to Cabinet and statute imposes that and that is mandatory. It is when there is the need or the request for a reduction of lease for national interest or any special circumstance. Then the Minister of Housing and Land cannot exercise that discretion himself. He does not have that power. He has to go to Cabinet.

So, in summary, to give a lease, it is within the sole power of the Minister of Housing and Land. And now, as it is known by one and all – and hopefully it should be – that policy at the level of the Ministry is not written by Cabinet, it is written by the Minister. The Minister decides on policy. Now, as far as the policy is concerned, I have myself decided to set up a new set of way forward in terms of a flowchart as to how things are to happen and for things not to get stuck somewhere and for it to be very transparent and for me to give reasons for refusal or reasons as to why one is accepted and the other is not.

So, everything has to be an informed decision and it has to be properly explained and placed even in a letter saying that land is not available. But there are circumstances where I have decided to go to Cabinet because there are certain industries or certain concepts that are being brought forward, new elements important to the economy and for that, it is the Minister who decides to go to Cabinet and it is his decision. Thank you

Madam Speaker: Okay, good. Before we proceed, one moment, so that I do not forget. I have now received a document. The Table has been advised that the following PQs – which

we should have done before – have been withdrawn; B/867, B/868, B/869, and B/870, B/874, B/876.

Yes, your next question!

SSRN HOSPITAL – MS B.M. – DEMISE – INQUIRY & OUTCOME

(No. B/881) Ms A. Savabaddy (First Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the death of B.M., a 21-year-old pregnant woman at the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam National Hospital on or about 23 May 2026, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to whether an inquiry has been initiated thereinto and, if so, indicate the outcome thereof.

Mr Bachoo: Madam Speaker, I wish at the outset to convey my deepest condolences to the family of the deceased patient.

Madam Speaker, with your permission, I will reply to question B/881 and B/902 together as they relate to the same subject matter.

Madam Speaker, I am informed that on 18 May 2026, late patient B.M., a 21-year-old pregnant woman, attended the Accident and Emergency Department of Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam National Hospital at 23.48 hours, complaining of low abdominal pain. The doctor diagnosed the patient with 23 weeks pregnancy with low abdominal pain. The doctor recommended immediate admission, but the patient refused and signed Discharge against Medical Advice. It was noted that the patient had no antenatal follow-up. According to established protocol, a pregnant woman should attend antenatal follow-up at the hospital or any health centre to be seen by a gynaecologist for a full assessment, including an ultrasound. According to information available, unfortunately, the patient did not follow antenatal care as recommended in our service.

Madam Speaker, about three hours later, that is, on 19 May 2026 at 3.00 a.m., the patient returned to Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam National Hospital, still complaining of abdominal pain and having minimal bleeding. On examination it was observed, that the patient was in labour. The foetal heart was absent. The doctor on duty informed the Specialist on call who advised to admit the patient in the Labour Ward to enable the delivery to progress naturally.

Madam Speaker, on 19 May 2026 at 6.40 a.m., that is three hours later, the patient started to bleed profusely due to placental abruption, that is, detachment. The Specialist on

call was informed of the case. He advised to transfer the patient to the operation theatre for surgery according to our established clinical guidelines. The Specialist on call performed the necessary intervention at 7.00 a.m. The patient was thereafter transferred to Gynae Ward at 9.00 a.m. since she was stable following the surgery. At 11.50 a.m., the patient collapsed in ward. She was attended by the Specialist on call and sent to the operation theatre for immediate intervention.

Madam Speaker, in the operation theatre, the patient was seen by the treating Specialist and the Consultant in charge who proceeded with a hysterectomy, that is, uterus was surgically removed. The patient was thereafter transferred to Intensive Care Unit for post-operative management. Madam Speaker, on 21 May 2026 at 9.05 a.m., it was noted that her abdomen was distended and exploratory laparotomy – that is the abdomen was reopened to assess the bleeding – was performed and patient was kept in ICU. On 22 May 2026, the patient was still in ICU and was seen by a multidisciplinary team comprising a physician, nephrologist, anaesthetist, surgeon, gynaecologist, but her condition continued to deteriorate.

In spite of further management, the patient developed several complications and, unfortunately, passed away on 23 May, at 8.40 a.m.

Madam Speaker, I am further informed that the body was sent to the Police Medical Officer for post-mortem, which was refused by the relatives. For all road traffic accident, post-mortem examination is mandatory. For ordinary cases, same is at the discretion of the Police Medical Officer.

Madam Speaker, given that this is a case of maternal death, a preliminary enquiry was chaired by the Acting Regional Health Director, and he recommended for an in-depth inquiry into the matter. Based on the recommendations of the preliminary enquiry, my Ministry has, on 26 May 2026, set up an independent enquiry committee on the matter. The independent enquiry was conducted on 28 May 2026 at SSRN Hospital. The enquiry team comprised an Acting Regional Health Director from Dr. Jeetoo Hospital, and two Consultants-in-Charge in Obstetrics and Gynaecology from Victoria Hospital and Jawaharlal Nehru Hospital, respectively.

Madam Speaker, the independent enquiry report was submitted to my Ministry on 01 June 2026. The report of the enquiry panel concludes that a catastrophic medical outcome was heavily driven by a combination of suspected regular cannabis use, of high-risk obstetric

conditions and severe patient-side delays. The lack of routine antenatal surveillance has severely predisposed the patient to placental abruption and acute disseminated intravascular coagulation (DIC).

I wish to inform the House that a large 2024 cohort study found that cannabis use during pregnancy was associated with a higher risk of gestational hypertension, pre-eclampsia, abnormal pregnancy weight gain and placental abruption. The initial refusal of inpatient management by a discharge against medical advice directly delayed critical early intervention. Once re-admitted, the medical team executed all standard emergency, surgical and intensive care protocols without delay or shortcoming. Despite maximum blood component therapy to reverse the bleeding, the sheer severity of the fulminating DIC culminated in fatal multiple organ failure and transfusion-related acute lung injury (TRALI).

Madam Speaker, despite the conclusion of the independent enquiry committee, in the interest of justice and transparency, my Ministry will refer the case to the Medical Council of Mauritius for an in-depth investigation and appropriate actions.

Madam Speaker: Okay, one to start with.

Ms Savabaddy: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Will the hon. Minister inform the House whether no gynaecologist was present at 3.00 a.m. on that date, and the problem comes with the recent ruling of the Employment Relations Tribunal on the work of specialists on a 24/7 basis? What is being done to this effect? Thank you.

Mr Bachoo: I thank the hon. Member. She appears to be very well-informed about this.

Pursuant to government policy aimed at reducing maternal and under five mortalities, the PRB Report of 2008 expressly provided for officers of the grade of Consultant-in-Charge and Specialists in the field of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Paediatrics and Anaesthetists to be physically present, at all times, to ensure coverage at night in the regional hospitals.

Unfortunately, in August 2022, the then government proceeded with the implementation of 24/7 specialised services in the three above-mentioned fields without ensuring an adequate number of Specialists were available in these fields. They acted very fast, and unfortunately, following a labour dispute between the Government Medical and Dental Association and the Government, regarding 24/7 specialised services, the

Employment Relations Tribunal concluded that 24/7 specialised services constitute an imposition of a unilateral change in terms and conditions of service. The ERT, therefore, recommended that the Ministry has to review the situation. That is, the doctors will no longer be asked to compulsorily be present 24/7. Only when they are called, they will have to be present.

When that award was out, on the same day – I remember because we had decided that we have to discuss with the *syndicats*, the unions –, but unfortunately, the Government Medical and Dental Officers Association, the Secretary wrote a letter to all those who are concerned, stating that the 24/7 working system, illegally imposed upon the Obstetricians, Gynaecologists, Paediatricians and Anaesthetists, shall stop with immediate effect. So, what they did is that they stopped it, though we were still discussing with them to find ways and means on how they will be present. They stopped it and, therefore, they were on call.

It is a fact that the gynaecologist was not present at that time. If I am not mistaken, he was giving instructions, but he came around 6.00 in the morning. I can inform the House that because of this we will be very strict about it. We are definitely going to have a protocol, a very severe protocol and serious one – we are working on it –, to see to it that when any life is in danger, any patient is in danger, not only the doctor responsible for that discipline, but all those directly or indirectly associated with it should be compulsorily present because it is not a matter of money only, it is a matter of life and death. Unfortunately, I am very, very sorry to say that – I am not going to blame all –, but there has been a handful of them who are making abuse of this award which has come out.

Madam Speaker: Okay. Chief Whip! Because she had a question you replied to.

Ms Anquetil: Je vous remercie, Madame la présidente. Je présente également mes sympathies à la famille endeuillée.

Can the Minister inform the House whether *une assistance psychologique* will be provided à la famille endeuillée? *Je vous remercie, Madame la présidente.*

Mr Bachoo: Upon request, definitely, I will look into it favourably.

Madam Speaker: Yes, your second question!

Ms Savabaddy: Thank you, Madam Speaker. *Par rapport à ma question supplémentaire*, the Minister made it clear that there is going to be a 24/7 presence of Specialists such as Gynaecologists. He already answered. Can the Minister inform the House who asked the doctors to stop working 24/7, and what is the outcome of the report of the high-powered committee in this matter? Thank you.

Mr Bachoo: There is no high-powered committee as such. As I just said, it was about the Government Medical and Dental Association as well as the Employment Relations Tribunal, that is, the ruling of the Tribunal. But I had just mentioned that once the ruling was out, on the same day, without waiting a single day, a single minute, instructions came from the union that it has to be stopped immediately. Everybody knows that these are very rare fields, scarcity areas. We have a lack of such experts and specialists in our in our hospitals, and it was extremely difficult for us to, immediately, rush and to take a decision. But we have maintained that the doctors have to be present on call. They should be present.

The doctor was present, but was present early in the morning. He gave instructions and then after that he came. That is why I said we are referring the matter to the Medical Council. It is up to the Medical Council to go through all the reports and to take the necessary action.

Madam Speaker: Yes, Dr. Aumeer!

Dr. Aumeer: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: That will be the last question!

Dr. Aumeer: First, I extend my deepest sympathy to the bereaved family. The hon. Minister, in his answer, mentioned that he has been made aware of the report. He clearly mentioned that disseminated intravascular coagulation (DIC) is the main cause of death in this particular case, and it is usually the main causes of death in maternal deaths. May I ask the hon. Minister whether it is not high time that all our public hospitals have a consultant haematologist, who is a specialist in DIC, to avoid such tragedies? Thank you.

Mr Bachoo: Definitely, I will consider it favourable, except that the only problem is that it is a scarcity area. We will try to find out if we can get the support from our partners, particularly the WHO because we keep on getting advice from them and even from experts.

Madam Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. Members, now, I am informing you that the Table has been advised that the following PQs have been withdrawn: B/882, B/897, B/903, B/907, and B/909. Thank you.

I will now raise for one and a half hour. Thank you very much.

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

On resuming at 2.33 p.m., with the Deputy Speaker in the Chair.

The Deputy Speaker: Please be seated!

The hon. First Member for Vacoas and Floréal!

FOND DU SAC GOVERNMENT SCHOOL - PRE-PRIMARY UNIT - UPGRADING WORKS

(No. B/882) **Mr S. Jugurnauth (Second Member for Savanne & Black River)** asked the Minister of Education and Human Resource whether, in regard to the construction of a new toilet block and upgrading works at the Pre-primary Unit of the Fond du Sac Government School, he will state the –

- (a) name of the contractor therefor;
- (b) contract value thereof and disbursements made as to date, and
- (c) delay in the execution thereof, if any, and, if so, indicate the reasons therefor.

(Withdrawn)

MORCELLEMENT BAOBAB LTD – BUILDING & LAND USE PERMIT – CONFLICT OF INTEREST

(No. B/883) **Ms J. Bérenger (First Member for Vacoas & Floreal)** asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to the Building and Land Use Permit issued to Morcellement Baobab Ltd. for the construction of 25 residential building units at Gros Cailloux, he will state whether he has been informed of an alleged conflict of interest involving the Chairman of the Permit and Business Monitoring Committee in connection therewith and, if so, indicate the actions taken and/or being envisaged in relation thereto.

Mr Wochit: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the District Council of Black River that Morcellement Baobab Ltd submitted a total of seven applications for the Building and Land Use Permit in respect of a proposed residential development at Black River Road,

Gros Cailloux. Out of the seven applications, six were either set aside or rejected before any approval was granted. Four applications were set aside due to the failure of the applicant to provide the information, clarification, and supporting documents requested by the Council.

One application was rejected owing to the absence of mandatory clearance from relevant authorities, including Central Electricity Board, the Land Drainage Authority, and La Ferme and Magenta Water Users Association. Another application submitted for a development comprising 35 residential units was set aside following advice from the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change that the proposed development constituted a schedule undertaking requiring a Preliminary Environmental Report clearance, that is, a PER.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, a revised application was subsequently submitted on 01 September 2025 for the construction of 25 residential units. I am informed that the revised proposal differed materially from the earlier submission in terms of its scale and layout and was assessed as a new application on their own merits. The application was referred to the relevant technical authorities and favourable recommendations were received from the Wastewater Authority, the Land Drainage Authority and the Water Resources Unit. At the time the application was assessed, the Council had not received any determination from the Ministry of Environment indicating that the revised development of 25 residential units constituted a schedule undertaking requiring a PER clearance.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the application was thereafter considered by the Permit and Business Monitoring Committee, that is the PBMC, which is a collective decision-making body comprising elected members and officers of the Council. Following consideration of the application and recommendations received from the relevant authorities, approval was granted at the Committee meeting held on 06 October 2025 and the Building and Land Use Permit was subsequently issued in accordance with the applicable statutory procedures.

I am further informed that it was only on 27 January 2026, that is, more than three months after the permit had been approved and issued, the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change informed the Council that the development of 25 residential units should be treated as a schedule undertaking requiring a Preliminary Environmental Report clearance. Upon receipt of that communication, the Council acted immediately. The promoter was informed that the requirement and at its meeting of 06

February 2026, the Permit and Business Monitoring Committee resolved that an additional condition be incorporated into the permits requiring the promoter to obtain the necessary preliminary environmental report approval prior to the commencement of any development works on site. The promoter was accordingly advised that no works could proceed unless and until the required environmental approval had first been obtained.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to the allegation of conflict of interest, I am informed that the matter was raised for the first time by way of a letter dated 29 April 2026, more than six months after the Permit and Business Monitoring Committee (PBMC) had considered and approved the application.

I am further informed that the application was considered by the PBMC in the presence of several members, including Mr V. B., in his capacity as District Councillor, and member of that objection, reservation and concern being raised by any member, including V.B. in relation to any alleged conflict of interest during the consideration of the application. The allegation subsequently made, does not constitute a finding of conflict of interest. It remained an allegation which is presently the subject of investigation by the competent authorities. It is not for the District Council or my Ministry to speculate on, or determine, the merits of that allegation. The responsibility falls within the remit of the competent investigative authorities.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that concurrently, an inquiry has already been initiated at the level of my Ministry regarding the issuance of the BLUP, while the allegation concerning possible conflict of interest has been referred to the Financial Crimes Commission and other relevant authorities for investigation. At this stage, neither the District Council nor my Ministry has established the existence of any possible conflict of interest.

In the absence of any such finding and in view of the ongoing inquiry and investigations, it would be inappropriate and premature to draw conclusion or prejudge their outcome. Any decision or action that may be required will be considered once the inquiries and investigations have been concluded. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes!

Ms J. Bérenger: Je vous remercie. Je souhaiterais déposer d'abord la lettre de signalement authentifiée. L'honorable ministre peut-il informer la Chambre si le *clearance* du ministère de l'Environnement n'aurait pas en principe dû avoir été obtenu avant que soit délivré le permis de construction, le *BLUP*?

Mr Woochit: Above 30 unit of residential permit, it needs a PER. Under 30 units, we do not need a PER. But it depends on the Ministry; it can ask for a PER even of under 25 as it is the case. It depends on the Ministry to decide.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, hon. Member!

Ms J. Bérenger: L'honorable ministre peut-il indiquer à la Chambre s'il y a eu également des plaintes des habitants de Gros Cailloux concernant l'opération d'un garage appartenant au *Chairman* sur un terrain appartenant à cette compagnie et si c'est le cas, qu'est-ce qui a été fait pour soulager ces habitants?

Mr Woochit: We have not received any case of such complaint because as I know from the Council that the garage exists for nearly 10 years above.

The Deputy Speaker: Next question!

The hon. Second Member for Rodrigues!

RODRIGUES – NATIONAL EMPOWERMENT FOUNDATION – CONTRACTS & PAYMENTS RECERTIFICATION

(No. B/884) **Mr J. F. François (Second Member for Rodrigues)** asked the Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity whether, in regard to the National Empowerment Foundation, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the reasons for delays, if any, in the recertification of contracts and payments to potential beneficiaries in Rodrigues, indicating the remedial actions taken and/or being envisaged in relation thereto.

Mr Subron: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to inform the House that households on the Social Register of Mauritius (SRM) who choose to sign the social contract with the

National Empowerment Foundation (NEF) are provided with support through numerous schemes meant to empower these beneficiaries to move out of poverty.

If these households comply with the requirements of the contract over a period of two years, they are provided continued support for one additional year. If the beneficiaries consider that they still need support after these three years, they may apply again to be on the Social Register of Mauritius. If they are found eligible, they are placed anew on the SRM and are called to sign a new social contract with the NEF.

For Rodrigues, applicants have to submit their applications at any one of the four offices at the level of the Commission for Social Security falling under the RRA. I am informed that these applications are processed and visits are conducted by officers of the Commission within a month on average. The applications and reports of visit are then forwarded to the SRM Unit of the Ministry of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity, where the eligibility test is carried out at the end of each month. If found eligible, these families are notified and invited to sign the social contract with NEF. I am informed that the average time taken by NEF Rodrigues to process these contracts would be one month.

Thus, it would be reasonable to state that the time between the application date at the Commission for Social Security of RRA and the finalisation of the new contract with the beneficiary would take around three months.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed that as at 30 April 2026, there was a total of 6,888 households on the Social Register of Mauritius, made up of 4,301 household in Mauritius and 2,587 households in Rodrigues. This represents a total of 25,240 individuals with 16,329 individuals in Mauritius and 8,911 individuals in Rodrigues.

I am also informed that out of these, as at 30 April 2026, there was a total of 5,430 beneficiaries who signed the social contract and benefited from support from the National Empowerment Foundation, made up of 3,373 household in Mauritius and 2,057 household in Rodrigues. This represents a total of 20,092 individuals with 13,093 individuals in Mauritius and 6,999 individuals in Rodrigues.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the House may please note that payment of a monthly subsistence allowance is effected to all SRM eligible households that have signed a social

contract with NEF by mid-month, systematically each month at the level of my Ministry. This is the case for Rodrigues beneficiaries, too.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, hon. François.

Mr François: Thank you, hon. Minister.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

I understand the visits are taking longer than one month. May I ask the hon. Minister whether his Ministry and NEF are agreeable to consider paying overtime as it used to be at times to the limited number of staffs at Regional Assembly level, as I understand they don't have the budget for same to expedite matters on these SRM NEF cases inquiries when the list at times consists of more than 500 cases to attend to?

Mr Subron: As it stands and the law as it is, the Commission for Social Security is budgeted under the RRA. But according to figures that I have, from 01 July 2025 and 31 of May 2026, the number of applications received was 1,614 and the number of visits effected was 1,444, which means nearly 90% of the application have been attended and visited, and the number of visits not effected is 170. I would consider this normal given that the span of time but if there is a need, I will meet the Commissioner of Social Security this Friday. I can raise the matter with him.

Mr François: On the same breath, hon. Minister, you replied to me during an adjournment matter. Will your Ministry complete and implement a new review mechanism of the system of approval and payment to – you said three months –but I understand it goes beyond those three months. Are you coming with a new mechanism in that direction?

Mr Subron: The three months is for Rodrigues and Mauritius, too but the whole process of the National Empowerment Programme, the payment as well as social integration and empowerment are being reviewed in the context of the budget.

Mr François: Okay.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay, the next question. Hon. Third Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière.

**MAURITIUS FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION – MR S.S, PRESIDENT – APPEAL
DISMISSAL**

(No. B/885) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the dismissal of the appeal lodged by Mr. S. S., President of the Mauritius Football Association, before the Appeal Court of the Tribunal de Première Instance of Antananarivo, Madagascar in a criminal matter, he will –

- (a) for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Football Association, information as to its official stance thereon, and
- (b) state the position of his Ministry in relation thereto, indicating the implications thereof on his eligibility to continue holding office as President of the said Association.

Mr Nagalingum : M. le président, je suis sidéré par cette question car elle est *factually erroneous*.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have in my possession documentary evidence that the appeal of Mr. S.S., President of the Mauritius Football Association, was called for hearing on Thursday 28 2026 at the Tribunal de Première Instance of Antananarivo but has been postponed to a future date. Thus, the question of the appeal being dismissed, does not even arise and most probably, is but a figment of someone's imagination.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, chronologically, notice of questions is submitted to the Clerk's Office not less than four days before the Sitting of the Assembly, excluding Sundays and public holidays. Technically, this question must have been submitted by Wednesday 27 May 2026. This is where the issue lies. How can an appeal be dismissed without even having been heard?

I stand to prove wrong and invite the hon. Member to lay a certified true copy of the judgment to which he is referring.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the other part of the question is of no relevance.

Mr Quirin : M. le président, j'ai en ma possession – je ne sais pas si l'honorable ministre a quelque chose de différent – des documents, des verdicts certifiés et authentifiés que je vais déposer et l'honorable ministre aura l'occasion et vous-même, M. le président, de jeter un coup d'œil. D'après ces documents, l'appel de monsieur S.S. a été rejeté. C'est pour cela que j'ai adressé une question à l'honorable ministre de façon à ce qu'on puisse savoir

quelle est la position de la MFA, quelle est la position de son ministère par rapport au verdict de l'appel de monsieur S.S. qui a été rejeté.

Cette affaire a été répercutée dans les médias et l'honorable ministre, je suppose, a dû certainement prendre connaissance de toute cette affaire. Alors, c'est pour cela que je suis venu avec cette question aujourd'hui pour savoir quelle est la position de son ministère et quelle est la position de la MFA par rapport au verdict de l'appel qui a été rejeté.

The Deputy Speaker: Are you going to lay this document?

Mr Quirin: Yes, sure.

The Deputy Speaker: Please, let me have a look.

Mr Nagalingum: Si vous permettez, M. le président, je redis que l'affaire a été renvoyée au 25 juin 2026.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, do you have a next question?

Mr Quirin: Yes. L'honorable ministre peut-il déposer, il vient de nous parler, je crois du 26 juin, si je ne me trompe – le document auquel il fait référence ?

The Deputy Speaker: The document you have produced, hon. Quirin, is a document where he has been sentenced but it is not from the Appeal Court. He has been sentenced *sur l'action civile*, but the hon. Minister is referring to the Appeal Court. Do you want to lay the document, as well?

Mr Nagalingum: No, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the document I have in my possession is a privileged information between Mr. S.S. and his Counsel, which he has graciously shared with us and cannot be made public. However, my Ministry has requested the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade information regarding the case. I will share in due course.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay, we close it here because we are dealing with a foreign jurisdiction. We do not know the procedure in Madagascar clearly. As per the document you have produced, he has been sentenced on the first instance. The hon. Minister saying there is an appeal.

Mr Quirin: M. le président, avec votre permission ?

The Deputy Speaker: Yes.

Mr Quirin: Je ne vois pas pourquoi l'honorable ministre ne veut pas déposer le document qui est dans sa possession.

The Deputy Speaker: He has been advised that it is a privileged document. We are talking about a foreign tribunal.

Hon. First Member for Vacoas & Floréal!

ISRAEL-MAURITIUS – DIPLOMATIC, TRADE & SECURITY RELATIONS

(No. B/886) Ms J. Bérenger (First Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to Israel, he will state the scope of the diplomatic, trade and security relations of Mauritius therewith in the light of the orders of the International Court of Justice under the Genocide Convention, the arrest warrants of the International Criminal Court and the findings of the United Nations Commission of Inquiry against Israel, indicating whether consideration will be given for the –

- (a) suspension thereof, and
- (b) filing of a declaration of intervention in the proceedings before the International Court of Justice.

Mr Ramful: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Mauritius has consistently maintained a principled and long-standing position in support of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to self-determination and the establishment of an independent, sovereign and viable State of Palestine, in accordance with international law and the relevant resolutions of the United Nations.

Our support for the Palestinian cause has been demonstrated over several decades through our voting record at the United Nations and its agencies, our support to decisions relating to Palestine at the African Union, our support for humanitarian initiatives aimed at alleviating the suffering of Palestinian civilians, and our participation in international, legal and diplomatic processes concerning the question of Palestine.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as regards part (a) of the question, diplomatic relations with Israel were established shortly after the accession of Mauritius to independence on 23 April 1968.

However, on 07 July 1976, Mauritius severed diplomatic relations with Israel in line with the position adopted by many African States and in solidarity with the Palestinian people. Mauritius subsequently recognised the Palestine Liberation Organisation in 1979. Diplomatic relations with Israel were re-established on 29 September 1993, following the signing of the Oslo Accords between Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organisation.

On 15 May 1996, Cabinet agreed to the reopening of a honorary consulate of Mauritius in Tel Aviv. In 2009, under the prime ministership of Dr. the hon. Navin Ramgoolam, in the wake of the Israel's bombardment and continued escalation of Israeli military action in Gaza, Cabinet agreed to consider reviewing the operation of the honorary consulate of Israel in Mauritius.

Thereafter, the request for the accreditation of the Israel Ambassador in Pretoria was kept in abeyance until 2015, and the Israel Ambassador presented its credentials only in 2018. Although diplomatic relations have not been formally severed, the current Government has maintained a restrained approach to bilateral engagement, consistent with our long-standing support for the rights of the Palestinian people and our commitment to the principles of international law.

This is reflected in the modest volume of trade between the two countries, the limited scope of bilateral cooperation programmes, the absence of significant recent bilateral agreements, and the lack of high-level political exchange. Mauritius continues to uphold its fundamental principles regarding the inalienable rights of the Palestinians to self-determination.

In this regard, Mauritius will, today, itself vote in favour of the participation of Palestine in the International Labour Organisation as a non-member state.

As regards part (b) of the question, in particular the proceedings under the Genocide Convention instituted by South Africa against Israel before the ICJ, Mauritius is closely following the proceedings, and a decision on the need to intervene in the proceedings will be taken at a convenient stage in consultation with our missions in New York and Geneva.

However, it is to be highlighted that the Mauritian government has publicly stated that it supports the case entered by South Africa in 2023. This was stated in this Assembly by the

then Minister of Foreign Affairs in July 2024, and there has been no change in policy on this issue by the current Government.

Any decision to intervene in the proceedings before the ICJ will be taken in a manner that is consistent with our national interests, our international obligations, and our enduring commitment to justice, multilateralism, and respect for international law.

In this regard, Articles 62 and 63 of the Statute of the ICJ provide distinct mechanisms through which a State may seek to participate in proceedings before that court.

Article 62 allows a State to request permission to intervene where it considers that it possesses an interest of a legal nature that may be affected by the court's decision.

Such intervention is subject to the authorisation of the ICJ. Article 63, however, provides for intervention by States that are parties to a convention where interpretation of that convention is in issue in the proceedings, allowing them to present observations on the interpretation of that convention. So far, 19 countries have filed declarations supporting the case for South Africa, and three have opposed the case.

The majority of these countries have filed declarations under Article 63 in order to provide their inputs to the interpretation of the relevant provisions of the Genocide Convention.

It has to be noted that countries intervening under Article 63 are restricted to give their views on the interpretation of the convention, and not on the substance of the case. Any decision by Mauritius to intervene in the proceedings will be based, therefore, on a rigorous assessment of the applicable legal requirements, the objectives to be achieved, and the extent to which Mauritius could make a meaningful contribution to the proceedings.

In the meantime, Mauritius will continue to support all efforts under the aegis of the United Nations aimed at securing an immediate cessation of hostilities, ensuring the protection of civilians, facilitating unhindered humanitarian assistance, and advancing a just, comprehensive, and lasting solution to the Palestinian question.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. First Member for Port-Louis Maritime and Port Louis East!

STATE LAND & PAS GÉOMÉTRIQUES – LEASES & RENTAL ARREARS

(No. B/887) Mr E. Juman (First Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to State Land and Pas Géométriques, he will, in each case, state the number of leases granted, indicating the total amount of arrears on rental as at to date and the amount thereof outstanding for a period exceeding three years.

Mr Mohamed: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed that as per records held by my Ministry as at 25 May 2026, 19,149 leases have been granted over State lands classified as *Non-Pas Géométriques* and 6,410 leases have been granted over *Pas Géométriques*.

In addition, 897 leases have been granted specifically in respect of ex-CHA houses situated on *Pas Géométriques*. Let me hasten to add that those figures are leases that predate my coming into office as Minister of Housing and Lands. We may add five leases ever since I have come at the most. Nothing more than that.

With regard to the total rental arrears, I am further informed that as at 31 December 2025, the outstanding amount stands at approximately – hold your horses – Rs1.3 billion. On this figure, Rs647 million has remained outstanding for a period exceeding three years.

Now, what I have done in order to proceed with the recovery of those amounts owed to the State.

In August 2025, recovery action was initiated as regard *campement* site leases by notice against defaulting *campement* site lessees carrying rental arrears totalling approximately Rs43.99 million to effect payment within a period of one month ending 28 September 2025.

Following that, as at date, some Rs20 million has been recovered out of the Rs43.99 million for *campement* site leases. 62 lessees have been referred to the SLO, under my instructions, for legal actions for recovery of arrears in rent and premium due.

For industrial site leases – this is where the amounts are quite immense. With regard to industrial site leases and arrears of rental payments, information has been compiled to exclude, *inter alia*, cases involving ongoing court proceedings and cases where payment facilities have been requested and any other matters that may affect the issuance of notice.

Once the relevant statement of claims is generated, notices are issued requiring the lessees to settle all outstanding rentals within a period of one month from the date of such notice.

Now, as at the 01 June 2026, 65 notices have been issued to recoup outstanding arrears. And those 65 notices are the lion share of the Rs1.3 billion that is owed.

Let me conclude, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, by saying that many of those lessees over the years have played a very important and interesting - important to them -, but interesting little game. And that game has been to avail themselves of a particular section of the Civil Code. That particular section of the Civil Code states that we cannot, it is time, it is barred by a maximum of three years. And you cannot, once you claim, go further than the three years. So, what they do finally, is not paid. Then you have successive Ministers of Housing, and governments who come in, who do nothing - like our absentees. And what happens is that the debt goes up and then they take advantage of the three years. But this is not going to be the case anymore. Because true it is that the Civil Code says we can go only as far back as three years to claim, but it does not in any way remove the possibility of me cancelling the lease *de plein droit*. Even if it is a hotel, even if it is a running business, even if it is a beautiful five-star hotel, you owe money to the State, you will pay. Otherwise, I will cancel the lease and you will have no door to knock upon, maybe go to court, but in the meantime, the lease will be cancelled.

Mr Juman: Merci, M. le président. L'honorable ministre, c'est hallucinant ! R1.3 milliards, l'argent des contribuables qui aurait dû être dans la caisse de l'État. Déjà qu'on est à court de fonds pour divers projets. Mais, l'honorable ministre a parlé de 3 ans *time barred*. Et déjà, il y a 650 millions qui ont déjà dépassé 3 ans. Qu'est-ce que vous comptez faire pour faire entrer cet argent ou sinon révoquer le contrat ?

Mr Mohamed: *L'honorable député*, let me say the following, you see, I have practised law for many years. I myself have taken advantage – Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, will understand what I am getting at – when something the Civil Code is there and helps you out, your client's liability, if ever you represent such clients, you're limited to three years. Fair enough. But as I said, I will not run away from, you pay your three years, but you will get a cancellation of the lease at the same time.

However, should you wish to maintain the lease and for it not to be cancelled, you enter into the *reconnaissance de dette* whereby you accept owing the State the full amount. And you pay whatever you owe. Failing which, you shall lose the industrial site lease and whatever comes and stands on it without any necessity for compensation.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes!

Mr Juman: Merci, M. le président. L'honorable Ministre, R 650 millions. Combien de ces R 650 millions de contrats ont été renouvelés depuis les dernières années qui ont 3 ans de dette ?

Mr Mohamed: Ever since I have been in office, the answer is none. So, you see, whenever you have situations whereby, they owe money, my main objective, – and those are the instructions I have from Government, and the hon. Prime Minister, – that we have to recover that whatever is owed. So, what I do, in fact, is ensure that they pay what they have to pay. Unless they have been giving facilities by the then Minister of Finance, that is another matter to deal with.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Seeburn!

Mr Seeburn: Yes, thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Being given that there is large amount of rent in arrears from the lease holders, I am referring particularly to the residential lease holders who have been occupying the state land and the *pas géométriques* for perhaps half a century. Would the hon. Minister consider the possibility of amending the legislation so as to grant the freehold title to those lease holders in order to alleviate the situation and to overcome the problem of rent due at the same time?

Mr Mohamed: The issue that the hon. Member raises is indeed a real issue. My hon. colleague, the hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs, has many times drawn my attention to that particular issue. Let me therefore say that many of those people living in such situations on *pas géométriques* have lived there for generations and they are continuously in a situation where they have to pay a rent. So, the lease that they have to pay itself, sometimes, is less in terms of total that is recovered than the administrative cost that we have to invest in order to recover it.

So, there is a nonsensical situation. I have at some point considered the possibility of selling the land to them. But at the same time, it would also mean many of those are not necessarily those of the low-income group. Many have been successful through efforts, through investment, through energy deployed by their parents and grandparents, and I take note of that. But I do not want to be put in a situation where millionaires who happen to be quite a few among them, not many, would also benefit from a free plot of land when the State should recover money.

So, what I am working on at the moment at the level of my Ministry; many plots of land of *pas géométriques*, - I have said this in this Assembly, I am saying it again, - at one point in time were sold in violation of the law. And all those sales are null and void. They have been resold and sold again and title has passed. But each of those titles that have passed, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is null and void because it is inalienable. You cannot alienate; you cannot sell *pas géométriques*. This is against the law. There was a wrong move by a certain time by a certain minister who sold *pas géométriques*. And, that was even registered at the Registrar General. Wrong, unlawful.

So, what we intend to do is in fact nullify all those sales. We are working on that. Nullify all those sales and give all of them a *bail*, all of them a buy for 99 years for one rupee. That is a possibility because we would be saving money in the process. But to give away *pas géométriques* selling it, that is against the law and we will have to correct that wrong in the law.

The Deputy Speaker: The next question, hon. Ms Savabaddy!

**REHABILITATION YOUTH CENTRE – TRANSFER TO MINISTRY OF GENDER -
AMENDMENT TO CHILDREN’S ACT 2020**

(No. B/888) Ms A. Savabaddy (First Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the issue of the transfer of the Rehabilitation Youth Centre from under the responsibility of the Prime Minister's Office to her Ministry, she will state whether the committee set up to look thereinto has recommended same and, if so, indicate the expected implementation date thereof and whether amendments to the Children’s Act 2020 or to any other relevant legislation are being contemplated to facilitate same and, if not, why not.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I wish to inform the House that in a correspondence dated 01 September 2025, my Ministry was notified by the Prime Minister's Office that approval had been obtained for –

- (a) the conversion of two buildings used as Rehabilitation Youth Centres (RYCs), into dedicated specialised institutions for Children with Serious Behavioural Concerns (CSBC), and
- (b) that the centres would be managed by my Ministry and the secondment of 39 of the RYCs officers for a mutually agreed period.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, on 04 September 2025, a meeting was held at the Prime Minister's Office with officers of my Ministry to discuss the implementation thereof, following which, a site visit was effected at the RYC premises on 25 September 2025 by senior officers of the PMO, of the office of the Director of Public Prosecutions and my Ministry.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, on 26 January 2026, a draft MOU was submitted by the Prime Minister's Office outlining the *modus operandi* on the administrative arrangements and operational management of revamped rehabilitation youth centres. These require extensive discussions and consultations between the stakeholders. I wish to inform the House that the challenge of dealing with CSBC requires a strategic approach and therefore, a committee co-chaired by the Attorney General and myself was set up.

Therefore, the draft MOU has been kept in abeyance pending the recommendation of the committee. The committee comprises the Chief Government Whip, the hon. Ms Stephanie Anquetil, the hon. Dr. Ms Babita Thannoo, Member of the National Assembly, representatives of the Office of the DPP, the Probation Office, the Police, as well as officers of my Ministry, the Prime Minister's Office and that of the Attorney General's Office. This committee was established in order to come up with concrete solutions in addressing the existing gaps concerning CSBC and those in conflict with the law.

A first meeting was held on 04 February 2026 at which the stakeholders present were requested to submit proposals aimed at addressing loopholes in the current legislation framework, policies and infrastructural arrangements. On 10 March 2026, a second meeting was held to take stock of the proposals received. Given the complexity of the issues, the

committee considered it more appropriate to establish two distinct subcommittees; one dealing with matters involving children with serious behavioural concerns and the second one regarding children in conflict with the law in order to undertake an in-depth analysis of the submissions made by all stakeholders concerned. A third meeting of the main committee was held on 29 April 2026 to which, the hon. Minister of Education and Human Resource and the Ombudsperson for Children, were also invited.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, during that meeting, it was agreed that there was need for an infrastructural facility, specifically designed to cater for children with serious behavioural concerns, separate from children who are in conflict with the law. Thus, consideration would be given to the requisite RYC infrastructure and trained staff being dedicated to an institution which would centralise service delivery for children with serious behavioural concern.

A fourth meeting of the committee was held on 21 May 2026. Following discussions, it was agreed that the new institution would be operated by a parastatal body which would be under the aegis of my Ministry. The new institution would be situated within the premises of the RYC which will be upgraded in order to meet the standards of an institution for care and protection of children while taking into consideration the requirements of CSBC. The new multidisciplinary body which would be staffed among others by the professionals formerly working in the RYC would address the education and psychological needs of CSBC. It was therefore proposed that an interim report be drawn and Government be apprised of the work conducted by the committee and seek approval for its implementation as soon as possible.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to an expected implementation date, a definite time frame cannot be given at this stage. However, the House should rest assured that this matter has the attention of this Government.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, hon. Member?

Ms Savabaddy: Merci, M. le président. L'honorable adjointe au Premier ministre peut-elle dire à la Chambre si les recommandations appuient le transfert du *Rehabilitation Youth Centre* à son ministère ? Merci.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Tout sera dans le rapport qui sera soumis au Cabinet.

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

**ST ANTOINE PLANTERS CO-OPERATIVE TRUST BOARD – COMPOSITION –
FUNDS, PROJECTS & ACTION PLAN**

(No. B/889) Mr N. Beejan (Second Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre D'or) asked the Minister of Industry, SME and Cooperative whether, in regard to the St Antoine Planters Co-operative Trust Board, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the –

- (a) composition thereof;
- (b) amount of funds available thereunder, and
- (c) projects, programmes and action plan envisaged up to December 2026 for the benefit of the planters, indicating the projects and schemes implemented in Goodlands since 2015 to 2024, further indicating in each case, the nature, cost and beneficiaries thereof.

Mr Ameer Meea: Yes, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

I am informed that the Saint Antoine Planters Cooperative Trust was set up following the closure of Saint Antoine Sugar Factory under the Saint Antoine Planters Cooperative Trust Act No. 28 of 1994. It became operational in March 1996. The purpose was to provide financial and material support to planters who previously delivered sugar cane to that factory. The Trust receives and manages funds contributed by the *Compagnie Sucrière de Saint Antoine Limitée*. The funds are exclusively used for the benefit of planters in the ex-Saint Antoine factory area in accordance with the object set out in the Act.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am tabling the composition of the Board which was reconstituted on 10 October 2025.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that the actual fund of the Trust amounts to Rs88 million, out of which, the Trust holds savings account totalling to around Rs6.3 million and a current account of Rs200,000 and the rest are fixed deposit. The Trust is entitled to expenses reasonably incurred in the management of the fund, provided that the expenses do not, in any year, exceed 1% of the net current value of the fund. I am further informed that the Trust continues to manage its financial resources prudently in accordance with the provisions of the Act as established financial procedures.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (c) of the question, I am informed that the Trust operates several loan schemes, grant schemes and support projects for the benefit of

planters in the ex-Saint Antoine Sugar Factory area, which includes Goodlands and surrounding regions. The following measures and action plan are envisaged up to December 2026; for loan schemes, the technical subcommittee of the Trust reviewed the existing loan scheme in February 2026 in view of the increasing cost of sugarcane cultivation and recommended revised rates for crop year 2026. The revised proposals include increases in the ceiling for new plantation loans, derocking loans, one-year crop loans and loans for the purchase of agricultural equipment and transport facilities. These proposals were approved by the Board on 5 March 2026 and are operational as from March 2026. However, no application has yet been received.

As regards to grant schemes, I am apprised that the Trust presently operates a grant for cutting, loading and transport, a grant for the purchase of sprayers and a fertiliser grant for new plantation. With regard to the grant of cutting, loading and transport, I am informed that for crop 2025, 70 planters have benefited a total amount of Rs324,000. For crop 2025, 27 additional applications have been received amounting to 185,000 which have been favourably considered at the board meeting held on the 26 May this year. If the Trust receives more applications, they will definitely be entertained.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to projects and schemes implemented specifically in Goodlands over the period 2015 and 2024, I am informed that the Trust does not implement projects for specific village or region in isolation. All projects and schemes are implemented for the benefit of planters within the entire ex-Saint Antoine Sugar Factory area, which includes Goodlands and surrounding regions.

Nevertheless, I am informed that projects and schemes have been executed in Goodlands region as part of the wider area for road mending works during the period 2016-2017 to facilitate access to agricultural fields for the conveyance of sugarcane.

The total amount disbursed under road mending projects in the Goodlands area and other regions came up to around Rs991,000 for a total of 2,480 metres for roads repaired as at June 2016, and Rs1.2 million for a total of 4,050 metres for roads repaired as at June 2017.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed that planters in Goodlands, as part of ex-St Antoine Sugar Factory area, benefited from grant schemes relating to cutting, loading and transport, fertilisers and sprayers during the period 2016-2024, amounting to approximately Rs1.4 million. Whilst for the purchase of sprayers and fertilisers an approximate amount of

Rs15,000 and Rs73,000 were granted. Furthermore, over the same period, road mending projects undertaken at Goodlands for 2,530 metres of roads for an approximate amount of Rs593,000.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, hon. Beejan!

Mr Beejan: Thank you, Deputy Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether the Board has conducted any formal consultation, survey or meeting with planters to identify their priorities or needs? If not, will consideration be given?

Mr Ameer Meea: Yes, there was a technical sub-committee that met, on 09 February this year, to review areas of concern for planters, for example, loan schemes, grant schemes among others. I must say that should any request be made, projects and schemes that would be executed in Goodlands, for any particular project to be submitted in the future, they may favourably be entertained by the Trust, provided they fall within the authorised financial parameters.

The Deputy Speaker: Last question!

Mr Beejan: My last supplementary. In view of the importance of agriculture in the northern region, will the hon. Minister indicate whether the Board has established measurable targets and key performance indicators for the next financial year?

Mr Ameer Meea: Yes, indeed. It came to my attention that this year, the technical sub-committee further recommended that the grant for cutting, loading and transport be increased from Rs100 to Rs150 per tonne of cane produced for Crop Year 2026, given the rising operational cost faced by planters. This measure will be effective as from 01 July, that is, next month.

Concerning the mechanisation support, the Trust has apprised that this year the technical sub-committee has also initiated discussion on the forthcoming measures to assist planters in mechanising their lands to benefit from mechanical harvesting facilities, and further consultation are being held on this matter.

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

**PUBLIC HEALTH INSTITUTIONS – VASCULAR, CARDIOVASCULAR
SURGEONS & INTERVENTIONAL CARDIOLOGISTS**

(No. B/890) Mr T. Apollon (Second Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to vascular and cardiovascular surgeons and interventional cardiologist, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Medical Council of Mauritius, information as to the number thereof currently registered therewith, indicating, in each case –

- (a) the number thereof presently serving in the public healthcare sector, and
- (b) whether an assessment has been made regarding shortages, if any, in these specialties in public hospitals and regional health institutions.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Medical Council of Mauritius that the number of registered Specialists in the following specialties is as follows –

- vascular surgeons: 2
- cardiovascular surgeons: 5
- interventional cardiologists: 1

In addition, 74 cardiologists and 10 cardiothoracic surgeons are also registered with the Medical Council. Many cardiologists are also trained and are performing as interventional cardiologists.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, regarding part (a) of the question, I am further informed that there are two funded posts at my Ministry's establishment for vascular surgeons. Unfortunately, one passed away and the second one resigned from service. Currently, there is no vascular surgeon working in the public hospitals.

I wish to inform the House that an advertisement for the post of vascular surgeon was launched at the level of Public Service Commission on 24 April 2026 with the closing date on 14 May 2026. I am informed that no candidate has applied for the post. Regarding the field of cardiology, 19 cardiologists are working in public health institutions, and there is only one vacancy. As such, an advertisement was launched on 10 March 2026 by the Public Service

Commission with the closing date on 30 March 2026. To date, the vacancy has not yet been filled.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to cardiovascular surgeons, there are no cardiovascular surgeons employed by the Ministry. However, at the level of Cardiac Centre, Pamplémousses, there are four cardiac surgeons who are currently practicing at the centre.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (b) of the question, my Ministry, with the assistance of the World Health Organisation Country Office, has started an assessment to evaluate the shortages in various medical specialities, including vascular surgeries and cardiovascular surgeries. A report with its recommendation is expected shortly.

As a caring government, my Ministry is leaving no stone unturned. In the field of high-tech medicine, keeping in mind the welfare and well-being of the patients, every avenue is being explored, including visits of specialised surgical experts from foreign countries, including India, United Kingdom, South Africa, France, Australia, and United States of America, to carry out complex surgical interventions in public hospitals.

Currently, there is a team comprising a cardiac surgeon from Krishna Institute of Medical Sciences, Hyderabad from India, which is carrying out delicate cardiac interventions at SAJ Hospital. My Ministry is also expecting a second team by next week. In addition, my Ministry regularly receives the visit of Dr. Rittoo, an eminent consultant in vascular surgery from the United Kingdom. Dr. Rittoo, who is a Mauritian born, has carried out more than 100 cases on a voluntary basis.

Moreover, 11 complex onco surgeries have been carried out at the National Cancer Centre, with over 90% success rate by two doctors from Chennai, India. I wish to inform the House that my Ministry has also invited eminent doctors from India to clear approximately 2,200 cataract cases, which will be done in around two months' time.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the key reasons for these frequent visits are that the visiting teams can provide expertise in different areas, and this creates an opportunity for our local doctors, nurses and technicians to work alongside these experienced specialists for hands-on training, exposure to new techniques and continuing medical education. Foreign surgical missions often perform many surgeries within a short period, thus help in reducing the waiting time for patients to be operated. Visiting teams do bring specialised equipment and

expertise in new minimally invasive or highly complex procedures that may not yet be widely available within our setup. Bringing foreign specialists to operate within our hospitals do help in the reduction of associated costs in connection with sending patients abroad for overseas treatment. Patients have access to specialised high-tech medicine locally, and there is no need to travel abroad for such interventions.

I can reassure the House that sustainable progress will be achieved by a holistic response, including capacity building, building bilateral and multilateral collaboration with foreign countries. I am confident that we can truly ensure life-saving care for patients, and no patient is left behind.

My Ministry is working with the Ministry of Finance to put in place a special scheme to enable the recruitment of foreign doctors in specific fields where there is lack of qualified personnel. It is worth noting that dozens of doctors from India have been helping our country on a purely voluntary basis in different fields such as oncosurgery, paediatric oncology, vascular surgery, neurosurgery, renal and multi-organ transplant among others.

I wish to inform the House that during my recent visit to Geneva, in the context of the 79th World Health Assembly, I had the opportunity to have a working session with Mr J.P. Nadda, the Health Minister of India, who agreed to consider providing assistance in specialised fields.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Apollon!

Mr Apollon: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Can I ask the Minister if his Ministry has received any complaint from patients as their treatment is being delayed for lack of specialists?

Mr Bachoo: I have already mentioned that we hardly have specialists left in specific fields. That is the reason why we are turning towards our donor country to help us. They have to be a bit patient. As I have just mentioned, we are leaving no stone unturned to help those patients.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Juman!

Mr Juman: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Hon. Minister, since you said we have no vascular surgeons in our public hospitals, can you consider to refer vascular patients to private clinics?

Mr Bachoo: Even in private clinics, if I am not mistaken, there is one vascular surgeon who is in Darné Private Hospital. So, when we do get such cases, well I have no hesitation to refer them. But actually, we are having one foreign doctor who is working with us and actually, he is operating. But if the need is felt, I don't have any hesitation in referring them to the private clinic.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. First Member for Savanne and Black River!

FISH LANDING STATIONS - WEST & SOUTH COASTS

(No. B/891) Mr B. Babajee (First Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Agro-Industry, Food Security, Blue Economy and Fisheries whether, in regard to the fish landing stations located along the west, south-west and south coasts, he will –

- (a) for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Fisheries Division, information as to the number thereof which are currently;
 - (i) operational, and
 - (ii) non-operational, indicating, in the latter case, the reasons therefor, and
- (b) state whether consideration will be given for the conversion of the non-operational stations for other activities.

Dr. Boolell: Thank you very much. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, from information obtained, all the 61 fish landing stations are operational.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes!

Mr Babajee: May I ask the Minister if he has done a survey and tell me exactly where the operating ones are because as per my information, most of them are closed.

Dr. Boolell: I can. I have a list here which I will obligingly circulate, and you can peruse at your own leisure. Thank you.

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

**RODRIGUES – WOMEN ENTREPRENEUR LOAN SCHEME –
APPLICATIONS - TERMS & CONDITIONS**

(No. B/892) Mr J. F. François (Second Member for Rodrigues) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the Women Entrepreneur Loan Scheme, she will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the –

- (a) terms and conditions thereof, and
- (b) number of applications received in the current financial year from women in mainland Mauritius and Rodrigues Island respectively, indicating the number thereof approved and total value of loans disbursed as at to date.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, following the Budget 2025-2026, I am informed by the Development Bank of Mauritius (DBM) that the Women Entrepreneur Loan Scheme was reviewed. The maximum credit limit on the loan was raised from Rs500,000 to Rs1.2 million. The scheme is designed to provide financial assistance to women for the establishment and development of income generating activities. I am also informed that following the Budget 2025-2026, all DBM loans under the Women Entrepreneur Loan Scheme carry a moratorium of 18 months for repayments instead of 12 months, during which only interest is payable. Thereafter, capital and interest are repayable over a maximum period of five and a half years.

I am further informed that eligibility for the scheme extends to women entrepreneur who have Business Registration Number, as well as companies in which women hold majority shareholding. Under the scheme, women are eligible for a maximum of Rs1.2 million at an interest rate of 0.5% per annum. Moreover, a general floating charge on the assets of the women entrepreneur is taken as guarantee.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed by the DBM Ltd. that for the period 01 July 2025 to date, for mainland Mauritius and Rodrigues, 69 applications were received altogether for a total amount of Rs40,825,550, of which Rs39,426,000 has been approved and Rs30,086,187 has been disbursed. The breakdown of these figures is as follows –

- (a) for mainland Mauritius, 68 applications were received for a total amount of Rs40,475,550, of which Rs39,096,000 has been approved and Rs30,086,187 has been disbursed.
- (b) for Rodrigues Island, one application was received on 17 March 2026 for a total amount of Rs350,000, of which Rs330,000 has been approved on 23 April 2026 and Rs287,500 has been disbursed.

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

LE BOUCHON – PIG BREEDING FARMERS – RELOCATION

(No. B/893) 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 proposed relocation of the pig breeding farmers of Le Bouchon, he will state whether the Technical Committee set up at the level of his Ministry therefor has submitted its report thereto and, if so, indicate the policy measures, if any, being envisaged in relation thereto.

Dr. Boolell: Thank you very much. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that a Technical Committee was set up at the level of my Ministry to look into the relocation of pig breeders at Le Bouchon. Now, the Committee noted that -

- (a) the pig breeding activities at Le Bouchon were carried out by seven pig breeders with 334 heads;
- (b) the activities were being carried out on private land. Although, as far as I know, I can query whether it is private land. There is a long story over the legitimacy of those who claim that it is private land.
- (c) as per the Environment Act, pig rearing forms part of the list of undertakings requiring a Preliminary Environmental Report, and
- (d) pig breeders were also required to have a Building and Land Use Permit from the District Council to carry out their activities.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, since the owner of the said land was unknown, the assistance of the Ministry of Housing and Lands was sought and the ownership of the private land was communicated to my Ministry. A site visit was effected on the 11 March 2026 by representative of the Food and Agricultural Research and Extension Institute, and the

Ministry of Housing and Lands. With regard to the Building and Land Use Permit, and Preliminary Environmental Report, I am informed by the Ministry of Local Government, and Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change that these breeders, unfortunately, do not have the required permit and are operating illegally.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, pig farming produces significant organic waste, often causing environment harm and health risk. Hence, the relocation of pig breeders from Le Bouchon is necessary, taking into consideration the environmental and biosecurity concerns.

Furthermore, with a view to addressing the issue of pig breeding activities in a holistic manner, an Inter-ministerial Committee has been set up and the first committee was held on 05 March 2026 under the Chair of our colleague, hon. Shakeel Mohamed. The Committee is, *inter alia*, looking at –

- (i) solutions for pig waste treatment;
- (ii) pig breeding around the island on State and private lands;
- (iii) way forward with regard to illegal pig breeding activities, and
- (iv) engagement of all stakeholders from public and private sectors to address the issue of pig breeding.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my Ministry launched an expression of interest for collection of pig waste and its transformation into biogas, following which two companies have submitted their proposals. Same is at evaluation stage at my Ministry's level.

In addition, a tender was launched on 30 April 2026 for consultancy services for the proposal and design of pig waste treatment facility for conversion of biogas to electricity at the St Martin Pig Farm with closing date of 12 June 2026.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, hon. Member!

Mr Apollon: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Thank you, hon. Minister. Can I ask the hon. Minister, if any land has been spotted nearby Le Bouchon to relocate these pig breeding farmers?

Dr. Boolell: Land was spotted, but unfortunately, because of high water table and wetlands, unfortunately, the site was not appropriate. That is why we are erring on the side of caution. The committee is looking into issues relevant to pig breeding. It is unfortunate also that only 128 pig breeders have registered. And even then, they are operating illegally because none of them have, what we call, Building and Land Use Permit. So, that is why we

say the approach has to be holistic. We are looking at all the issues relevant. And, I have also taken the decision that no permit for pig rearing would be given. Thank you.

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

GOODLANDS BY-PASS ROUNDABOUT – TRAFFIC CONGESTION

(No. B/894) Mr N. Beejan (Second Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure whether, in regard to the heavy traffic congestion occurring along the By-Pass from the Goodlands Roundabout to the Espace Maison/Rouillard Roundabout between 7 00 a.m. to 9 00 a.m. and between 3 30 p.m. to 7 00 p.m., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Road Development Authority, information as to whether consideration will be given for the construction of –

- (a) an additional lane along same, and
- (b) a separate road stretch after Clos de la Fôret, Daruty, for commuters converging towards the Vale and Petit Raffray.

Mr Guinness: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to refer the hon. Member to the reply I made to PQ A/4 on 28 October 2025 regarding traffic congestion at the Daruty and Vale Junction.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the heavy traffic congestion occurring along the bypass from the Goodlands roundabout up to the Espace Maison/Rouillard Roundabout, that is, the Forbach roundabout, is not an isolated issue. In fact, technical assessments indicate a significant shock wave effect originating from the Labourdonnais and Mapou roundabouts. The backup traffic queue eventually cascades down to the Forbach Espace Maison roundabout, creating a major obstruction for vehicles coming from the Goodlands bypass that attempt to join the motorway M2.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit that its traffic modelling unit has recently undertaken a comprehensive traffic modelling exercise to identify the most effective infrastructure proposal for enhancing traffic fluidity along the motorway M2 corridor, specifically for commuters travelling from Labourdonnais and Mapou regions towards Port Louis and vice versa during peak hours. The traffic modelling concludes that the existing infrastructure is currently in a state of total corridor failure, characterised by severe traffic delays.

The traffic modelling confirms that the motorway M2 between Mapou and Labourdonnais functions as a single interconnected system. At grade, improvements such as the implementation of slip lanes only are insufficient to support the long-term traffic growth on this corridor. Also, the upgrading of only one of the two roundabouts is counterproductive. This intervention triggers a collapse of the adjacent node due to the increased rate of vehicle arrivals.

In this context, the TMRSU issue has informed the RDA that it recommends the implementation of dual flyovers, great separated junctions at both Mapou and Labourdonnais roundabouts. This option is expected to achieve an optimal level of service while maintaining existing local access patterns and safeguarding the existing public transport routes.

The TMRSU further recommends the construction of a link road between Beau Plateau Road, B43 and Middle Road, B17, starting from a new roundabout at the sharp bend of B43 Road, which passes on the outskirts of Mapou village. The RDA has examined this option, but is proposing the construction of a new bypass linking Beau Plateau to Mapou. This bypass would streamline traffic between the two roads without requiring access to motorway M2. Additionally, replacing the sharp bend with a roundabout along the B43 Road will significantly enhance safety along that segment of the road. Accordingly, a request has been made in the Budget 2026-2027 for the provision of funds for this project.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the junction of Mapou-Goodlands Road-A5 Road and the Vale Road B12 Road is a signalised T-junction. It has been observed that during peak hours, there is a high volume of traffic coming from A5 Road and Goodlands bypass A13 Road, wishing to right turn to exceed onto B12 Road. As such, the vehicles have to wait for either a safe gap to perform this right turn movement for vehicles coming from motorway M2 provide the right of way as a courtesy for vehicles on A5 to right turn onto B12 Road. In doing so, traffic queues quickly build up. This high volume of right turning traffic movement during peak hours is the primary cause of queuing at this signalised T-junction.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am further informed by the TMRSU that it has, as an immediate measure, provided for a shorter time of the green traffic signal for the leg coming from the motorway M2, that is stopping the vehicles along this leg and simultaneously increasing the green light time for the traffic signal along A5 Road to cater for the high volume of right turning traffic movement.

This measure is intended to give the high volume of right turning vehicles on A5 Road more time to clear the intersection and thus provide immediate relief to the queue build up.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed by the RDA that with a view to solving the traffic congestion problem at junction Daruty and Vale, the TRMSU has asked the RDA to improve the junction by constructing a slip lane from the Mapou-Goodlands Road towards Vale Road B12. However, this project will require the acquisition of private land. A request for land acquisition has recently been made by the RDA to my Ministry and action has been initiated for land acquisition.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would also like to highlight that I recently announced the implementation by my Ministry of the Motorway M4 project, which will start in the region of Forbach near the Espace Maison roundabout. This new motorway project will be an alternative route and is expected to contribute substantially to the decongestion of the existing road networks in that region, including the Northern corridor.

The project also comprises a great separated junction along the motorway M2 at Forbach to significantly improve the fluidity of traffic in that region. The works are expected to start during the next financial year to be completed some 32 months later. It is therefore premature to consider the construction of an additional lane from Goodlands roundabout to Forbach. Once the motorway M4 project would be completed, an assessment would be conducted to find out whether there would be need for the construction of the additional lane.

Thank you.

Mr Beejan: Yes, thank you, Deputy Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether any representation by former elected members or previous government, has been received at the Ministry concerning the daily traffic congestion pending over there, Goodlands-Daruty, since many years?

Mr Guinness: As far as I have seen in the files, I have not seen any question or any request from MPs but however, I appreciate that you raised the question of congestion in that region.

The Deputy Speaker: One last question.

Mr Beejan: Yeah. Thank you. In view of rapid residential and commercial development taking place in the northern region, more precisely at Goodlands, Petit Raffray, Calodyne, Roche Terre, Grand-Gaube, will the hon.Minister indicate whether a

comprehensive Traffic Management Plan is being envisaged for these particular areas to ease the traffic flow?

Mr Guinness: But this is what I said in my answer. So, we have a comprehensive study and now we will be working on B43, that is, from Beau Plateau to Mapou, that is passing at the back of Ecole Labourdonnais in order to bypass that region and they go to Mapou. And then we have the M4 road project which is coming, so we will have to assess all these once they are completed on how they are working.

The Deputy Speaker: Do you have a question on this?

Ms J. Bérenger : Oui. Je vous remercie.

Le ministre a confirmé dans sa réponse que le gouvernement ira de l'avant avec le Motorway M4. Le ministre peut-il indiquer si le gouvernement considère qu'une étude de faisabilité datant de 2012 est suffisante pour engager un projet dépassant R 10 milliards dans le contexte économique et démographique actuel et dans la négative, pourra-t-il indiquer à la Chambre si une étude actualisée sera faite ?

Mr Guinness: First of all, let me thank the Government of India for assisting us in having this project to come on our pipeline for the next financial year because without the Indian grant and loan support, without the support of Indian Government, we would never have been able to undertake this project, and this project dates back 20 years. Government after government knows that we have to connect the North with the East and eventually with the South. Now, there was an EIA which has been done. Despite that there has been an EIA, we are updating the EIA.

There will be the local consultants who have worked on the project, the same local consultants whose services have been retained. The Indian side have accepted that the local consultant will work on that. So, they are doing everything to review the EIA and all.

Ms J. Bérenger: It is not EIA. C'est une étude de faisabilité.

Mr Guinness: Tout a été fait. Tout va être fait. Mais on apprécie et on remercie le gouvernement de l'Inde pour nous aider pour faire ce projet.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay, you have answered the question.

You have one question?

Mr Etwareea: Yes.

The Deputy Speaker: On the same issue?

Mr Etwareea: Yes, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Or your next question?

Mr Etwareea: No, it is on the same issue.

The Deputy Speaker: Quick.

Mr Etwareea: Since the hon. Minister is talking of a master plan for that region, will he consider the total rehabilitation of the Forbach Road together in the road system there?

Mr Gunness: Yes, this is what I said because the Forbach region where you have Espace Maison...

Mr Etwareea: The Forbach Road.

Mr Gunness: Yes, the Forbach Road will be taken care when we will be working on the M4 Project. All these will be taken care of.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Third Member for Grand' Baie and Poudre d'Or, your question.

RIVIÈRE DU REMPART DISTRICT COUNCIL – BUILDING & LAND USE PERMITS – APPLICATIONS & OBJECTIONS

(No. B/895) Mr R. Etwareea (Third Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to Calodyne, he will –

- (a) for the benefit of the House, obtain from the District Council of Rivière du Rempart, information as to the number of applications received for the issue of Building and Land Use Permits thereat, indicating the number of objections received and number of permits issued, and
- (b) state the policy of Government regarding infrastructural development thereat.

Mr Wochit: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the District Council of Rivière du Rempart that from 01 January 2025 to date, 113 building and land use permit, that is, BLUP applications have been received in respect of the region of Calodyne, comprising 67 residential development, 34 sub-division excision projects and 12 commercial developments.

I am tabling a detailed schedule showing each application and its current status.

I am further informed that two objections have been received in relation to proposed non-residential development, namely a proposed car wash and a proposed apartment development.

As no formal BLUP application has yet been submitted in either case, no permit has been issued, and thus, no assessment has commenced. The objection has nevertheless been duly recorded and will be considered should formal BLUP application be submitted.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, all applications are assessed on an individual merits and in accordance with the Planning and Development Act 2004, Local Government Act, the Planning Policy Guidance, the relevant technical sheet and other application law, and regulation and planning standards. The submission of the application does not confer any automatic entitlement to a permit.

In determining an application, the local authority consults and takes into consideration, where applicable, the recommendation, technical advice, clearances and statutory requirements of the relevant authorities, including the Land Drainage Authority, Road Development Authority, Irrigation Authority, Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit, Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change, National Ramsar Committee and other wetland authorities, Forestry Services, Mauritius Fire and Rescue Services, Central Water Authority, Central Electricity Board and Wastewater Management Authority.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, where required by law, development may also be subject to a Traffic Impact Assessment (TIA), Preliminary Environmental Report (PER), Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) or any other statutory clearance deemed necessary by the competent authorities.

These assessments ensure that adequate consideration is given to infrastructure capacity, road access, traffic circulation, drainage, flood risk, utility services, environmental protection, public health and safety before any development is authorised.

I am further informed that no specific development plan currently exists for the region of Calodyne.

Subsequently, applications are assessed on a case-to-case basis within the existing planning framework and in accordance with the recommendation of the relevant technical authorities.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change that parts A, B and C of the Sixth Schedule of the Environment Act 2024 prescribe undertakings that may require a preliminary environmental report licence and environmental impact assessment licence or a strategic environmental assessment depending on the nature, scale, location and likely environmental impact of the proposed development.

Section 30 (3) of the Act further empowers that the Minister responsible for environment to declare an undertaking as a schedule undertaking, requiring such approval where circumstances so warrant. The ministry has also confirmed that no PER or EIA licence has been issued in respect of any project located in Calodyne during the past 10 years.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, regarding report of activities in the region, I am informed that the matter falls under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Environment, which has already issued a stop order and is monitoring the site through the relevant enforcement authorities, including the *Police de l'Environnement*.

The grant of BLUP does not exempt a promoter from any other statutory obligation and every approved development must be implemented strictly in accordance with the approved plans and permit condition. The promoter and the and the responsible professionals, including the architects and engineers, are required to ensure full compliance with the application planning guidelines, building regulation, engineering standard, environmental requirements and construction norms governing the approved project.

Any non-compliance may result in enforcement action by the competent authorities. Local authorities cannot lawfully grant permit that are contrary to statutory requirements, especially for planning control, technical standard or environmental safeguards.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Government remains committed to ensuring that developments in Calodyne and even all around the island proceed in a planned, balanced and sustainable manner. No permit is granted unless all applicable legal, planning, environmental and technical requirements have been satisfactorily addressed.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Third Member for Port-Louis North & Montagne Longue!

**VALLÉE DES PRÊTRES – JAMES BURTY DAVID SSS STUDENTS – BUS
SERVICE SHORTAGE**

(No. B/896) Mr L. Caserne (Third Member for Port-Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Land Transport whether, in regard to the provision of school bus services for students residing in Vallée des Prêtres, Port Louis, and attending the James Burty David State Secondary School, Belle Village, Port Louis, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Land Transport Authority, information as to whether it is in presence of representations in respect of the shortage thereof and, if so, indicate the remedial measures being envisaged in relation thereto.

The Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection (Mr M. Yeung Sik Yuen):
Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I will answer this Parliamentary question.

I am informed by the National Land Transport Authority (NLTA) that with regard to the provision of school bus services for students residing in Vallée des Prêtres, Port Louis and attending the James Burty David State Secondary School, Bell Village, transport facilities are currently being provided along the said corridor through regular school services operated by United Bus Service Limited and other operators.

These include, in particular, Route 168 which provides a dedicated school trip to Vallée des Prêtres via Vallée Pitot. In addition, other supporting services are being operated, namely Route 115 from Plaine Verte via Tranquebar and return via Vallée Pitot, Route 33 and 33B serving the transportation centre and Plaine Verte, respectively.

Route 115A via Tranquebar as well as Route 51 operated by Triolet Bus Service Company Limited from Pointe aux Sables. Collectively, these services contribute to the overall accessibility of the school for students travelling from Vallée des Prêtres and surrounding regions.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I understand that hon. Ms Savabaddy had informed the substantive Minister about this matter. They both did a site visit in the vicinity of the school. The NLTA is monitoring the situation closely and is maintaining close coordination with the school and operators to assess demand and operational conditions on an ongoing basis.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, should the need arise, appropriate remedial measures, including adjustments to existing services based on capacity, will be considered in consultation with stakeholders to ensure that students are adequately catered for.

The NLTA has been requested to carry out a survey to that effect. I am tabling the timetable for Routes 160 and 160A for the benefit of the House.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes !

Mr Caserne: Je remercie le ministre pour sa réponse. Juste pour rappeler qu'au niveau de James Burty David, il y a pas mal de requêtes qui nous sont parvenues pour qu'il y ait un ajustement par rapport au service de transport public pour les élèves qui vont à cette école.

Puis-je demander à l'honorable ministre de transmettre le message au niveau de la NLTA pour que le *survey* soit actualisé dans un moment assez rapide puisque les périodes des examens arrivent très bientôt. Si le nécessaire pouvait être fait rapidement ? Merci.

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the needful will be done.

STATE SCHOOLS – PRIMARY & SECONDARY – STAFF SHORTAGES

(No. B/897) **Mr B. Babajee (First Member for Savanne & Black River)** asked the Minister of Education and Human Resource whether, in regard to shortages of teaching and non-teaching staff in primary State schools, secondary State schools and private secondary schools, he will state –

- (a) the extent thereof in each category since the resumption of school in January 2026, and
- (b) whether consideration will be given to the regularisation of all supply teachers and to their appointment on a permanent basis.

(Withdrawn)

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

TEENAGE PREGNANCY – JANUARY 2025 TO 01 JUNE 2026 - REMEDIAL MEASURES

(No. B/898) **Ms S. Anquetil (Second Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to teenage pregnancy, she will state the measures taken by her Ministry to address the issue and reduce the incidence thereof, since January 2025 to date.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to point out that cases of teenage pregnancy are reported to my Ministry by medical social workers from all the regional hospitals throughout the island for follow-up and cases are referred to the drop-in centre by the Family Support Services of my Ministry. I wish to inform the House that since December 2003, my Ministry, through a drop-in centre located at Port Louis and managed by the Mauritius Family Planning and Welfare Association, works towards the rehabilitation of adolescents, teenage mothers.

The objectives of the drop-in centre are –

- (a) to ensure victims' empowerment through referrals to educational and vocational institutions and other related organisations;
- (b) to promote the concept of “entertain to education activities” like personality development programmes and art competitions;
- (c) to help mothers, teenagers acquire both social and life skills to overcome their traumas;
- (d) to conduct group therapy sessions and focal group activities, and
- (e) to ensure the rehabilitation of these teenage mothers and their reintegration into the society through networking with appropriate stakeholders.

The services offered by the drop-in centre are, *inter alia*, as follows –

- (a) counselling;
- (b) prevention through talks in the community including schools;
- (c) medical sessions conducted on a monthly basis for mothers and babies;
- (d) broadcast radio programmes on a fortnightly basis in Creole and Hindi, and
- (e) recreational activities held on a quarterly basis.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, pregnant adolescents and teenage mothers are vulnerable. They, therefore, require dedicated support with regard to their emotional, psychological, social and economic needs.

Thus, whenever cases are reported at the level of Family Support Services of my Ministry, individual counselling, guidance and psycho-social support services are also provided to them as well as to their families. Home visits and follow-up sessions are

conducted with the pregnant adolescents and teenage mothers to ensure that their best interests and rights are safeguarded and that they are living in a safe and secure environment.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my Ministry also provides necessary counselling to encourage stronger family support, improved communication between parents and children and promote responsible parenting practices. If required, the pregnant adolescents and teenage mothers are referred to the Ministry of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity for financial support.

I wish to inform the House that the adolescent-friendly sexual productive health services of the Ministry of Health and Wellness are provided at primary health care level through area health centres, community health centres, medi-clinics and regional hospitals. And health care professionals have been sensitised on the provision of confidential, respectful and youth-friendly services. Since 2025, my Ministry has been strengthening collaboration with community organisations, NGOs and relevant Ministries departments through the Community Child Watch Programme and the District Child Protection Committee under my Ministry. These two programmes facilitate coordinated interventions, improve referral mechanisms and ensure effective follow-up of cases including teenage pregnancy cases.

Furthermore, I am informed that the AIDS Unit of the Ministry of Health and Wellness implements a range of evidence-based interventions, contribution to the prevention of HIV as well as teenage pregnancy. This Unit carries out awareness sessions in secondary schools on sexual and reproductive health and HIV prevention.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am also informed that since January 2025, sexual education has been integrated within the school curriculum and covers topics including sexually transmitted diseases, reproductive health, gender rights, common taboos and misconceptions. My Ministry works in coordination with the Ministry of Education and Human Resource to ensure that the content is both age-appropriate and comprehensive. Particular emphasis has also been placed on boys and young men as active participants in prevention, recognising that gender-based power imbalances and attitudes towards sexuality are key drivers of teenage pregnancy.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, hon. Anquetil!

Ms Anquetil : Je vous remercie, M. le président. Je remercie l'honorable adjointe au Premier ministre pour sa réponse. Pourrait-elle indiquer à la Chambre si elle aurait les statistiques sur le *teenage pregnancy*, s'il vous plaît ?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Malheureusement non, M. le président. J'inviterai l'honorable membre à venir avec une question *substantive question on that*.

Ms Anquetil : *Je vous remercie, M. le président.* Would the hon. Deputy Prime Minister inform the House what specific tailor-made measures has her Ministry put in place to address the issue of teenage fatherhood?

Thank you.

The Deputy Prime Minister: C'est une bonne question, je pense que c'est une bonne proposition à laquelle on va considérer, bien sûr.

The Deputy Speaker: Last question for today, hon. Juman!

NATIONAL SOCIAL INCLUSION FOUNDATION – QUANTUM & BENEFICIARIES

(No. B/899) Mr E. Juman (First Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity whether, in regard to the National Social Inclusion Foundation, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to, since July 2025 to date, the –

- (a) total amount of funds –
 - (i) received from the Mauritius Revenue Authority
 - (ii) used for administrative and operational cost, and
- (b) beneficiaries thereunder, indicating the eligibility criteria and evaluation process adopted for approval and fund allocations.

Mr Subron: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the National Social Inclusion Foundation (NCIF) operates under the aegis of the Social Integration Division of my Ministry and is governed by its council. The aim of NCIF is to provide, is to empower and improve the well-being of people living in conditions of poverty and vulnerability through impactful and sustainable stakeholder partnerships.

The Foundation is the central body that receives funds collected by the Mauritius Revenue Authority (MRA) in accordance with the legal provisions and the section 50L of the Income Tax Act under the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) provision.

As per its Charter, NCIF is to allocate funds to non-governmental organisations for the benefit of vulnerable groups to support programmes and projects in priority areas of

intervention such as the socio-economic development as the means of poverty alleviation, educational support and training, support people with disabilities, family protection including gender-based violence and environment and sustainable development.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by NCIF that from July 2025 to April 2026, it has received a total amount of Rs976,058,116.

As regards part (a)(ii) of the question, the operating costs for NCIF amounted to Rs162,115,132.52 as at April 2026.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that there is a well-structured funding mechanism established at the level of NCIF, whereby funds are disbursed strictly to NGOs duly registered with the Foundation and based on projects received following call for proposals launched by the latter. NCIF disbursements, both from funds received from the MRA, and from fund invested as per its reserve and investment policy.

Furthermore, I am apprised that a four-tier process is adopted by the NSIF for a rigorous evaluation of projects prior to the approval of fund allocation. The first stage relates to an initial screening constituting of administrative checks. Subsequently, at a second stage, a technical assessment is carried out whereby the proposals received are examined and assessed based on their relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of proposed interventions. The third stage involves the validation of the technical assessment by the Project Management Committee. Finally, the fourth stage constitutes the approval of the project proposal and funding thereof by the Council.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, for this financial year, as at April 2026, I am informed that an amount of Rs1,58,808,995.50 has been disbursed to 240 beneficiaries, namely NGOs and charitable homes to implement their respective projects and programmes including their operational costs.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, given that the NSIF deals with public money, for the benefit of the House and for public interest, I am tabling the full list of beneficiaries, namely the 240 NGOs and charitable institutions and the amount of fund disbursed by NSIF to the respective entity. I am informed it is the first time that this kind of list is deponed in the National Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: I give you only one question because time is over.

Mr Juman: Thank you, hon. Minister for tabling the list. Hon. Minister, given that the NSIF is intended to support social inclusion and vulnerable groups, can you confirm whether any organisation affiliated with major profitable corporate groups has benefited from NSIF funding and how such allocations were justified in light of the foundation's objectives?

Mr Subron: I think this is a very good question. The topic is in discussion on the Board of NSIF. It has been the practice in recent years under the previous Government and Board. This discussion is ongoing. I have my own opinion on it and I will give my opinion to the Board when the Board will take a decision on this issue. It is not a correct practice for me. There is no one with acquired rights under NSIF. Every project has to be analysed and decided on the merits of the project, not as an acquired right. This is my stand.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, time is over.

Hon. Members, the Table has been advised that the following PQs have been withdrawn; PQs B/900, B/901, B/904, B/908, and B/909.

Hon. Prime Minister!

MOTION

SUSPENSION OF S.O. 10(2)

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

The Deputy Prime Minister rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

PUBLIC BILLS

First Reading

On motion made and seconded, the Supplementary Appropriation (2024-2025) (No. 2) Bill (No. VII of 2026) was read a first time.

Second Reading

THE CONSTITUTIONAL REVIEW COMMISSION BILL

(No. VI OF 2026)

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on the Constitutional Review Commission Bill (No. VI of 2026).

Question again proposed.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr Ramful!

(4.17 p.m.)

The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade (Mr D. Ramful): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we should be proud that 58 years after independence, our Constitution has stood the test of time, adapting itself through various amendments without, of course, losing its core values and its core essence, that of protecting the fundamental rights of our people. Some countries have had to rewrite their Constitution. Some Constitutions were even revoked, but ours stood firm, resilient, protecting the rights of our people and also making sure that the institutions that have been created in the Constitution do ensure the protection of the rights of our people.

I, very often, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, hear some people saying that our Constitution was imposed upon us by the British but that is not true! In fact, we give the impression that as if our leaders at that time were invited over a cup of coffee at Lancaster House and were handed over a copy of that Constitution but that is not true. It has to be rectified. Our Constitution is the fruit of various negotiations, various sessions that occurred between the colonial powers and the Mauritian leaders and after various sessions, various discussions, when our leaders were happy, were satisfied that that Constitution did contain sufficient provisions to protect the rights of our people, then it was agreed and not even that, it did obtain the indirect approval of the people at the 1967 election. The general framework of the Constitution was put to the people for vote and they voted in favour of the coalition Government led by Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam. It was after that. Then the British passed the Mauritius Independence Ordinance in the British Parliament and then we had the 1968 Constitution.

So, as I have said, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, very often we hear people saying that our Constitution was handed over to us. I believe that I had to make this point very clear. It is also with pride that we can say that there have been various judicial pronouncements that have come mainly from the Privy Council on the interpretation of several sections of our Constitution that have been used as reference, as precedents in various other jurisdictions. Let me just give – especially in Commonwealth jurisdictions – a few examples. The cases like *The State vs Khoyratty*, where they laid emphasis on the separation of powers between the

judiciary and the executive. This case is now being used everywhere in various jurisdictions as precedent. The case of *Darmalingum vs The State*, where the citizen's right to be tried within a reasonable time. The case of *Dhooharika and the DPP*, which talks about the vital role of the media in a democracy. So, all these judicial pronouncements that are now being used in various jurisdictions emanate from interpretation of our Constitution. This is why Mauritians should be proud of that Constitution.

As I have said, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, our Constitution has also evolved; it has evolved with time and it adapted itself through various amendments. Today, once again, we are being called upon to consider setting up a Commission; a Commission to make recommendations in order to bring extensive amendments to the Constitution in order to reinforce the fundamental rights of the people and to consolidate the institutions that have been created under the Constitution.

Now, people should ask the question: why are we doing this? Why have we taken such a decision? Because little did we realise that one day, there will be a tyrannical government which will rule and will even dare to abuse people's rights!

Sometimes I listen to people on the radio. They criticise on social medias. They do not realise, two years back, under the MSM regime, what we have witnessed. They tend to forget very easily, and I am going to remind the people because, unfortunately, Mauritians tend to forget very, very easily. It is good that we use this occasion, since we are talking about constitutional rights, fundamental rights, institutions, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to remind people about what has occurred in the past 10 years.

In the midst of the political campaign in November 2024, access to social medias, access to internet were suspended, in complete violation of the citizen's right to information!

Ms Anquetil: L'ancien régime!

Mr Ramful: C'est arrivé à Maurice en 2024!

Ms Anquetil: MSM!

Mr Ramful: In April 2021, the MSM Government launched a consultation paper to do what? To amend the ICTA Act in order to create a National Digital Ethics Committee, composed of political appointees. Who would decide? They would decide what contents they

would allow on the social media. *Vous vous imaginez ce qui s'est passé sous le régime MSM* ? Luckily, there was public outcry, and they retracted from this amendment.

Sometimes, I listen to what is being said on the private radios. Do they realise that in November 2021, the MSM Government amended the IBA Act to reduce the duration of private radio licences from three years to one year? *Avec pour but* to make private radios at the beck and call of the MSM Government. They also introduced an administrative fine of up to Rs500,000. *Un demi million de roupies* as administrative fine if the private radio does not follow the broadcasting guidelines.

This is why it is important, as has been mentioned in the present Bill, that we have to think about the introduction of new generation Bills –

- freedom to information;
- freedom to technology, to digital and information rights.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in December 2016 – the Prime Minister has made reference to this –, would you imagine, they brought the Prosecution Commission Bill to create a monster. A prosecution commission composed of political appointees. Do you know what to do with it? To issue directions to the Director of Public Prosecutions...

Ms Anquetil: Lamentable!

Mr Ramful: ...who is an independent body under the Constitution, in order to decide who to prosecute and who not to prosecute.

Ms Anquetil: Lamentable!

Mr Ramful: They even succeeded in curtailing the powers of the DPP on the decision to prosecute in corruption and money laundering cases. They transferred that power to a political appointee, the then Director of ICAC.

The Police Force is supposed to be ensuring law and order in the country. We were supposed to have an independent Commissioner of Police in command of the Police Force, but the Commissioner of Police, at that time, was taking directions from the ‘kitchen.’

Mr Jhummun: *Pe distribie gel!*

Mr Ramful: The Police Force was being operated from Sun Trust. This is what was happening two years back.

People have forgotten how the SST was being used to traumatise political opponents or even those who dared to criticise the policies of government. There were cover-up inquiries. What have not we read in the report of the Magistrate of the Moka Tribunal in the Kistnen case? Cover-up in murder cases.

I listened to some police officers, even my bodyguards, they are complaining about promotion. Do they realise? For the first time in the history of this country, under the MSM government, promotions were given to police officers close to politicians, and the Routine Orders were not published. In opacity! They did not even know who was being promoted and who was not. This is how promotion was given under the MSM government. An accelerated promotion to some of them.

Even the judiciary was not spared! Would you believe this, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? Even the judiciary! Do you remember after the verdict in the Medpoint case by the two magistrates of the Intermediate Court, finding the then Prime Minister Pravind Jugnauth, guilty? His father, late Sir Anerood Jugnauth, was then the Prime Minister, and do you know what he said about the magistrates? I will quote it in *Kreol*. Allow me, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. He said –

“Ena ban mazistra nouvo, pena lexperyans, zot donn bann zizman brikbrak.”

And the son was not better. When Bruneau Laurette was given bail, the then Prime Minister Pravind Jugnauth said –

“Zame mo finn trouv enn zizman de enn mazistra osi bankal ki sa. Li enn inkonpetan. Li pa konpran mem ki apel la lwa.”

This is how heads of States, under the previous MSM Government, were treating the judiciary.

Ms Anquetil: Shocking!

Mr Ramful: In this august Assembly, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, which is supposed to be the temple of democracy, what have not we witnessed?

Ms Anquetil: *Pa koze! Pa koze!*

Mr Ramful: The most atrocious rulings ever being handed down at every session of this Assembly by the former Speaker. The former DPM was right. I remember he was saying that when we come to power, we have to delete all these rulings from Hansard. He was right. There was no decorum at all. Unparliamentary words were being allowed. Even the then Speaker was using unparliamentary words.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, just to give an example on how this House was being managed, I decided to make *un relevé* to see how many times, on how many occasions, MPs were either ordered out, named or suspended.

An hon. Member: In all sessions!

Mr Ramful: Do you know how many times?

Ms Anquetil: Every session! Every session!

Mr Ramful: 123 fois!

An hon. Member: Incroyable!

Mr Ramful: On 123 occasions!

Dr. Aumeer: Shakeel *komie ena?*

Mr Ramful: At one time, all the Opposition Members were ordered out. For the first time in the history of this country, the Committee of Supply was voted in one day, without any questions put!

Ms Anquetil: At 1.00 a.m.!

Mr Ramful: Can you imagine this? This happened under the MSM regime in this very House which is supposed to be the temple of democracy. Sometimes when you hear people talking outside, criticising us, they have forgotten what has happened just two years back.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Bank of Mauritius is another example. The Bank of Mauritius became a money printing machine under the MSM government. The Bank of Mauritius, which was supposed to be an independent body looking after monetary policy, was

being used to cover for the fiscal deficit of government. This is what the Bank of Mauritius was doing. The Prime Minister said it the other day, they have printed Rs1.8 billion. This is why it is important, as has been mentioned in the Bill, that we have a Senior Officials Appointment Committee to make recommendations on the appointment of Heads of some public institutions.

Municipal Elections have not been postponed once, not twice, on three occasions. *En trois occasions les citoyens* have been prevented to vote for their representatives at Municipal Elections. This is why we have to come up with provisions so that never again Municipal Elections, Local Government Elections are postponed. Also, we need to have a Constitutional Division of the Supreme Court. Because cases involving breach of constitutional rights need to be treated with urgency.

Look what has happened about the election petitions that we had entered in 2019 after the elections. It took the judiciary - I am not criticising - for several reasons, it took them five years. One whole mandate of the previous government to deliver judgment in the election petition. One whole mandate! And you see, because of that people, unfortunately, lose trust in the system. This is why on the day of the last elections, people started taking control of government electoral vehicles carrying ballot papers to ensure that elections are done fair and free. This is what happens when you delay to give justice. This is why it is important that when people feel that their constitutional rights is being breached, they have to be given justice with urgency. They have to be treated with urgency.

Even the Prime Minister made mention about this – using covert surveillance for eavesdropping on citizens' life. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am not going to be long. The government at that time...

The Deputy Speaker: One minute left!

Mr Ramful: ...became so untrustworthy when it comes to protection of the fundamental rights of people that the citizens on the day of election, they decided to use their own pen. They sanctioned the previous government and gave us the mandate to protect their fundamental rights and consolidate democracy and institutions. This is what we are doing, today, with the introduction of this Bill in Parliament.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Dr. Ms Jeetun!

(4.37 p.m.)

The Minister of Financial Services and Economic Planning (Dr. Ms J. Jeetun): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I speak today in support of the Constitutional Review Commission Bill. As a citizen of this country, one may ask, why do we need to review our Constitution? After all, our Constitution, as my colleague has just said, has served this well for 58 years now. It has provided stability, safeguarded democracy, protected fundamental rights and helped transform Mauritius from a small island with no resources into one of Africa's most successful countries.

But, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the true strength of a Constitution is not that it never changes. The true strength of a Constitution is its ability to remain relevant in a changing world. It is not merely a legal document. A Constitution is like a compass for a nation. It does not determine every step we take, but it provides the direction by which we navigate moments of uncertainty, of disagreement and of change.

Through Vision 2050, we are asking ourselves what kind of economy we wish to build, what opportunities we wish to create, and what future we wish to leave to our children. Yet no national journey can succeed if we neglect the compass that guides it. And just as a navigator periodically checks whether the compass remains true during changing conditions, nations too must periodically reflect on whether their constitutional arrangements remain adapted to the realities of their time. The purpose of constitutional review is not to change our destination. It is to ensure that future generations can continue the journey with confidence, stability and trust.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are modernising our economy. We are modernising our infrastructure. We are modernising our technology. And so, it is only legitimate that we also reflect on whether aspects of our constitutional framework should also be modernised for the challenges of the 21st century. In fact, this is what the people of the country expect of us as a government. History teaches us a very important lesson: prosperous nations are not built merely by exceptional governments. Prosperous nations are built by exceptional institutions. As my colleague just said, institutions that are referred in the Bill, like the judiciary, like the DPP, like the Appointment Committee. Governments come and go. Political parties rise and fall. But strong institutions endure. Indeed, the true test of a nation's maturity is the quality of the institutions it leaves to the next generation. And it provides the strong local democratic fabric. So, the purpose of constitutional review is to protect tomorrow's citizens.

As the Minister responsible for economic planning, I have the privilege of leading the work on Vision 2050. Vision 2050 asks a fundamental question: what kind of Mauritius do we wish to leave for the future generations? What sort of economy do we want? What sort of society do we want? What opportunities do we want our children and grandchildren to inherit? But there is another question that is equally important: what sort of institutions do we want them to inherit? Vision 2050 is about designing the future of our economy that is socially inclusive and embedded into sustainability. The Constitutional Review Commission will look into designing the future of our democracy and one cannot succeed without the other.

Economic development without strong institutions is fragile. The Senior Official Appointment Committee is one such initiative that will create good governance in public administration. Democracy without effective institution is vulnerable and the establishment of a constitutional court will reinforce that. National prosperity without institutional trust is unsustainable and the two journeys must, therefore, proceed hand in hand.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as I said, Mauritius is quite unique in many ways. Our greatest resources are not oil reserves, not minerals, but the resilience and the talent of our people. And more importantly, it is the trust that our people place in our institutional fabric, and democracies endure where institutions are trusted. So, that is why constitutional review is not merely a legal exercise.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there is another reason why this exercise is important. Constitutions are designed to manage disagreements. When everyone agrees, institutions are rarely tested. The real test comes when there is disagreement. A good constitution provides rules, safeguards and institutions that allow differences to be resolved peacefully, fairly and democratically. This is one of the greatest achievements of constitutional democracy, not the absence of disagreement. And the Bill, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, provides the fabric to enhance the resolution of any such differences.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, every generation faces its unique challenges. The generation that negotiated independence confronted poverty, uncertainty and questions about whether Mauritius could survive as a nation. Today, we face different challenges – artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, climate change, demographic change, geopolitical uncertainty, rapid technological disruption. The world of 2026 is not the world of 1968. And the world of

2050 will be even more different. And so, this raises a profound question. What obligations do we owe to Mauritians who are not yet born?

The answer, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is simple. We owe them institutions that are at least as strong as the one we inherited. We owe them a democracy that is at least as resilient as the one that our forefathers built. We owe them a constitutional framework capable of protecting their freedom long after we have left public life. This is the essence of intergenerational justice. We are temporary custodians of an inheritance. Our responsibility is not merely to preserve it. Our responsibility is to improve it before passing on.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the strongest societies are not those that never question themselves. The strongest societies are those that possess the confidence to examine themselves honestly. As an island State, we must be agile. We must be more forward-looking. We must be more willing to prepare for tomorrow rather than merely react to yesterday. And as we stand today in this fast-changing world, constitutional renewal is a necessity. The Constitutional Review Commission Bill is therefore not about rewriting our history. It is about preparing our future. It is not about abandoning our foundations. It is about strengthening them. And so, I return to the work of Vision 2050.

Vision 2050 challenges us to think beyond electoral cycles, beyond annual budgets, beyond immediate pressures, beyond the politics of the day. The constitutional review requires exactly the same mindset. It requires us to think not as politicians, but as custodians; not as occupants of office, but as stewards of national inheritance.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, every generation inherits a nation it did not build. Every generation benefits from its institution it did not design. The question before us today is therefore both simple and profound. Will we leave those institutions stronger than we found them? Will we leave our democracy more resilient than we inherited it? Will we leave our future generation better equipped to face the challenges of their time?

If the answer to those questions is yes, then this Bill deserves our support because Constitutions are not monuments of the past; they are bridges to the future. It is our responsibility collectively and courageously to ensure that the bridge remains strong for generations to come.

Our colleague just stated about the challenges of modern world. The challenges confronting democracies across the world today that our founders could scarcely have imagined when our Constitution was drafted. Information travels slowly. News was verified

before it was published. Public debate took place in media, in town hall, in newspapers, in parliaments. Citizens could disagree but there was usually a common set of facts upon which that disagreement was based.

Today, we live in a fundamentally different world. Information travels instantly. Rumours travel faster than facts. Outrage often travels further than reason. And algorithm increasingly reward what is sensational rather than what is true. Technology has given every citizen a voice and that is a remarkable democratic achievement but it has also created new challenges. Across the world, we are witnessing the rise of populism, polarisation and division. Too often, public debate is reduced to slogans rather than solutions. The challenge of our generation is therefore not simply to preserve democratic institutions. It is also to preserve democratic culture and trust in facts, not slogans.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is why constitutional reflection is more important today than at any time in recent history. The architects of our Constitution designed the pillars of our democracy: judiciary, the DPP, local democracy, which were capable of managing the challenges of their age. Our responsibility today is to ensure that our constitutional fabric remains resilient in an age of artificial intelligence, digital misinformation, global connectivity, unprecedented technological change, climate change, etc. For if the 20th century taught us that democracy must be protected from authoritarianism, the 21st century teaches us that democracy must also be protected by strengthening fundamental rights relating to the above. It is a national challenge. And it is a challenge that demands foresight, wisdom and courage from all of us.

So, let me conclude with a famous quote from Abraham Lincoln.

“The best way to predict your future is to create it.”

I thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. Minister.

I suspend the Sitting for half an hour.

At 4.51 p.m., the Sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 5.31 p.m. with Madam Speaker in the Chair.

Madam Speaker: Yes, please be seated!

Hon. Minister Subron, it is your turn.

(5.31 p.m.)

The Minister Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity (Mr A. Subron): Madam Speaker, we are in a defining historical moment. What we will be enacting tonight, the Constitutional Review Commission Bill, is not a law like others. It is the mother of all laws. We are presently creating the condition, an instrument to shape the society of the future and especially for future generations.

This would be the main legacy of this Government. After its enactment, all will depend on how our citizens, especially the youth and visionaries, will appropriate the space and tools we are giving them to make the dreams of Republic 2.0 become a reality. How did we get here? When we were approaching the last general elections, my party made a public political proposal.

Change the authoritarian of the mafiosi previous government, while at the same time changing the system. We were of the view that authoritarian and mafiosi decay of the previous government was also itself, in a sense, a product of an outdated system which itself need to be changed.

It was the reflection we had after COVID-19, Kistnen murder, planting and especially Wakashio oil spill. We proposed a transition Government of two years to perform this prime duty and adopt a new Constitution. In this context, we went on to meet all the opposition parties to discuss this political project. What we are debating tonight stems from this process.

In some ten meetings with the present Prime Minister and the former Deputy Prime Minister at Riverwalk, we discussed the proposal *pou sanz gouvèrnemen et sanz system* based on constitutional amendments. I must put on record the wisdom of both the present Prime Minister and the former Deputy Prime Minister when we were discussing all these matters.

We finally agreed that a new Government will have its full five years mandate and agreed on the core elements of system change through fundamental amendments of the Constitution. Tonight, the whole nation should also know that *Rezistans ek Alternativ* only agreed to discuss *tiket* with our electoral partners only upon agreement on fundamental amendments to the Constitution, including electoral reform.

Just to let the nation know how important was system change via constitutional change to *Rezistans ek Alternativ* further commitment in the *Alliance du Changement*. Our 20 years of involvement in various struggles made *Rezistans ek Alternativ* spearhead for constitutional reform in Mauritius. But if we have arrived where we are today, we must also pay tribute to

people like Jack Bizlall, leftist and trade unionist, the platform for a *Nouvo Konstitution et Nouvo Repiblik of 2010*, Blok 104 and various movements, academics and opinion leaders. They are the core drivers of change of the present constitutional reform agenda.

Madam Speaker, we are in this defining historical moment because it is the first time since independence that the people, the electorate directly and massively voted for the present constitutional reform agenda, which was part of the electoral manifesto. The Bill and its terms of reference contain, I would say, 60% of the constitutional amendments agreed and voted by the people. Let me clarify this issue.

First, the mini amendment to eliminate the communal classification of candidates in election is not in the Bill. Second, the much-needed electoral reform is also not there. Third, constitutional amendment to enable the usage of Kreol in this Assembly is not included in the Bill. They are not there or here, not because this Government does not want to address these three critical constitutional issues. On the contrary, it is because the Government want to go quicker and are already addressing these issues in parallel that they have not been included in the present Bill.

The electoral reform which would incorporate the issue of mandatory communal classification of candidates in general elections and the issue of Kreol in the Assembly have already been subject of two separate parallel processes. The House must also know that the separation of electoral reform was a proposal made by the MMM since last year and accepted by all the partners of *Alliance du Changement*.

Having clarified the non-inclusion of electoral reform and amendment to eliminate communal classification of candidates in general election in the Bill, *Rezistans ek Alternativ* is eagerly expecting that the processes already started follow its due course to build consensus on a holistic electoral reform proposal to be brought to the to the Cabinet and the National Assembly by the hon. Prime Minister. Madam Speaker, we are in defining historical moment.

I would postulate that the closest defining corresponding moment to the period present period would be the 1947 Constitution passed under the British colonial rule. It is always important to remind ourselves that colonial Mauritius knew its first set of social governing legal framework in the form of *Code Noir*. A special penal, labour and civil code designed solely to institutionalise, regulate and enforce the system of slavery.

Now decreed a crime against humanity by the UN. The *Code Noir* legally class legally classified and enslaved human being as movable property, *bien meuble*, and set the legal limits of human exploitation, outlining several severe corporate style punishments such as branding, ear cropping and execution for runaway slaves and acts of rebellion.

Our pre-constitution, in a sense, was the *Code Noir*. Our first constitution under the British rule in 1885 was aimed to protect the wealth accumulated by ex-slave owners as well as restricting the right to vote to the sugar oligarch.

The voting franchise was tethered to strict property ownership and high income. Out of a massive population, only about 4,000 elite men, 2% were eligible to vote, while the working class remained disenfranchised. When talking about protecting the wealth accumulated by ex-slave owners, it is worth to note that the compensation paid to slave owners was around 2.1 million pounds sterling. If this sum was invested in a bank at a conservative historical average, 3% interest, it would have yielded Rs38.1 billion today. If invested in long-term bond, 4.5% interest, it would have yielded Rs603 billion. Yes, Madam Speaker, this is the figure!

With the birth of the Labour Party in 1936 and with the workers and small planters struggle, the British finally had to brought a new constitution in 1947. It marked at the same time a qualitative change. It eliminated the property clause to the franchise.

It dramatically expanded the voting franchise to all adults who passed a simple literacy test, exploding the voter base from around 11,000 people at this time to over 71,000. This shifted political power away from the sugar estate oligarchs and towards the masses of people, especially the working people coming from slavery periods and indentured labourers and small farmers coming from India. This 1947 Constitution was the exact opposite of the 1885 Constitution.

The events leading to the 1947 Constitution itself was thus a defining moment in the history of Mauritius. Universal suffrage thus opens the door for the struggle towards independence in 1968. The adoption of the first constitution of independent Mauritius incorporated self-determination and civil and political rights. This is the first generation of rights. A major journey started in 1936. Passing the 1947 Constitution moment was achieved.

Our moment is similar like the 1947 moment and what preceded it. In 2026, after 20 years of struggles, *Rezistans ek Alternativ*, militants like Jack Bizlall and the trade union

movement, the small planters, fisher folks, democrats, opinion leaders, ecologists and other citizens. We are now at the doorstep of a new era.

Likewise, to the moment of 1936 and 1947. We are at the beginning of a new historical process, not the end of it. Now is to be born a new Mauritius. From the old, a new has the possibility to be born. A qualitative historical leave is in the process. As ratified by the electorate, a qualitative transformation and enhancement can now be sold by us all.

A new set of human rights, second, third generation of rights, social, economic and cultural rights, nature rights, digital rights, right to privacy, as well as the right of recall, the establishment of a constitutional court, recognition of public interest litigation, just to mention a few, are proposed to be included in the Constitution.

Madam Speaker, let me expatiate on the social, economic and cultural rights. My hon. colleague spoke of many of the other rights. Let me say that the socio-economic and cultural rights, as recognised by the United Nations, were very important human rights, one after the worldwide century of struggles of workers and liberation movement mainly in the global South. Let me mention a few of them because it has not been spelled out in this Assembly –

- The right to work,
- the right of everyone to the enjoyment of just and favourable working conditions.
- The right to strike, yes, Madam Speaker, the right to strike.
- The right of everyone to social security including social insurance.
- The right to get the widest possible protection and assistance to the family, which is the natural and fundamental group unit of society.
- The right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself, and his family.
- The right to adequate food, clothing and housing and the conditions and the continuous improvement of living conditions.
- The fundamental rights of everyone to be free from hunger.
- The right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health.
- The right of education and health.

- The right of everyone to take part in cultural life, to enjoy the benefits of scientific progress and all its applications.

It should be stressed that the UN International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights undertakes to guarantee that the rights enunciated in the in the Covenant will be exercised without discrimination of any kind as to race, colour, sex, language, religion, political, or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

With the inclusion of these rights in the Constitution of Mauritius, citizens will henceforth be able to have access to the Constitutional Division of the Supreme Court on any violation of these social, economic, cultural rights and others, and seek redress. That is, someone not accessing, as provided for in the Constitution, health, education and housing can go to the Court. This is what it would mean when we enact the new amendments to the Constitution.

Madam Speaker, the introduction of the principle of the right to of recall, that is, the possibility for electors to recall their Member their MPs in between two elections will introduce the principle of participatory democracy, for the first time, in the Constitution of Mauritius. The introduction of the rights of nature will place Mauritius amongst the pioneer country in the world to have recognised that nature has a legal right on its own. My hon. colleagues have expatiated on the other new rights for a more democratic society - I rejoin them on the issue.

Madam Speaker, when I say that there that we are presently in a historical moment similar of 1947, I am also referring to two elements. First, the introduction of a new sets of rights and freedom in the Constitution have similar significance as the recognition of the universal suffrage in 1947 Constitution, which created the condition for the full recognition of the civil and political rights in the 1968 Constitution.

Secondly, as we have seen in the 1947 process, some had opposed the advancement of society. In this period too, there will be new forces who will try to block the movements towards fundamental constitutional reform. We also know how opponents to progress after 1947 Constitution translated into divisions, how communalist tensions were instrumentalised, how these tensions culminated in ethnic-based violent *bagarre* during our independence process time.

I sincerely believe that our society has grown up, is mature enough to transcend these obstacles and contradictions, and to collectively bring the gigantic leap forward awaiting us.

Be it on constitutional reform issues within the parameter of this Bill, and others like the electoral reforms, outside this Bill.

Third, we must factor in the obstacle that will be put by those representing the ruling economic class and corporate interest, who will fight tooth and nail, for example, against the inclusion of the rights of nature or economic and social rights in the Constitution. Wait and see! This will not be new. We have already seen how many right-wingers ferociously opposed the socioeconomic and social rights in the past in other countries. We have recently seen the political right or even extreme right-wingers deploying their aversion to the very recognition of climate and ecological crisis in many parts of the world. I bet we will see them in Mauritius too against the rights of nature in the Constitution. Notice is being given to our youth and nature lovers to get ready as from now.

Madam Speaker, let me move to the last part of my intervention – to explain to the House from where my constitutional transformation journey started. It was in 2005, more than 20 years ago. My party, Rezistans ek Alternativ, was just born. We were only a few. We decided to participate in the coming general elections without filling the compulsory communalist classification of candidates in the nomination paper. We wanted to stand candidate simply as a Mauritian citizen with our Mauritianism, with our multiple and indivisible identities. All our candidatures were rejected by the Electoral Commissioner. Mauritians were shocked. We seized the Supreme Court, and Judge Balancy said that the compulsion of community-based classification was a violation of section 1 of the Constitution of Mauritius. In a historical judgment, he ruled that the 11 candidates of Rezistans ek Alternativ had to be reinserted in the 2005 election ballot. We were the first Mauritians to be able to stand candidate simply as a Mauritian citizen. This judgment was overruled behind our back in November 2005.

From this moment, a fierce judicial battle unfolded. In 2010 elections, several citizens joined this struggle to stand candidate as citizen. We won, but were denied participation on a technical basis, rule of precedence. The then judge, today Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, validated the Balancy Judgment in a historical judgment. In 2011, the issue was brought to the Privy Council that said that we had a strong case and invited the local courts and the National Assembly to deal with the issue.

In 2012, the UN Human Rights Committee ruled in our favour and stated that the rejection of candidatures was a violation of section 25(b) of the UN Civil and Political Rights

Covenant to which Mauritius is a signatory. The UN also stated that Mauritius is at crossroads. We have to decide, shall we remain a community-based electoral system based on community classification of 1972 or shall we move towards another electoral system, which will guarantee the diverse political representation or other interests - I am adding - via a dose of proportional representation. This is the challenge, in parallel to the Constitutional Review Commission, we need to transcend in the very near future.

Madam Speaker, yes, indeed, we are in a defining moment of our history. The only ones who will judge us will be our grand-granddaughters and grand-grandsons when looking back 50 years afterwards.

In fact, it is precisely for them that we have a duty to transcend this historical moment positively by bringing the constitutional and the much-needed electoral reform. We are living in time of rampant global capitalism with its existential crisis, be it in terms of climate and ecological crisis, or in terms of war crisis with possibilities of nuclear exchanges which threaten the very survival of our civilization.

Madam Speaker, our comrades from Rodrigues have raised pertinent questions which we as Resistance and Alternative share. The Commission will be a space dedicated to them too, and rest assured that one member of the Commission is indeed one of your proud Rodriguan sons, Mr Joel Edouard, a well-known historian. His name in the Commission is proposed by the Cabinet. I will not go into the details of the composition of the Commission.

Madam Speaker, let me end. I am proud as a 40 years plus activist. We are proud as Resistance and Alternative, as *l'Alliance du Changement* Government to initiate one of the most important constitutional transformative journeys of our time. Long live the new Republic 2.0. This Bill deserves to be supported by both sides of the House.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

(5.55 p.m.)

The Minister of National Infrastructure (Mr G. Guinness): Madam Speaker, at its heart, this debate is about one fundamental question. How do we strengthen Mauritian democracy for future generations? Democracy is not self-sustaining. It depends on strong institutions, effective safeguards and public confidence in the rule of law.

When democratic protections are weakened, trust declines and when Constitutions fail to evolve, they risk falling behind the society they are meant to serve. This is why the Constitutional Review Commission Bill is so important today. This Bill is not about political convenience. It is not about headlines and it is certainly not about short-term politics. It is about correcting institutional weaknesses that have been exposed over time. It is about modernising our constitutional framework and it is about ensuring that no Government, regardless of political colour, can ever take liberties with democratic institutions again. That is why, 58 years after our independence, the Commission has been tasked with reviewing our Constitution; the Commission that we are going to put in place.

Madam Speaker, Mauritius has built a proud democratic reputation since independence in 1968. We are often cited internationally as a stable democracy, a country where different communities live together peacefully under democratic institutions but democracy is never permanently guaranteed. Democracy must be defended. Democracy must evolve and democracy must learn from past mistakes. Therefore, in that vein, we promised during the last election to bring major changes to our Constitution. This Government, unlike the previous MSM Government, is not using its three-quarter majority to weaken democratic institutions or to undermine constitutional safeguards.

Many Mauritians still remember the controversial Prosecution Commission Bill of 2016, through which the former Government attempted to amend the Constitution in order to create a mechanism widely perceived as an attempt to control or interfere with the independence of the Director of Public Prosecution. That project raised serious concerns across the country because the independence of the DPP is one of the essential pillars of the rule of law and democratic governance but today, this Government is choosing a very different path. This Government is using its constitutional majority not to concentrate power, but to strengthen democracy, deepen constitutional rights and freedoms, reinforce democratic institutions and provide stronger safeguards for future generations.

In our Government Programme 2025-2029, a Bridge to the Future, at page two, we clearly announced the setting up of a Constitutional Review Commission to examine the major democratic and constitutional challenges facing our Republic. The programme specifically announced reforms aimed at strengthening democratic institution, restoring public confidence in governance and modernising our constitutional framework. It proposed constitutional guarantees for the regular holding of Local Government Elections, stronger protection of fundamental rights, reforms to our electoral system, anti-defection provisions, a

right to recall Members of Parliament, greater transparency in political financing and establishment of a constitutional division of the Supreme Court. The programme also announced that the Commission would examine broader constitutional protections relating to the environment, technology, education, health, economic and social rights, as well as measures to reinforce the independence and credibility of public institutions and today, this commitment is becoming a reality as the Bill is now before this House for debate.

I will fail in my duty if I do not congratulate the hon. Prime Minister, the hon. Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam for bringing this important Bill before this House. True, it has taken some time, but we are keeping our promise. We are also proud that the Commission will be presided by a respected former Chief Justice and other prominent members whom I am sure nobody can contest their independence. As someone who has spent nearly half a century in the *Mouvement Militant Mauricien*, I have witnessed many defining chapters of our political history. I have seen Governments rise and fall. I have seen alliances formed and broken. I have seen moments where institutions were respected and I have also seen moments where democratic safeguards came under strain.

Madam Speaker, I am not going to dwell on all the issues which the Commission is mandated to examine, but rather on a few of them which I deeply value. One of the reasons why this Constitutional Review Commission is necessary today is because what Mauritians witnessed in recent years regarding Local Government Elections. The last Municipal Election before the recent polls were held on 14 June 2015. Under normal democratic practice, the new elections should have taken place several years earlier. Instead, the previous MSM Government repeatedly postponed Municipal Elections, first in 2021, then again in 2022 and once more in 2023. For years, elected municipal mandates were extended without the population being consulted through the ballot box. Village Council Elections also were postponed under the MSM-led Government.

Regional democracy is of utmost importance as it empowers local communities in the management of their own affairs. Municipal Elections were eventually held following the 2024 general elections but that does not erase the constitutional and democratic concerns raised by those repeated postponements because the issue is larger than one election. The issue is whether any future Government should have the power to repeatedly delay democratic consultations for prolonged periods without stronger constitutional safeguards. This is the question.

Madam Speaker, for many Mauritians, the most worrying aspect was not only the postponement itself, but the reasoning used to justify it. The MSM Government openly argued before the Supreme Court that Municipal Elections were not constitutionally protected because according to them, the Constitution is silent on local elections.

Madam Speaker, imagine the danger of such reasoning. If elections can simply be postponed repeatedly because the constitution is silent, then, tomorrow, any government with a parliamentary majority, may feel tempted to weaken democratic processes for political convenience. That is exactly why the Commission has as mandate to see how local government elections are enshrined in the Constitution so that, henceforth, no government may postpone them without a valid constitutional justification.

Madam Speaker, the inclusion of local government elections in our Constitution should, perhaps, have been done at the time we came with the amendment to include the Rodrigues Regional Assembly election in the Constitution. However, as we say, it is better late than never. No future government should ever again be allowed to play with democracy in this manner.

Madam Speaker, today, some people will say: ‘The reform will never happen. They will never go through with it. This is only political communication.’ We hear those comments, but I want to remind this House that throughout our political history, many important democratic reforms were once considered impossible until courageous political decisions were taken. Mauritian politics has always evolved through struggle, resistance and democratic engagement.

Madam Speaker, this Bill also opened the debate on anti-defection legislation. This is not a new debate in Mauritius. It is a debate that has accompanied our democracy for decades. Our political history has repeatedly been shaped by defections, political realignments, breakaway movements and shifting alliances. Entire governments have been transformed. Parliamentary majorities have changed. New political parties have emerged. Political mandates, given by voters at one election, have sometimes been altered long before the next one. For many citizens, this has created a fundamental question about democratic legitimacy.

When voters cast their ballots, they are not simply voting for an individual. They are voting for a programme, a set of values, a political project, and very often, a team seeking a

mandate to govern. Yet, throughout our history, Mauritians have repeatedly witnessed situations where elected representatives cross the political floor, join rival formations or contributed to changing the political balance established by voters. Nobody disputes that elected representatives must enjoy freedom of conscience. Democracy cannot function without that principle. But democracy also requires respect for the mandate entrusted by the electorate.

The challenge before us is, therefore, not to suppress political freedom, but to strike a fair balance between the rights of elected representatives and the sovereign will of the people. Because in any democracy, citizens have a legitimate expectation that the choice they make on election day will not be fundamentally altered without accountability or without returning to the people themselves. For too long, this question has remained unresolved. Today, through this Constitutional Review Commission, the opportunity is being given to examine whether stronger constitutional safeguards are needed to protect both democratic stability and the integrity of the electoral mandate.

Let us speak honestly. For the MMM, this issue carries deep political and emotional significance. Since the historic 1976 election, the MMM has experienced repeated defections and political departures. Militants have often witnessed elected representatives obtain votes under one political banner and later abandon the mandate entrusted to them by the people. And yes, even recently, Mauritians have once again witnessed political departures and political repositioning. That is part of democracy. Nobody is denying that, but the constitutional question remains valid. When citizens vote for a political programme, a political ideology and a political alliance, should elected representatives be free to completely abandon a mandate without accountability to voters? These are difficult questions, but they are necessary questions.

Madam Speaker, the proposal for a right to recall mechanism is also extremely important. Citizens today expect greater accountability from politicians. People no longer want democracy to mean vote once every five years and remain silent afterwards. The right to recall introduces the principle that elected representatives remain accountable throughout their mandate.

Madam Speaker, another important proposal concerns the constitutional recognition of the values contained in our national anthem: peace, justice and liberty. Madam Speaker, 50

years after independence, these values still do not explicitly appear in our Constitution. Yet, these three principles define the soul of Mauritius –

- Peace – because our country has remained an example of co-existence among different communities and religions.
- Justice – because generations of workers, trade unionists and militants fought for social justice and equal opportunity.
- Liberty – because democracy, freedom of expression and human dignity must always remain protected.

At a time when democracies across the world are facing extremism, intolerance and authoritarian temptations, Mauritius must proudly reaffirm these principles within its Constitution.

Madam Speaker, this Bill also seeks to strengthen protection against discrimination, particularly for persons living with disabilities. A modern republic cannot claim progress while leaving vulnerable citizens behind. Inclusion must not remain a slogan used during campaigns. It must become a constitutional reality.

Madam Speaker, the strengthening of the Electoral Commission is equally essential. Mauritius has earned international recognition for holding free and fair elections. But institutions must continuously be protected from political pressure and political interference. Strong democracies depend on strong institutions.

Madam Speaker, political financing reform is another issue which Mauritius has debated for decades. This discussion did not suddenly appear today because of political convenience. As far back as 2002, a Select Committee on Public Funding of Political Parties, chaired by former Attorney General, Emmanuel Leung Shing, examined proposals aimed at bringing greater transparency and accountability to political financing in Mauritius. Around the same period, important reflection on electoral reforms were also undertaken. Unfortunately, once again, the MSM found all types of excuses not to come forward with a *projet de loi*.

For more than 20 years, successive debates, consultations and reports highlighted the urgent need for a credible framework governing political financing and electoral

transparency. Yet, despite all those discussions, what did the previous MSM Government finally bring to this House in 2019? A Political Financing Bill, which was widely criticised as incomplete, selective and dangerously unbalanced. A Bill which many believe was designed more to control political opponents than to genuinely clean up the financing of politics in Mauritius. A Bill which failed to inspire confidence because transparency cannot be credible when institutions themselves are perceived as being weakened by political interference.

Madam Speaker, real reforms cannot exist where there are fear, intimidation and excessive concentration of power. Real democratic credibility cannot exist when a government repeatedly postpones election while simultaneously claiming to defend democracy. Today, through this Constitutional Review Commission, we finally have the opportunity to conduct a more serious, broader and more credible national reflection on political financing and democratic accountability. Not for partisan advantage, but for the long-term strengthening of our democratic institutions.

Madam Speaker, a Constitution cannot remain frozen while society evolves. Today, Mauritius faces new realities. Digital transformation, Artificial Intelligence, environmental threats, climate vulnerability, data protection, economic uncertainty, and increasing demands for democratic accountability. Our institution must evolve accordingly.

Madam Speaker, this Bill is not about weakening democracy. It is about strengthening it. It is not about political revenge. It is about democratic responsibility. It is not about partisan calculation. It is about the future stability of our Republic. Mauritius has always progressed when institutions were stronger than personalities and when the national interest prevailed over narrow political interests.

Today, we have the opportunity to strengthen the democratic foundations of our Republic for generations to come. Let us not waste that opportunity, Madam Speaker. I thank you.

Madam Speaker: Thank you. Yes, hon. Dr. Boolell!

(6.16 p.m.)

The Minister of Agro-Industry, Food Security, Blue Economy and Fisheries (Dr. A. Boolell): Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, right from the outset, we have to state facts. To me, not only to me, but to many people, this is history in the making. Some may argue, it is a prelude to history making; wait till the Commission submits its findings. But I can vouchsafe, this is history in the making. The hon. Prime Minister, as first amongst the equals, is honouring an electoral pledge which features prominently in Government's programme. The setting up of a Constitutional Review Commission is fundamental to the process of democracy.

The Commission will listen to the voice of the people and its people's legislation first, and foremost. Government will pay heed. I am not saying that nothing is agreed until everything is agreed, but there will be wide consensus. Talk to people who are well versed in interpreting our Constitution. Unlike a lay person who moves around with the public, rubs shoulders with one and all, I was told that the Constitution is sacrosanct and supreme. Precisely, because of supremacy and sacrosanctity of our Constitution, that the Review Commission will not be insensitive to the creation of a court of appeal whose judges have to be, not only independent, but fiercely independent. How will the judges be selected? The Commission will not make the deliberate choice. It will be the choice of the mere mortals and the experts. The proposal made by a former international judge with the UN cannot and should not go unnoticed. We should always have judges at the Berlin Wall.

Madam Speaker, between our Government and the previous government – the MSM-led regime – there is not only a vast difference, but there is a monumental difference. The MSM-led regime had a reputation to tamper with the Constitution.

The MSM in government was a regime of colourable device. Why did the MSM-led government convene an early Sitting of Parliament on 26 January 1993? The political arm of the Executive of a decadent regime in collusion with the then Speaker wanted to declare the seat of the then Leader of the Opposition vacant. The court reaffirmed under section 37 (1) of the Constitution, the Supreme Court, not the Speaker or Parliament itself, has exclusive jurisdiction to determine whether a Member of Parliament has vacated his or her seat. The Supreme Court ruled, Dr. Navin Ramgoolam was then allowed to retain his seat. The MSM-led regime in government was a square peg in a round hole.

From 2019 to 2024, separation of powers was blurred, and collusion between the Speaker and the Leader of the House was a trademark of the culture of impunity. Against this backdrop, Madam Speaker, I will walk you down memory lane to highlight the merits of this Bill. I seek the indulgence of this this House to step back, not by years, but by generations.

Because what we debate today is not simply a piece of legislation. It is a question of who we are as a people; as a nation, what we have built, and whether we have the courage to build something that lasts.

In 1961, one of the world's most famous economists, a Nobel Laureate, Professor James Meade of Cambridge University, looked at this island and pronounced it doomed. His conclusion was as bleak as it was authoritative and I quote, –

“whatever economic progress Mauritius might achieve would be at least modest.”

And 11 years later, the Nobel Laureate, V.S. Naipaul, came here and published his verdict. He described Mauritius as an overcrowded barracoon. A land without destiny.

Labour Party, under the able leadership of the Father of the Nation, proved them to be wrong. Manmohan Singh, then Professor, if I am not mistaken, at Cambridge University, had faith in the leadership of Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam and the will of our people. Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, and other political leaders of the time, gifted Mauritius with a Constitution written by a legal team led by Professor S. A. de Smith. The latter specifically requested that his ashes be scattered across Mauritius. It was indeed honoured. Meade, Titmuss, and V.S. Naipaul were wrong because they looked at our geography and saw only its limitation. They counted our resources and found them wanting. They did not see, could not see the one resource that would define this nation and carry it forward. At the end of an arduous road, after years of trials, tribulation, trouble, the new Mauritius was born to be guided by a Constitution, the rule of law and separation of powers.

We received foreign investment because the world trusts our institutions. We punch above our weight in every international forum because countries know that when Mauritius makes a commitment, it keeps it.

Madam Speaker, that is the dividend of democracy. At the centre of that democracy stands a Constitution. The Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in the landmark case of *Matadeen v. Pointu* – spelt out forcefully – and I quote –

“A constitution is an attempt at a particular moment in history to lay down an enduring scheme of government in accordance with certain moral and political values.”

Our Constitution has served us well. The independence of the judiciary, the separation of powers, the system of check and balances, these were not gifts. They were choices made

by the freedom fighters of our great little country. Choices that subsequent generations have had to honour and defend. But Constitution like democracies do not maintain themselves. They require vigilance, they require reform, and sometimes, as we know only too well from recent memory, they require rescue.

Madam Speaker, I will not pretend that the road that brought us here was a straight one. We know what this country went through during the MSM years. An erosion of independence of institutions that generation had built and trusted. There had been an attempt to arrest the DPP, which was unheard of. Our beloved Mauritius descended into a grey zone of electoral autocracy.

The people of Mauritius will remember. The word planting, once a proud agricultural term in Mauritius, born from the soil, became synonymous with something dark, that the deliberate planting of drugs to destroy lives and silent dissent. This is what we had become. Some police officers whom we trusted for our security, had turned into dacoits. Reward money was weaponised to suit the political agenda of the government of the day. So much drug had infiltrated the arteries of this country that we are today seeing the devastating consequences affecting our youth. There was overt surveillance into the private lives of ordinary citizens and members of the press. Phone tapping was rampant.

The people of Mauritius gave their answer on the election day. They gave not a mandate, but a verdict. Politics is not a test of popularity, but the will to make hard decisions for the betterment of a nation. Some may argue, we campaign in poetry and govern in prose.

And from the moment this Government took office, certain words began to quietly disappear from our national vocabulary: wiretapping, planting, censorship. In their place, came something we had almost forgotten, the taste of a free press, independent journalism, the ability to speak, to criticise, to hold power, to account without fear. We did not just win an election; we reclaimed a Republic, Madam Speaker but reclaiming what was lost is not enough. Our obligation to this country is not merely to restore. It is to build something stronger in its place. Something that makes it harder, not merely unlikely for the abuses of the last decade to recur.

Madam Speaker, trust in politics is not maintained by rhetoric. It is maintained by action. When we stood before the President on the 24 January 2025 and presented the Government Programme for 2025-2029, we made a specific public commitment to appoint a Constitutional Review Commission. The Bill before this House today is the fulfilment of that

commitment to the letter. We said we would do it, we are doing it. The Constitutional Review Commission will be tasked with examining the full spectrum of our constitutional framework and making recommendation for reform. Its mandate is deliberately broad because the task before us is genuinely ambitious.

For the first time, a Senior Official's Appointment Committee will be established to ensure that the heads of our major public institutions are appointed on merit and independence, not on political loyalty. Fundamental rights will be strengthened and modernised. Not only the civil and political rights of previous century, but the right to a clean environment, to access to healthcare and education, to protection of personal data and privacy in the digital age. Rights that Mauritius had already recognised in international treaties it has signed and must now be enshrined in its own supreme law.

The independence of the Director of Public Prosecution will be reinforced so that decision to prosecute is never again susceptible to political interference. I am not saying that the DPP is next to God, but the office has a moral and legal right to justify its decision as and when required. Stronger safeguards will be put around our electoral process. Free and fair elections, the independence of the Electoral Commissioner, fast access to justice in electoral dispute, the transparency of political funding because an election that cannot be trusted, and I say it – is no election at all.

Anti-defection provisions will be introduced so that the mandate given by the people to their elected representatives, cannot be treated or surrendered for personal advantage. Should an electoral college be widened to give additional powers to the President? It is in our Electoral Programme. It was spelt out in the Presidential Address. It will be raised and discussed at the bar of public opinion. It is sad that politicians from specific quarters are trying to whip basic and baseless arguments over it. And for the first time, the Constitution will enshrine a principle of freedom of information because in a democracy, transparency is not a favour the government grants to the public; it is an obligation the government owes to the people it serves.

There have been criticisms from the Opposition that the mandate of the Commission would be incomplete without the revision of the Electoral System including the Best Loser System but the modernisation of our electoral system has always been under the aegis of Prime Minister. Several reports have been published and the work is ongoing. There is a need to avoid unintended consequences. The Commission will act diligently to make the difference

without exercising any influence on those who will freely express themselves. Perhaps the most important aspect of this Bill, Madam Speaker, is not what the Commission will examine; it is how it will examine. The Bill sets out a four-stage consultative process. Citizen, civil society, organisations, political parties and experts will all be invited to submit their proposals. The Commission will consult, it will research, it will deliberate, and only then, will it draft.

This is not a technocratic approach of a government that has already decided and is merely seeking validation. It is an invitation to the people of Mauritius to participate in the making of their own Constitution. It has been done before. Iceland invited the citizens to crowdsource a Constitution in 2011. South Africa built its post-apartheid Constitution from months of public hearings that reached to every township and province. The legitimacy of a Constitution is inseparable from the process that created it.

We are asking every Mauritian, what kind of country do you want to live in? What values do you want your supreme law to protect? What abuses do you never want to see again? The Constitution will have to gather the voices of the people, including the marginalised one. The Commission will be a bridge between government and the people.

Madam Speaker, I want to close with a reflection that goes beyond the closures and schedules of this Bill. There is a realignment in our political circumstances today. For the first time in a generation, the Government holds constitutional majority required to amend the supreme law of this land, and we must pay tribute to the leaders of all four parties which form this great alliance –Nouveaux Démocrates, Rezistans ek Alternativ, MMM and the Labour Party.

That majority was not given to us as a privilege. It was given to us, Madam Speaker, as a responsibility. And this window will not remain open indefinitely. We have before us an opportunity to build a Constitution worthy of our history and strong enough to protect our future. The majority is there, the moment is here. And the only question that remains is whether we will have the political will to use it. And I say yes, we shall.

Thank you very much.

Madam Speaker: Thank you.

Yes, hon. Minister of Environment!

(6.34 p.m.)

The Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change (Mr R. Bhagwan): Merci, Madame la présidente. Je ne vais pas être long parce que tout ça a été dit par mes collègues. Madame la présidente, je ne pouvais ne pas intervenir sur ce projet de loi.

Comme l'a si bien dit l'honorable Subron, quelques années encore, nous sommes en train de tracer l'île Maurice de demain, la République de demain. Madame la présidente, les élections générales de 2024 n'ont pas été des simples élections de remplacement d'une équipe par une autre. Il s'agissait, Madame la présidente, pour le pays de marquer au fer rouge un gouvernement sortant pour ses innombrables atteintes à la liberté. Marquer au fer rouge, je l'ai bien dit, ces abus contre l'État de droit et le pillage systématique des biens publics.

Ces élections, Madame la présidente, ont permis non seulement de sanctionner comme il se doit un gouvernement pourri jusqu'à la moelle, mais surtout à travers un score sans appel. En plébiscitant ce gouvernement, la population s'est donné l'espace, la fraîcheur et les moyens pour que les institutions progressent et que le pays renaisse de ses cendres pour enfin effectuer un grand bond en avant.

Ce gouvernement, issu des élections de 2024, représente donc une formidable énergie constructive et une opportunité pour effectuer les grandes réformes nécessaires et depuis longtemps en souffrance. C'est cela l'un des plus grands atouts de ce gouvernement.

C'est donc avec cette conviction que ce gouvernement a l'immense responsabilité de concrétiser cet aveu resté pieux depuis longtemps.

Le *Constitutional Review Commission Bill* présenté par le chef du gouvernement, l'honorable Premier ministre Dr. Ramgoolam, est un exemple concret. Pendant des lustres, on a évoqué ici et là les changements devenus nécessaires pour remettre nos institutions au diapason avec les nouvelles normes de transparence et de gouvernance.

C'est donc dans un environnement nouveau, dans un paysage politique plus serein que nous, nous lançons sur ce chantier constitutionnel. C'est donc dans un environnement sain, je leur ai dit, que nous sommes en train de venir avec ce projet de loi.

Déjà, Madame la présidente, dès les premiers mois au gouvernement, nous avons lancé des signaux tangibles. Personne ne peut remettre en question le fait qu'avec ce gouvernement, les Mauriciens ont retrouvé leur voix, leur liberté d'expression et une tranquillité d'esprit. Ils peuvent maintenant s'exprimer plus librement sans vivre sous la menace de l'intimidation.

Nous avons vécu ces moments tristes de l'arbitraire, de *planting* ou d'atteinte injustifiée à leur vie privée à travers les écoutes téléphoniques.

Il ne faut aussi jamais oublier que c'est sous ce gouvernement, notre gouvernement, que l'indépendance et les pouvoirs du directeur des poursuites publiques ont été rétablis et constitutionnellement renforcés. Alors que nous savons à quel point – il faut le redire ; mes collègues l'ont dit –, le bureau du DPP avait été méthodiquement pris pour cible. Des attaques multiples frontales et démotiver le personnel de ce bureau.

D'abord, à travers une première tentative de vider cette autorité suprême en matière de poursuite à travers le *Public Prosecution Commission Bill*, avorté *in extremis*. Je dois rendre hommage à l'époque au PMSD, à Xavier-Luc Duval.

Ensuite, la mise sous tutelle du bureau du DPP sous l'autorité de *l'Attorney General*, compromettant directement son indépendance opérationnelle et financière. À cela s'ajoutaient de graves affaires institutionnelles répétées avec l'ancien commissaire de police, des pressions, des commentaires publics et des communiqués délibérément destinés à saper l'autorité et le moral du DPP.

Sans oublier des menaces à peine voilées. Tout comme une atteinte directe au pouvoir constitutionnel du DPP à travers la *Financial Crime Commission Act* de 2024 qui visait à détourner, à *hijack* des attributions qui appartiennent constitutionnellement exclusivement au DPP. Pourtant, Madame la présidente, malgré ces pressions, le bureau du DPP est resté un rempart contre ces abus. Ses représentants ont fait preuve d'un courage exemplaire, notamment lors de l'affaire Kistnen devant le tribunal de Moka.

Ce gouvernement a donc eu à cœur de restituer à cette institution sa pleine indépendance financière, opérationnelle et constitutionnelle. Pas que ça, nous avons aussi rendu public le rapport du *Fact Finding Committee* sur la mort de 12 patients dialysés au New Souillac Hospital durant la pandémie de la COVID-19. 12 vies, Madame la présidente, 12 familles brisées. Tout comme nous avons rendu public le rapport de la Court of Investigation sur l'échouement du MV Wakashio ainsi que celui sur le *Land Drainage Master Plan*.

Madame la présidente, on est appelés à faire des choix stratégiques par rapport à notre économie, par rapport à la gestion du social, de l'environnement pour construire une société durable, une économie prospère et un cadre de vie agréable à notre population.

Déjà, depuis le début de ce mandat, le scénario *business as usual* n'est pas une option envisageable après le bilan catastrophique laissé par le MSM et amplifié maintenant par la crise et les incertitudes financières internationales.

Dans de telles situations, le gouvernement a préféré jouer la carte de la transparence sur la situation exacte du pays et les défis auxquels nous devons tous ensemble faire face dans les mois à venir. Le rapport *The State of the Economy* nous a confirmé comment les institutions financières de l'État fonctionnaient et les conséquences désastreuses pour le pays.

Madame la présidente, ce gouvernement a été élu pour apporter des changements, des changements importants, des changements structurels, des changements qui touchent le cœur même de la démocratie. Mon collègue, l'honorable ministre des Administrations régionales, a également lancé des consultations pour une refonte de la *Local Government Act*.

Tout cela indique que le gouvernement veut impliquer la population dans la prise des décisions. Cette refonte de nos collectivités locales comprend aussi l'introduction dans la constitution des dispositions rendant obligatoire la tenue des élections des collectivités locales à des échéances prévues par la loi. Cela fera partie des attributions de cette commission de réforme constitutionnelle.

Madame la présidente, notre Constitution est un héritage précieux, mais comme tout édifice, elle porte les marques du temps. Des manquements se sont révélés. Il serait irresponsable de les ignorer au nom d'une tradition figée.

Notre devoir est de corriger ce qui doit l'être tout en préservant ce qui est fait force qui fait notre force. Ce projet de loi, une fois adopté, donnera force de loi à la Commission de révision constitutionnelle.

Il habilite le Président de la République à nommer cette commission dont la mission sera d'examiner et de formuler des recommandations sur les réformes constitutionnelles fondamentales, la protection des droits fondamentaux et la consolidation de notre démocratie et de nos institutions. Parlons de la composition de cette commission qui témoigne de l'importance que le gouvernement accorde à ce projet.

Une commission présidée par un ancien chef juge et incluant des personnalités de calibre, un ancien directeur des poursuites publiques, entre autres personnes crédibles, dont l'intégrité et l'expérience sont reconnues de tous. Ce gouvernement réunit cette élite en intelligence collective, car ce projet est trop important pour être laissé à l'improvisation. Il mérite le meilleur et nous avons mis le meilleur à son service.

Madame la présidente, quels sont les grands actes que la Commission sera appelée à examiner ? Premièrement, la création, - mes collègues l'ont dit, je le redis, - la création d'un *Senior Official Committee*. Un comité chargé de faire des recommandations au gouvernement sur la nomination des responsables des grandes institutions publiques. Trop longtemps ces nominations ont été perçues comme des décisions opaque. Ce comité apportera transparence et mérite.

Deuxièmement, la création d'une nouvelle cour d'appel au sein de la cour suprême, composée de juges d'appel. Cela permettra de traiter des appels contre les décisions des juges de premières instances, tout en maintenant le droit du recours final au *Judicial Committee du Privy Council*. C'est une réforme de modernisation judiciaire attendue depuis longtemps.

Troisièmement, l'établissement d'une division constitutionnelle de la cour suprême dédiée au traitement rapide des affaires constitutionnelles et des droits de l'homme parce que *justice delayed is justice denied*, surtout quand il s'agit des libertés fondamentales.

Quatrièmement, pour avoir dirigé à un moment un journal, j'ai personnellement fait l'expérience de ce que signifie concrètement l'absence de droit à l'information. L'information n'est pas un privilège accordé à la presse. C'est un droit appartenant au peuple que la presse exerce en son nom. La consécration du principe de liberté d'information que la Commission de la réforme constitutionnelle sera appelée à examiner vient précisément corriger cette lacune.

Madame la présidente, permettez-moi d'insister sur un point qui me tient particulièrement à cœur : la révision du chapitre 2 de notre Constitution. La Commission sera chargée d'examiner comment mieux protéger les droits fondamentaux, y compris ce qu'on appelle les droits de nouvelles générations. Des droits liés à l'environnement, à la technologie, à la santé, à l'éducation, des droits économiques, sociaux et culturels reconnus par les traités internationaux.

L'inclusivité ne doit pas rester une simple bonne intention qu'on remet de temps en temps dans des formules ronflantes, mais doit être une réalité au quotidien. Peu importe le lieu de résidence d'une personne ou de sa situation de handicap. *No stone should be left unturned*, y compris contre les discriminations dont sont victimes les personnes en situation de handicap.

Cette Commission sera appelée à examiner le renforcement de leur protection, un impératif moral et juridique fondamental, garantissant leur pleine participation à la vie

sociale, professionnelle et civique sur un pied d'égalité avec les autres citoyens. Encore plus encore, le projet de loi mentionne explicitement les droits de la nature. C'est une vision audacieuse, progressiste, en phase avec les grandes réflexions internationales sur notre rapport à la planète. D'ailleurs, à mon ministère, on travaille sur la révision de l'*Environment Act* et nous avons reçu une cinquantaine de commentaires du public et de la société civile.

Nous allons également examiner comment inscrire dans notre Constitution les valeurs fondamentales que nous proclamons dans notre hymne national : la paix, la justice, la liberté. Ces mots que nous chantons, il est temps de les graver dans notre loi suprême.

Le projet de loi, Madame la présidente, prévoit aussi des dispositions anti-défection pour les membres de l'Assemblée nationale. C'est une mesure de discipline démocratique. Le mandat appartient au peuple, pas aux ambitions individuelles.

Madame la présidente, un mot sur la réforme électorale. Oui, c'est vrai qu'elle n'est pas incluse dans ce projet de loi. C'est un choix délibéré et sage, rendu public dans les délibérations du Conseil des ministres du 25 novembre 2025. Il ne faut pas voiler la face. Un système électoral peut faire et défaire un pays. Les enjeux sont différents. Les sensibilités sont différentes. Chacun a son opinion. Chacun a ses appréhensions et c'est légitime. Il était donc juste de ne pas tout traiter ensemble. Donner à chaque chantier toute l'attention qu'il mérite. La réforme électorale mérite son propre espace, son propre débat et je suis sûr que nous aurons cette réforme.

Le but de cette démarche est de donner à la population non seulement l'assurance que le processus est sérieux, mais aussi les moyens d'y participer.

Madame la présidente, pour conclure, je veux rappeler pourquoi nous faisons tout cela. Nous le faisons parce que la population de l'île Maurice a exprimé par son vote le désir d'un changement véritable. Nous le faisons parce que la démocratie ne se décrète pas depuis en haut. Elle se construit avec le peuple, pour le peuple et par le peuple. Avec cette Commission et ses commissaires mûris par l'expérience, avec la volonté politique claire de ce gouvernement, je suis convaincu que nous allons amener ce projet à bon port.

La confiance que vous nous avez accordée, nous ne la prenons pas à la légère. Nous la portons chaque jour comme une obligation. Ce gouvernement s'engage, au cours de ce mandat, à doter le pays d'une fondation démocratique solide, transparente et surtout capable de résister aux assauts présents et futurs des potentiels fossoyeurs de la démocratie et protéger notre population contre les lois liberticides.

Ce gouvernement s'engage à mettre les bouchées doubles pour rattraper un retard dans la mise à jour de nos lois fondamentales afin de léguer aux prochaines générations un héritage dont elles seront fières. Ce gouvernement a mandat pour reformer, pour transformer les institutions vitales du pays et c'est de loin le bilan le plus pertinent que ce gouvernement s'engage à présenter à la fin de son mandat. Les travaux de cette Commission permettront de garantir le destin démocratique de notre République. Et sur ce, je soutiens pleinement ce projet de loi.

Je vous remercie.

Madam Speaker: Merci.

Hon. First Member for Stanley and Rose-Hill!

(6.51 p.m.)

Mr P. Bérenger (First Member for Stanley & Rose-Hill) : *Madam Speaker*, nous discutons du projet de loi qui est devant cette Chambre, le *Constitutional Review Commission Bill* dans une grande confusion.

En effet, dans le pays et ici même, dans cette Chambre, beaucoup croient qu'en votant le projet de loi qui est devant nous, nous allons apporter des amendements à 19 aspects de notre Constitution, la loi suprême du pays, et traduire ainsi dans l'effet telle ou telle mesure du Programme électoral de l'Alliance du Changement. Or, ce n'est pas du tout le cas.

Lorsque nous allons voter le projet de loi qui est devant nous, nous ne ferons que mettre sur pied une Commission constitutionnelle qui sera appelée à faire des recommandations d'amendement à notre Constitution. Ces recommandations d'amendement auront à être approuvées ou rejetées ou amendées par le gouvernement. Les recommandations qui seront approuvées par le gouvernement devront alors faire l'objet de projets de loi visant à amender telle ou telle clause de notre Constitution et qui demanderont à être voté à une majorité de 3/4 ou de 2/3 selon le cas de notre Assemblée législative.

La première question qui se pose est de savoir combien de temps prendra la Commission que nous allons mettre sur pied pour faire ces recommandations au gouvernement. Combien de temps prendra ensuite le gouvernement pour décider quelles recommandations il acceptera, rejettera ou amendera ? Et, après avoir décidé, combien de temps prendra le gouvernement pour venir de l'avant avec des projets de loi amendant tel ou tel aspect de notre Constitution ? On peut s'attendre à ce que la Commission constitutionnelle

prenne autour de deux ans pour soumettre ses recommandations. Et on peut s'attendre à ce que le gouvernement actuel prenne autour d'un an avant d'approuver telle ou telle recommandation de la Commission constitutionnelle et de préparer et soumettre au Parlement différents projets de loi amendant telle ou telle clause de notre Constitution. En d'autres mots, il y a un risque – un an et demi déjà depuis les dernières élections générales – qu'aucun amendement ne soit apporté à notre Constitution d'ici les prochaines élections générales. J'espère néanmoins que les choses évolueront différemment.

Je passe à la réforme électorale. Le 24 avril dernier, le Cabinet a approuvé le *Constitutional Review Commission Bill* qui est devant nous. Le même jour, le Cabinet confirmait ; je cite le *Cabinet communiqué* du *Prime Minister's Office* –

“Cabinet has taken note that the issue of electoral reform is being addressed separately.”

Et c'est pourquoi les *terms of reference* de la Commission constitutionnelle n'incluent pas la réforme électorale, qui n'est donc pas devant la Commission constitutionnelle que nous mettons sur pied. La Commission constitutionnelle au terme de ces *terms of reference* sera seulement appelée à traiter des recommandations visant à améliorer le *electoral process*. Je cite les termes utilisés dans les *terms of reference* de la Commission qui est devant nous, que nous mettons sur pied. Donc je répète, la Commission constitutionnelle sera seulement appelée à traiter des recommandations visant à améliorer le *electoral process* ; c'est-à-dire le déroulement du vote et à consolider l'indépendance et les pouvoirs de la Commission électorale et du commissaire électorale. La réforme électorale, elle, si elle se fait sous le gouvernement actuel – ce qui est d'après moi très improbable – devrait introduire une dose de proportionnelle, éliminer l'obligation pour les candidats de déclarer leur communauté et garantir une présence féminine adéquate au Parlement.

Je passe à l'élection du président de la République. Un amendement de dernière minute aux *terms of reference* de la Commission constitutionnelle est devant nous. Un amendement est devant nous qui propose que le président de la République soit dorénavant élu par un collège électoral et non par le Parlement comme c'est le cas actuellement. Cet amendement tardif a créé de la confusion. En effet, on ne parle pas ici d'un président élu au suffrage universel comme en France, mais d'un président élu par un collège électoral, comme en Inde où le président est élu par le Parlement national, le Lok Sabha et les parlements régionaux. Ici, cela pourrait être le Parlement et les élus régionaux.

Je passe à la création d'un *Senior Officials Appointment Committee* qui ferait des recommandations au gouvernement concernant la nomination des *Heads of Major Public Institutions*. Ce n'est pas ce que j'avais proposé au gouvernement. Un *Senior Officials Appointment Committee* qui ne ferait que des recommandations au gouvernement ne changerait pas grand-chose. Ce que j'avais proposé s'inspirait – mais s'inspirait seulement, ne copierait pas – de ce qui existe déjà depuis des années aux Seychelles. Et je l'avais expliqué cela, aux Seychelles, c'est un *Constitutional Appointment Authority*, pas *Committee*, de cinq membres ; le président de la République nommant deux de ces cinq membres et le Leader de l'Opposition deux autres, le cinquième étant choisi par consensus pour présider ce *Constitutional Appointments Authority* qui lui-même sélectionne toute une série de ceux ou celles appelés à exercer de hautes responsabilités, allant de la Commission anti-corruption, à la Commission électorale en passant par l'Auditeur général, le *Seychelles Broadcasting Corporation* et cetera.

Je termine, *Madam Speaker*, en demandant au gouvernement de prendre l'engagement ici et maintenant de rendre public le rapport et les recommandations de la Commission constitutionnelle que nous mettons sur pied.

Je vous remercie.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Attorney General!

(7.01 p.m.)

The Attorney General (Mr G. P. C. Glover, SC): Madam Speaker, as the Chief Legal Adviser of the Government, it is not my role to make the case for this Bill from a political angle. The hon. Prime Minister made that case in opening this debate and he will complete it this evening. This House is entitled to expect the Principal Legal Adviser of Government to answer the questions of law, the objections, remarks, comments that have been put forward from the other side.

Let me say at the outset that I thank the hon. Leader of the Opposition and the Whip of the Opposition for putting their objections seriously, albeit, I will argue, erroneously and the hon. Members of the Opposition for putting theirs thoughtfully. What I will do is that I will take them on one at a time and I will do so as a lawyer must do, on the law and nothing but the law.

Madam Speaker, allow me to draw the attention of the House to what this Bill really is and what it certainly is not, and this has been alluded to by the hon. First Member for Stanley

and Rose Hill just now. It is not an amendment of the Constitution. Not a single comma, not a single word of our Constitution is being amended tonight. This Bill only establishes an independent commission to consult the nation and to take expert advice and to recommend. The report of the proposed amendments will return to this House and every Member will have his or her say and vote thereon. That is how it will be and how it should be.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition opened his critique with a rather bold assertion that the Government has acted *à l'envers*. He used our common expression '*anba lao*' because he said the choice of the Chairperson, Vice Chairperson and members of the Commission preceded the formal enactment of this Bill. He invoked in passing he said, the examples of Kenya and Canada to suggest that law must always precede nomination. With respect, Madam Speaker, that argument, however eloquently presented, is factually incorrect, constitutionally unsound and contradicted by the very Commonwealth precedents he seeks to rely upon. I explain myself. Let us begin with first principles. This Bill does not purport to create the Commission *ex nihilo*. It provides the legal framework, the powers, the mandate, the process, the immunities and the independence guarantee under which the Commission will formally operate.

The prior designation of a distinguished former Chief Justice and eminent commissioners was a statement of intent and preparedness. It signalled to the nation and the potential appointees the seriousness and urgency of this constitutional exercise. The Bill now gives that intent the force of law.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition cites Kenya. So, let us look more carefully at the Kenyan example. When Kenya undertook its constitutional review process, leading to their 2010 Constitution, the Committee of Experts, the body tasked with reviewing the harmonised draft, was appointed under the Constitution of Kenya Review Act of 2008. However, Madam Speaker, that appointment process was itself preceded by extensive governmental consultations, informal identification of candidates and public discussions about who the expert members would be before the formal gazetting. The sequence was not clean legislation, then clean appointment. It was iterative, practical and human.

Then comes South Africa, a country whose constitutional transition is one of the most celebrated in Commonwealth history. The Constitutional Assembly that drafted the final Constitution of 96 was set up under the interim Constitution of 1993. Yet, crucially, many of the substantive decisions, thematic commissions and technical committees that shaped the

final Constitution were assembled, briefed and commenced their deliberations during the transitional period before the final legal architecture was fully in place. No one accused then the ANC government of acting *à l'envers*. They acted with urgency. They acted with purpose. And they succeeded.

Lastly, Canada – it is an even more instructive example. The Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform in British Columbia, one of the most celebrated exercises in participatory constitutional deliberation in the Commonwealth, was announced by Premier Gordon Campbell in 2002 with the terms of participation and the commitment to a Citizens' Assembly made public before the enabling Order in Council was formally gazetted. The selection process was designed and the secretariat mobilised before the precise legal instrument was finalised. Again, intent, designation, then formal legal authority – in that sequence.

Lo and behold, Madam Speaker, is it not what we are doing today? This Constitutional Review Committee does not exist until this House wills it into being and its members are not appointed until this Act is in force since it is the empowering statute that provides for their appointment. When the appointments come to be made, they will be made by the President of the Republic. Under Section 64 of our Constitution, the President will act in accordance with the advice of Cabinet or of the Prime Minister because that is the case here.

That is not accidental, Madam Speaker. That is the settled architecture of our Republic. A Cabinet of Ministers that identifies in advance persons of standing, whom it intends to recommend, does no more than any responsible government does. It prepares to implement the law it asks Parliament to pass. Would the Leader of the Opposition truly have us legislate first and only then begin to wonder who on earth might serve on that Commission?

A government that plans ahead is not a government with something to conceal. It is a government that means to act the moment this House has spoken. The designation is not the appointment. The appointment is an emanation of this Act, and it will follow this Act in the constitutional form that Section 64 prescribes. No more, no less.

So, Madam Speaker, where does that leave the hon. Member's argument? It leaves it awash on the shores of legality. Mauritius is not lagging behind Commonwealth practice. Instead, we are exceeding it. This Government has chosen to do more, not less. We are not content to convene this Commission by mere resolution or warrant. We are placing it on a

statutory footing before this House, its independence guaranteed by Clause 4 (2) and its consultative duties written into Clause 7.

Madam Speaker, we have given this House and this nation more scrutiny, more transparency and more protection than any of the precedents the hon. Member admires. He cannot praise those models in one breath and condemn us in the next for surpassing them. So much for the *anba-lao* argument!

Let me meet head-on the insinuation lurking behind this criticism that to name the Commissioners in advance is to make them creatures of this Government. The opposite is true. That argument of his is indeed *anba-lao*!

It was precisely because certain clauses of this reform touched the most sensitive nerves of the constitutional order –

- the Office of the Presidency,
- the architecture of our justice system,
- the rights of the citizens against the power of the State that we sought, from the very start, persons whose independence is beyond question.

And we named them openly months ahead for the whole nation to scrutinise.

Openness, transparency, certainty and institutional independence, the four corners of the rule of law, which I have said time and again, we shall uphold, come what may.

Madam Speaker, servility conceals its appointments. Independence publishes them. A government bent on capturing a commission does not parade its members in advance and dare the Opposition to object. It does its work in the dark. We did the opposite. The early designation is not the fingerprint of political control. It is the proof of transparency. The calibre of the persons chosen is itself the guarantee of their independence.

Madam Speaker, the hon. Leader of the Opposition also alluded to the fact, so he says, that the Government is imposing its own propositions upon the Commission; that we begin the process, as he puts it, backwards. Nothing can be further from what is actually happening.

I will answer him on the law and on the record.

These propositions are not imposed. They are the 18 proposals the electoral itself endorsed in November 2024, as the hon. Third Member for Grand River North West and Port Louis West reminded the House. Even then, the Commission is still free to range beyond them, for the words “*inter alia*” in Section 4 mean exactly what they say. To give a commission terms of reference is not to start backwards. It is to start properly. A commission with no direction is not an independent commission, Madam Speaker. It is merely a commission adrift. We want clarity and purpose. We want traction on the main subjects. There lies our wish, the wish of the people.

Madam Speaker, if I may now turn to the arguments of the Opposition Chief Whip. He listed, what he called, the flaws of the Bill.

Madam Speaker: Not Chief Whip.

Mr Glover: I am very sorry. Do not get upset. The Whip of the Opposition. I was mesmerised by you right now.

He listed, what he called, the flaws of the Bill: no quorum, no qualification criteria, no voting mechanism, no independence expressly stated. Let me be blunt, to the point and clear. A statute that establishes a commission of eminent persons, but then attempts to micromanage the quorum, its order of voting, would be a statute that does not trust the very persons it appoints. Quorum and procedure are matters properly left to the Commission’s own rules as they are for Commissions the world over. There is no prescribed voting mechanism because a body of this kind proceeds whenever it can by consensus rather than by division.

An independence expressly stated? Well, independence does not live in a recital, Madam Speaker. It lives in the calibre of the members, of which I have already alluded to, and in the statutory function they are given. Let me take the hon. Member to the text for fear that he may have inadvertently missed it.

That provision reads and I quote –

“(2) The Commission shall, in the discharge of its functions and exercise of its powers under this Act, act independently and shall not be subject to the direction or control of any person or authority.”

Madam Speaker, the hon. Opposition Whip built partly his argument on an old quip that to bury an issue, you appoint the commission. Let me answer the quip with what the Bill provides. Now, you do not bury a reform by carrying it around the country in public sittings, by putting every submission on the record and set it up by an Act of Parliament. If the powers of this Commission are given by the people, acting by and through its elected Members, it is a legal imperative that it must report back to Parliament.

Now, he cited the Truth and Justice Commission, whose findings, he said, gathered dust and were not implemented. But the cure for a report that was ignored is not to refuse to commission the report. It is to bind its findings to this Chamber, which is exactly what we are doing now, today. The hon. Fourth Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue also found fault with our timing, perhaps overlooking the fact that we brought more than 30 Bills to this House last year.

He said our Government promised reform within six months, and we are still here after 18. That simply is not correct. What was promised was a setting up of a commission within six months.

What is true, however, is that we are late in coming to Parliament with this Bill. But we are late, Madam Speaker, precisely because we declined to do this exercise carelessly because we took the counsel of a former Chief Justice and a former DPP to get the framework right, and let me reassure him. He need not lie awake over a commission that never dies, a money pit that outlives its purpose because a body created by statute for a defined task is *functus officio* the moment it has reported. It is the most temporary of institutions. Its permanence is one thing he need not fear.

Madam Speaker, the hon. Opposition Whip next said that we were wrong to have thrown every reform into one basket, and in doing so, paralysed those that could move quickly. He would have the statute itself sort out the mature reforms from the complex ones. I understand the instinct, but it is the wrong hand on the knife. Whether a reform is truly ripe for immediate enactment or needs deeper study is a judgment of substance, and it is the very judgment we are appointing these commissioners to make and speed is not lost. Nothing in this framework forbids the Commission from issuing an interim report on whatever it feels is ready. The stage report referred to by the hon. Member is indeed that interim report, which framework already is allowed in this Bill.

Let us take his own prime example, the judiciary. He said the programme promised a superior Court of Appeal on Lord Mackay's model. Yet section 4(k) speaks only of a court within the Supreme Court and that word, he says, betrays the promise.

Madam Speaker, it does not. Section 4(k) is a term of reference. It is not the constitutional text that will create the court. It tells the Commission where to look. It does not pre-write the architecture the Commission will recommend, nor the amendment this House will probably enact. If only a distinct and institutionally separate court will truly secure judicial independence, and there is real force in what Lord Mackay said, then that is the case the hon. Opposition Whip should make to the Commission. "within the Supreme Court", as far as I can say, means literally that the Court of Appeal will be an extension of the Supreme Court, as we have it today, with the Chief Justice remaining the apex authority of the Supreme Court.

Madam Speaker, may I now come to the point raised by the hon. First Member for Vacoas-Floreal on electoral reform. *Entre autres, la fameuse dose de proportionnel*, the representation of women in Parliament, the balance of our constituencies and the end of the mandatory community declaration. The hon. Member regrets that none of these is entrusted to the Commission. But I must say with respect that she answers her point in the very breath in which she makes it.

For the hon. Member herself told this House that removing these matters from the text to be treated separately and more swiftly could be a good thing, because our electoral law must not be amended on the eve of a poll, because the subject matter has been the object of so much work in the past, that we may move towards the consensus that has emerged without reinventing the wheel. Madam Speaker, I could not have put the Government's own reasoning better. That is precisely why electoral reform is not referred to the expert Commission. Indeed, one cannot read either the words 'electoral reform' or the words 'proportional representation' in this Bill.

In fact, on electoral reform, the consultations have already taken place. The public has already been invited to file its representations. So, to send a question that has already been consulted upon back to this Commission would not be reform. It would be delay dressed up as diligence. It would expose us to the very danger the hon. Member warns against, namely tampering with the rules of the contest to close the contest itself.

Madam Speaker, electoral reform is a highly strung political matter, and perhaps not fit for the works of the Constitutional Review Commission. That Commission, Madam Speaker, will do the deep deliberative work that the new generation of rights in our institutional architecture require. Electoral reform, on the other hand, already ripe, will proceed on its own track and arrive before this House in its own right. The hon. Member need not fear that it has been forgotten. She will have every opportunity to hold the Government to it when that Bill is laid before the House.

Madam Speaker, the hon. Third Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière has pressed, on his side, for more clarity on the electoral college for the election of the President. So, let me outline things after what has been said by the First Member from Stanley and Rose Hill.

An electoral college is no more than a defined body of electoral representatives who together choose the Head of State in place of a bare majority of this Assembly. I was aghast to hear political commentators, not later than yesterday night, opining on the form it will take, jumping the gun and making ill-advised assertions.

Let me make it clear, nothing has been decided yet. We must await the report and the recommendations first and foremost. We have a number of examples around us. India elects its President this way, Germany, its federal President, small islands, Republics such as Trinidad and Tobago do the same. In each case, the purpose is the one our Government Programme states to give the President a mandate, not more powers.

A mandate from a broader base so that the first citizen of the Republic belongs to the whole nation and not to the party of the day. This does not create an executive presidency. The executive powers remain with Cabinet, led by the hon. Prime Minister answerable to this House. Nothing in this proposal changes that position.

The hon. Opposition Whip for his part would have parties simply disclose their nominees for President, Prime Minister and Minister of Finance before polling day. That is an idea worth placing before the Commission. But it is only an argument about which broad base is best, not an argument against having one. As for who sits in that college, by what criteria and how it votes, the very questions the hon. Third Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière fairly asked, that, Madam Speaker, is precisely what we ask the Commission to settle.

We do not ask this House to adopt an electoral college today. We ask only that the Commission examines it with public and expert input and to report. An Opposition that believes in checks and balances should welcome that inquiry, not fear it.

Madam Speaker, the hon. Opposition Whip warned that this Commission must not become a shield behind which Government hides. But a shield by definition is a thing one hides behind. But we are not using a shield. We are asking the country to do the very opposite. We are asking the people to step out and be heard.

So, let me close, not with an argument, but with an invitation; to the hon. Leader of the Opposition, to the hon. Whip of the Opposition, to the hon. Members of the Opposition, to all electoral representatives of this House, and to the Mauritian public – I say this; Stand up, be counted, speak out, because your voice matters. Bring your suggestions, bring your ideas, bring your objections, lay them before the Commission and watch the Commission weigh them on their merits.

The hon. Members on this side, Madam Speaker, have answered the politics of this Bill. Some have yet to do it. I, for one, have sought to answer the legal angle. And under law, Madam Speaker, this Bill is sound, it is constitutional, and it is the only proper, lawful first step towards the new Constitution that this nation aspires to and has asked this Government to deliver.

This moment, Madam Speaker, is indeed a historical one, and an opportunity for every one of us, from all walks of life, who want to take part, to do so, in order that we may leave the legacy of a better Constitution for future generations.

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

Madam Speaker: Thank you. Hon. Minister of Housing and Lands!

(7.25 p.m.)

The Minister of Housing and Lands (Mr S. Mohamed): Thank you, Madam Speaker. Before I turn to the substance of this Bill, Madam Speaker, I hope with your permission and the permission of my hon. colleagues on all both sides, allow me a personal remark. I cannot rise today to address the House without feeling the weight, very keenly so, of those that came before.

61 years ago, at Lancaster House, my late grandfather, Sir Abdool Razack Mohamed, Leader of the “CAM”, in alliance with the Labour Party of Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, sat

at the table; at that table as the foundation of our independence was negotiated. 59 years ago, my late father, Yousuf Mohamed, was elected to the inaugural Legislative Assembly at the General Elections of 1967.

Today in 2026, I find myself standing before this House embarking upon a review of that very Constitution as an hon. Member of the Labour Party led by hon. Dr. Navin Ramgoolam, Prime Minister. I do not say that to claim any inheritance of merit. Madam Speaker, merit in this House is earned and not bequeathed. The work of building a constitutional order is not the work of a single generation. Those who framed it back in the days could not have imagined Mauritius of 2026, and all of us here today will not be able to imagine Mauritius of 2068.

Madam Speaker, a Bill modest in its length but monumental in ambition for what we begin today is not the amendment of a clause, nor the fixing of a single provision. What we begin today is the most serious, the most structured, and the most participatory examination of our supreme law; the law of this country, we have ever undertaken since 12 March 1968. Our Constitution is now 58 years old. It has served us well, but even the finest vessel, after 58 years at sea, must be brought into dry dock, not to be discarded, but examined, repaired, modernised, and made ready for the voyage ahead. The conversation must start now. This is what the Bill does, no more and no less.

Madam Speaker, our Constitution has been amended on some two dozen occasions since independence. Each amendment has its own story and some must be told honestly today. In 1969, we made the first operational adjustments after independence. In 1970s, we lowered the voting age from 21 years old to 18 years old; a genuinely democratic act. A young person watching this debate today votes because of that reform. In 1982, Madam Speaker, one month after the famous “16-nil” of June 1982; if I remember correctly, it was the 11th June 1982. I remember.

Act 2 of 1982 was passed through this very House. It amended Section 113, *entre autres*, of the Constitution. The change appeared technical. The words, I quote –

“For such term not being less than four years”

were replaced by I quote –

“For such term not exceeding four years”.

Five words, Madam Speaker. Five words that quietly weaken the security of tenure of the Director of Public Prosecutions if appointed under Section 113.

Five words that weaken the security of tenure of those officials such as the Commissioner of Police, the Director of Audit, the Electoral Commissioner, and every sentinel of our democracy. Five words that made those guardians of the Republic appointed under Section 113, vulnerable to pressure from whichever Government held office. Some have even called it the ratchet effect. The slow, cumulative weakening of institutional independence that we have lived with for 44 years.

That, Madam Speaker, is how democracy is wounded, not in a single blow, but in five carefully chosen words passed in haste while the nation celebrated a landslide. In 1991 and 1992, we became a Republic, achieved without a referendum by the three-quarters consensus in this Assembly, providing that “win political” will exists, great reforms indeed are possible. In 1995, we abolished the death penalty.

In 2001, we gave Rodrigues the autonomy it deserved. In 2014, the country attempted a serious electoral reform that died for want of consensus. Many bear scars from that episode. We should not pretend otherwise. The lesson is clear. When we patch in haste, we weaken. When we reform in consensus, we strengthen. This Bill chooses consensus over haste. Some have referred to the need to go faster, but let us, I say again, choose consensus for it to strengthen and for us to succeed. I now turn to the heart of any constitutional debate. The everyday Mauritian in whose name we sit in this Chamber, to the student preparing for their exams, this Bill is about your future. The Commission will examine a constitutional right to quality education and a freedom of information principle that will let you request the data shaping the decisions affecting your life.

To the worker in the textile factory, I say, to the nurse on the night shift, the bus driver, the cane cutter, the call centre agent; this Bill is about your dignity at work. The Commission will examine enforceable rights to health, social protection, and fair conditions. The expanded Public Bodies Appeal Tribunal will mean that when you are passed over for a promotion you earned, you will have a real forum to demand justice, not a closed door. To every young Mauritian who has applied for a public sector job and felt that connections mattered more than competence, this Bill is for you. The Senior Official’s Appointment Committee, that is but a reflection of what is happening in the United Kingdom, will ensure that the leadership of our great public institutions is determined by merit, not patronage.

The day is coming when fairness in the public sector hiring will not be a hope, it will be a right. Some see everything as being dark. I have to believe that there is light. To the fisherman whose catch is collapsing, the diver who has watched our reefs bleach, the villager fighting a polluter, the young activist defending, for instance, the Black River Gorges, the Bill is for you. For the first time in our history, the Commission will examine the rights of nature. Combined with public interest litigation and class actions, an ordinary citizen, a small association, a village, could go to Court on behalf of the lagoon itself.

The era in which our environment has no voice in our courtrooms is coming to an end. I see the smiles of some of my friends. To every citizen who has asked the government a question and received silence, this Bill is for you. For decades, under every government, including those I have formed part of, Mauritius has promised a freedom of information and delivered none, the state of affairs stops now. It ends here. To those who have called for the right to referendums on matters of fundamental national importance, this Bill opens that conversation. The people's voice must not only be heard at elections, Madam Speaker. It must be heard on the great constitutional questions of the day.

Allow me, Madam Speaker, the hon. Minister for Agro-Industry and also the hon. Minister for Social Security and some hon. Members did make reference to the Best Loser System. I believe the hon. Minister of Social Security also mentioned it well. The word Best Loser System was pronounced by hon. Minister of Agro-Industry and other hon. Members. I am talking about those who spoke today.

Madam Speaker, I come now and because of that, I shall refer with reference to clause 4 (a) and 4 (r) of the Bill. I come now with the greatest care and respect to a matter on which this Chamber has been quiet for a long time. I come to it not to accuse, not to assign blame, not to reopen old wounds.

I come to it because a serious constitutional review cannot in good conscience set it aside and because it is better, surely, that we raise it ourselves in this Chamber with the dignity it deserves than that it be raised for us by others in less hospitable forums.

I am referring, Madam Speaker, to the figures from 1972 on which part of our electoral architecture and processes continue to rest. The hon. Minister of Social Security made reference to the United Nations and to the Privy Council. Those were issues that were also referred to in the pronouncements. I do not propose this afternoon to pronounce on what should be done. Far from it.

I propose only to ask questions. Questions which I believe every hon. Member on every bench of this House must privately have asked themselves at one time or another. Questions which the commission in the course of its work will be far better placed than this Chamber to answer.

May I, Madam Speaker, ask: is it sustainable in the 21st century for the demographic basis of any part of our constitutional order to rest on figures collected back in 1972? What does it say to the international community? To those friends of Mauritius who, in July 2012, in the case of Narain and others, expressed concerns under Article 25 of the International Covenant on the Civil and Political Rights that 14 years have passed without having taken up that conversation in earnest.

If we cannot have this discussion now in the context of the most comprehensive constitutional review since 1968 with a commission of experts, with public consultation built into every stage, with the protection of the three quarters majority, then, when, Madam Speaker, can we ever have it? I do not pretend that these are easy questions. I know they touch on matters about which sincere people, including dear friends across this Chamber, hold deep and differing views. Views formed by our particular history, by the memory of difficult times, by a profound love of country and fear of disturbing what holds us together. I respect those views. I share many of those instincts myself.

But I will put a question further to the House. Is it possible that the path of postponement, of leaving those matters perpetually for another day, another government, another generation, is itself a path with costs we have not properly counted? Costs that fall on us, not in this Chamber, but on the ordinary citizen in whose name we sit. That, Madam Speaker, is a question I believe the Commission is uniquely well placed to consider.

Madame la présidente, permettez-moi sur cette question de m'adresser à la Chambre dans notre autre langage de travail, car ce que je vais dire touche à un principe d'équité qui dépasse toute langue et toute communauté.

Ce projet de loi propose de renforcer la protection contre la discrimination. L'article 16 de notre constitution protège déjà chaque Mauricien contre la discrimination. Nous avons ratifié des instruments internationaux qui nous obligent à surveiller et à signaler la discrimination dans notre société. Mais je voudrais poser avec respect une question à cette Chambre.

Comment évalue-t-on dans la pratique le respect de ce droit fondamental? Un citoyen qui soupçonne avoir été désavantagé peut présenter son cas individuel. Mais peut-il, dans l'état actuel des choses, démontrer un schéma structurel? Une famille qui estime que son quartier est mal desservi par l'investissement public, peut-elle le prouver autrement que par l'anecdote?

Un jeune diplômé qui se sent exclu des opportunités peut-il appuyer son sentiment sur des données officielles? Tous ces Mauriciens jouissent d'un droit constitutionnel contre la discrimination. Aucun d'entre eux ne dispose pleinement des outils probatoires nécessaires pour le faire valoir. C'est là, Madame la présidente, le paradoxe que ce projet de loi met en lumière.

Un pays peut-il en toute cohérence prétendre combattre une chose qu'il refuse de mesurer? Un droit qui ne peut être vérifié empiriquement, n'est-il pas un droit exercé dans l'obscurité? Et les premières victimes de cette obscurité ne sont-elles pas justement les citoyens ordinaires qui n'ont pas eu d'autres moyens que de faire entendre leur voix?

Je pose ces questions, Madame la présidente, en toute humilité. Je ne prétends pas y avoir les réponses définitives, mais je crois que ce sont des questions que la commission ne peut pas en toute conscience écarter. Madame la présidente, nous ne sommes pas seuls à devoir penser ces questions.

D'autres démocraties pluralistes, dans des contextes parfois plus délicats que la nôtre, ont eu à se les poser. Examinons brièvement et avec humilité ce qu'elles ont fait. Singapour, une société profondément plurielle comme le nôtre, collecte des données démographiques détaillées dans chacun de ses recensements. Elle s'en sert pour concevoir sa politique de logement, sa politique éducative et son système de représentation. Singapour est aujourd'hui l'une des sociétés plurielles les plus cohésives du monde. La collecte des données n'a pas divisé la nation. Au contraire, elle a permis à l'État de démontrer, chiffres à l'appui, qu'il prétend qu'il prend au sérieux l'expérience de chaque communauté.

Le Canada, de même. Le Royaume-Uni utilise l'*ethnic monitoring* dans l'emploi, la santé et la police. C'est précisément cette pratique qui a permis, à la suite de l'enquête Stephen Lawrence et du rapport Macpherson, d'identifier le racisme institutionnel dans la police britannique et de déclencher les réformes qui ont suivi. Sans ces données, ces réformes auraient été impossibles.

La transparence, Madame la présidente, n'a pas affaibli l'unité britannique. Elle l'a rendue plus honnête. Je ne propose pas que Maurice copie l'un ou l'autre de ces modèles. Chaque démocratie doit trouver sa propre voie, adaptée à son histoire, à sa sensibilité, à sa réalité. Mais permettez-moi, Madame la présidente, de poser cette question: si toutes ces démocraties pluralistes ont jugé que la mesure était compatible avec et même nécessaire à la cohésion nationale, sur quelle base soutenons-nous à Maurice que le silence statistique servirait mieux à notre unité?

C'est une question, encore une fois, que je laisse à la commission le soin d'examiner avec sérieux, avec respect et avec la sagesse de tirer les leçons utiles de l'expérience internationale tout en demeurant fidèle à notre identité mauricienne.

Madam Speaker, I am not, this afternoon proposing, any particular outcome. I am proposing only that the Commission be given the political space, which it has, and the political invitation from this Chamber to examine those matters with the seriousness they deserve. Should it find a path forward and an appropriate one, that path could rest on principles that any hon. Member of this House on either side could reasonably support.

A path that is voluntary, not compulsory, where citizens choose whether and how to identify, including the option to identify simply as Mauritian. A path that is strictly purpose limited, used for measuring fairness and designing policy, better policy. Never, I underline that, never for electoral profiling. Never for political mobilisation. Never for surveillance. A path that reports only in aggregated form, illuminating patterns, never exposing individuals. A path, and I underline that as well, that decouples any such measurement from our electoral mechanisms separating the legitimate questions of equity from the contested questions of representation. And a path independently overseen by a statutory body insulated from political interference and accountable to this Parliament.

Let me be clear what this Bill is not. This Bill does not amend the Constitution. Not a single comma is changed. The Commission only recommends as has been expatiated upon before me. Every proposed amendment must come back to this Chambre. Every single one must command the required majority the Constitution rightly demands. Nothing becomes law without the consent of this Assembly.

This Bill is a constitutional invitation to govern on those matters as a nation rather than as fractions. I extend that invitation today, in good faith, and in the hope that on questions of this gravity, we may yet rise above the everyday battles of this Chambre. In 50 years' time,

historians will not remember the procedural skirmishes of any given session. They will remember whether in 2026 this Parliament had the courage to renew the foundation of the nation. They will ask whether we repaired what was broken. They will ask whether we had the wisdom and the gentleness to take up the questions that has remained too long unasked. They will ask whether we understood that the unity worth preserving is not the unity of silence, but the unity of demonstrable fairness. The unity of a Republic that trusts its citizens with the truth about itself. I do not want to be amongst one of those who failed to seize this moment.

I pray that this Assembly is not an Assembly that lets it pass. This Bill is our chance. A chance and we should seize it.

I commend this Bill to this House. May God bless the Republic of Mauritius.

Madam Speaker: Yes, Hon. Deputy Prime Minister!

(7.46 p.m.)

The Deputy Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I will not be long. The Constitutional Review Commission Bill before us is not simply another item on our legislative agenda. It is a significant milestone for the evolution of our democracy.

We have the duty, today, to do more than just make law. We are doing what we promised to the citizens of this country on the 10th of November 2024. We promised to legally address the violations of our rights as citizens which we endured during a decade. While commending the Bill, the hon. Prime Minister clearly set out the scope of this proposed legislation, that is, the setting up of a Commission to review the Constitution.

Madam Speaker, une Constitution qui a fonctionné dans le passé, l'était dans un contexte particulier. Nos *leaders* qui nous ont gouverné dans le passé, les tribuns ont respecté la Constitution et les différentes conventions de notre vie démocratique. Mais quand l'État est entre les mains de ceux qui n'ont aucune intégrité ou qui ignorent volontairement ou involontairement les conventions, cela crée des dommages profonds à la nation. Nous en avons fait l'expérience dans le passé. Et c'est précisément la raison que nous nous devons de faire empêcher qu'aucun autre gouvernement ne *slide into the kind of creeping authoritarianism this country endured between 2014 and 2024*. Je me réfère ici aux dérives parlementaires du passé.

Ce n'était pas seulement des attaques contre une institution, mais surtout une atteinte *on the very forum of democratic accountability*. Suspensions, les voix des élus étouffés. Suspensions, *not for a day, Madam Speaker, not for a Sitting, but for the remaining session. The voice of the electorate was deliberately silenced. Today, this is no longer the case. Thank you for that, Madam Speaker. This said, allow me to move to another issue.*

Madam Speaker, every time the MMM has been in Government, it has used that position to consolidate the country's democratic system in terms of permanent and tangible reforms. The MMM has never played a decorative role in Government, and we have no intention of playing that role today. The amendment that made the postponement of General Elections constitutionally impossible is our doing. Today, I wonder what the MSM would have done had we not amended the Constitution for mandatory elections on due dates. However, we should have extended the amendment to Local Government Elections.

Madam Speaker, on the electoral reform, the MSM was dead against. *On ne pouvait pas dire tout va très bien, Madame la marquise.* It cannot be said that all was rosy in 2000-2005. *Le gouvernement de 2000-2005 a raté une occasion en or de concrétiser la réforme électorale.* Had we completed the reform then, much of the *recul démocratique* of the last decade could have been avoided. Si cela avait été fait, nous aurions évité la pagaille qui a fait reculer notre pays entre 2014 et 2024.

L'histoire retiendra cet énorme gâchie. Madam Speaker, the MMM has been campaigning for electoral reform since 1986. A first document, a fair and workable electoral system was published because we understood since then, that there is no real democracy if Parliament does not reflect the will of the electorate. Because the question was never about what suited or suits the MMM. The question was and still is about what best serves the country. The objective is the same today. However, Madam Speaker, this is not the issue today as the electoral reform will be taken up separately as decided by the Government sometime back.

Madam Speaker, with regard to the possible introduction of an electoral college for the election of the President of the Republic. The question is, what kind of society do we want to leave as legacy to our future generations? In a society as diverse and plural as ours, it is important that the process leading to the election, the choice of our Head of State, inspires confidence across all sections of the population. Exploring an electoral college mechanism could encourage broader consensus, greater political maturity and a more balanced approach

to national leadership. This is about reinforcing trust in our democratic institutions and ensuring that the presidency continues to embody the dignity, neutrality and unity of the Republic. The Office of the President must remain a symbol of unity, stability and national cohesion. This institution rises above political divides and speaks to the collective identity of the Mauritian people. I look forward to the Commission's work and to a thoughtful national debate on this very important issue.

Madam Speaker, some voices and media narratives have attempted to attach the label of a second republic to the process of the possible introduction of an Electoral College for the election of the President. The suggestion is clearly intended to instil fear. *C'est le même refrain qui avait été utilisé en 2014 et c'est un acte de mauvaise foi.* Allow me to be absolutely clear. This Bill does not amend the Constitution. It establishes an independent Commission to consult, examine and recommend; nothing more and nothing less. The final word remains with this august Assembly.

Madam Speaker, when a constitution is comprehensively reviewed and modernised, it is entirely natural to speak of a new constitutional chapter. *Ce n'est pas une rupture, c'est un renouveau, une renaissance. La France en est à sa 5eme République. L'Inde a amendé sa constitution plus d'une centaine de fois. L'évolution constitutionnelle d'une nation n'est pas une menace. C'est un signe de maturité démocratique. Il y a une différence profonde entre les deux et ceux qui les confondent délibérément le font pour effrayer plutôt que pour informer.* Substantive reforms will be introduced and not cosmetic ones.

Madam Speaker, on a separate note, I believe that the Constitutional Review Commission must also examine whether our framework adequately supports the protection of women, girls, children and vulnerable persons, not merely in principle, but in practice. Formal equality, written in law, is necessary, but not sufficient. What is needed is substantive equality, constitutional space for the special measures that address structural weakness wherever it is.

Madam Speaker, Mauritius is today the only country in the SADC region that has not signed the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development. This is not for want of commitment to the values enshrined in the Protocol. Historically, concerns arose in relation to constitutional and legal rights provisions, particularly where the Protocol contemplated measures going beyond the existing Mauritian constitutional framing of equality and non-discrimination. Earlier statutory impediments, including those linked to child marriage,

Article 8 on marriage and family rights of the Protocol, have since been addressed through legislative reform with the Children's Act 2020 repealing the Civil Code provisions on marriage below 18 years old. This matter is therefore no longer an issue for accession to the Protocol. The remaining obstacles relate primarily to constitutional and legislative alignment, including the framing of equality and equity in the Constitution, family rights, access to economic opportunity and women's representation in decision-making amongst others.

Madam Speaker, I understand that Mauritius did not sign the 2008 Protocol because our principal concern lay with part 2 on constitutional and legal rights, especially Article 5, which referred to affirmative action. This was considered not to be in line with the Mauritian constitutional framework, given Section 16 of the Constitution on non-discrimination. Following the regional review process, the 2016 revised Protocol replaced the term affirmative action with special measures and introduced updated targets and additional provisions. The work of the Constitutional Review Commission, which is going to be set up with the Bill, with the legislation, may provide precisely the framework needed to address these issues and to enable Mauritius to finally take its rightful place alongside every other SADC Member State. That, Madam Speaker, is not a technical footnote, it is a matter of national dignity. These matters have already been flagged by the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare.

Madam Speaker, the objects of the Bill are to empower the President to appoint a Constitutional Review Commission to examine and make recommendations on constitutional reforms, including the protection of fundamental rights and the consolidation of democracy and institutions. I conclude by saying the following; the Commission will be independent. Every citizen willing to be heard, will be heard. Every institution, every political party as well as the civil society will have the opportunity to have their say in that Commission. At the end of the day, it will be their Constitution, the people's Constitution.

Madam Speaker, I therefore fully support the Bill. I thank you.

Madam Speaker: Thank you.

Yes, hon. Prime Minister!

(8.01 p.m.)

The Prime Minister: Yes, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, when I introduced the Constitutional Review Commission Bill, I said that constitutional reform cannot and should not be the monopoly of politicians alone. It concerns the entire nation.

I am glad, Madam Speaker, to see that so many hon. Members have taken part in the debate. In fact, I tried to count, there were no less than 28 interventions of hon. Members who participated in that vibrant debate.

Let me then thank all of those who contributed to this debate.

It is now time to take stock of what this House, on both sides, have had to say and to sum up what we can take away from these three days of deliberations.

What we have learnt, Madam Speaker, is this: the first thing is that on the essential question – the common ground is that after nearly six decades, the time has come for Mauritius to take a fresh look at our supreme law, our Constitution. There is an agreement on the need for constitutional reform.

There are disagreements, of course, and they are real. However, they are not about the need for reforms, but they are rather about the scope of the reforms and the timeline of these reforms.

Madam Speaker, I have listened to the range of voices that have spoken in favour of the principle, and from the Opposition benches, the hon. Opposition Chief Whip himself accepted that the question is not whether reform is necessary, but how it is to be done and the whole process.

When the Government and the Opposition agree on the destination and differ only on the road, it is for us to take the road together as far as our political differences will allow. Because let us not forget, I say it again, that reform is for the country at large.

Let me remind this House, that what we are proposing forms part of the Government Programme 2025-2029, A Bridge to the Future. On the very first pages, this Government undertook to appoint a Constitutional Review Commission to make recommendations– I emphasise on the words ‘to make recommendations’ – on constitutional and electoral reforms and on the enhanced protection of fundamental rights. The Programme named various matters which are now before the House: one of them is the Electoral College to give the President a mandate from a broader base.

Let me clarify a point that the hon. Leader of the Opposition and also the former Deputy Prime Minister made, the remark that the amendment concerning the Electoral College for the election of the President was circulated on the very day the Bill was being introduced. And the Leader of the Opposition asked whether it was an *oubli*. No, it was not an *oubli*. I will tell you.

There were queries that this might lead to all sorts of canvassing – we have seen how the MSM operates – canvassing for personal gains, influence peddling, money exchange. We have seen all this. So, there were some people, including me, who thought that this might be controversial. But all said and done, we decided that we should allow this point to be debated and examined by the Commission. And the whole point is that the Commission looks at all the proposals.

It was in our manifesto, in our Government Programme of 2025-2029. So, therefore, it was decided at Cabinet level that it is better to have the debate and let the Commission examine it.

Madam Speaker, the Attorney General has explained very clearly what an Electoral College is. He made reference to the Republics of Trinidad and Tobago, and great democracies like India and Germany, how they use it to choose a Head of State who belongs to the whole nation, not to the governing party of the day. I will not repeat the comparison, Madam Speaker. But I should address the insinuation that this conceals some personal ambition.

The Deputy Prime Minister has just made reference to it. I do not know what kind of fertile imagination people might have. Instead of looking at the text, they become hysterical.

That insinuation does not deserve the dignity of a response, Madam Speaker. The terms of reference make no mention of the powers of the President of the Republic having to be looked into. None, whatsoever. The Office of the President of the Republic will remain what the office has always been, that is, a guardian of the Constitution and a symbol of our unity, while the Executive answers, as it must, to this elected House. That is all.

The Bill also goes on to introduce mandatory holding of local elections, which were postponed. Hon. Ramful made reference to it. Hon. Ajay Gunness made reference to it. I think, hon. Bhagwan also made reference to it. They were postponed three times, Madam Speaker.

The Bill also introduces the protection of new generation rights: environmental, technology, health, education, and the rights of nature, and the enshrinement of the values of peace, justice and liberty that we pledge in our national anthem.

It promises to consolidate the constitutional right to privacy and to outlaw the mass covert surveillance of citizens. As hon. Ramful said, people seem to have short memories. He referred to the IBA Act, if I am not mistaken. But the MSM regime also tried to control what people were saying on social media, the internet and everything. There were protests across the country, especially the young were protesting. And what did they do? They withdrew their propositions. You would think it is a laudable action that they did. No, Madam Speaker. What they did behind the back of the people, what they did, in fact, surreptitiously, and did it without going through Parliament. Behind our back, this was done – massive surveillance of all the people of this country. I said it before.

The Bill also promises to reinforce the independence and the role of the Director of Public Prosecutions, who will now be the ultimate person to decide whether to prosecute or not to prosecute. We have already re-put the powers of the DPP as the Constitution says, but the DPP will now have exclusive prosecutorial authority. No one else can decide whether to prosecute or not to prosecute, as it should be. As the previous regime tried to change, I think, hon. Dr. Boolell made reference to that; how they did it.

This Government, Madam Speaker, stands by its promises whatever may be said.

The demand for constitutional reforms did not originate from a meeting in Cabinet. This is not the agenda of a political party that hon. Members are being asked to support. It is the agenda of the nation. This Bill is nothing more and nothing less than the continuation of our solemn undertaking in November 2024, and we got a mandate for it.

Madam Speaker, the Opposition has pressed essentially three concerns, and let me address them in turn.

On the sequence of events – the complaint that persons were designated before the law was passed. Hon. Uteem addressed that concern. The Attorney General has set out the constitutional position under Section 64. Madam Speaker, we sought the counsel of the former Chief Justice and a former Director of Public Prosecutions on the very shape of this Bill because we wanted it to be better, not because we wanted to bind anyone's hands. We have not done so.

On the fear of delay – the warning that this should become “a vehicle for delay” as recommendations of the past commissions have been cited. I say to the hon. Chief Whip, hon. A. Duval...

Madam Speaker: No, the hon. Whip of the Opposition!

The Prime Minister: Whip of the Opposition, sorry. Again...

(Interruptions)

I take the warning seriously. The hon. former Deputy Prime Minister also spoke about this problem of delay. But I ask the House to take note of the proposed remedy of the hon. Opposition Whip. He says we should do an interim report on the simpler reforms followed by a full report. It is not an argument against this Bill. It is not. And besides, what we want to do, exactly what the former Deputy Prime Minister is saying, we want to avoid delay. We do not want to create delay. We do not want to have never-ending debates. On a lot of things already we have spoken.

On the independence of the Commission – the charge is that we will impose an agenda through the list in section 4. Madam Speaker, I will simply say this. As I said, hon. Uteem clarified the issue very well. He explained the constitutional role of the President and the role of Cabinet.

The House will appreciate that the Terms of Reference are far-reaching and deal with fundamental democratic and human rights issues.

Madam Speaker, I wish to acknowledge that the speeches from the Opposition were in substance, from what I understand, in favour of the ambition of this reform; for the rights of nature, for social and economic rights, for the citizen's privacy, for the transparency, for honest reckoning with the place of women and the vulnerable in our Republic. Hon. Subron has many times spoken of the rights of nature that need to be protected. I may add that rights go together with duties. We should not forget that either.

May I also respond to what hon. Joanna Bérenger said. Good question! Why the electoral reform is not part of the remit of the Bill? I must say, and quite rightly, the former Deputy Prime Minister pointed out that electoral reform should be done separately. We agreed with it. I agreed with it as well, because the danger is, you reopen a debate that has already taken place, and it would be never-ending. We already had large consultations, and,

again, we have had on this matter. In any case, electoral reform too will have to be debated in this House at the end of the day. And let me assure our friends from Rodrigues, Rodrigues is not going to be forgotten, it will be part of that reform.

Madam Speaker, as I emphasised, the case for reviewing the Constitution does not belong to the Government. It does not belong to the Opposition either. It belongs to the whole Republic.

Some, both in this House and outside, have argued that this whole enterprise is going to be eyewash - a Commission appointed, as some cynics are saying, they will bury the very thing it pretends to examine. I think the hon. Attorney General spoke about this, about the architecture of the Bill.

No Government that wishes to bury constitutional reform invites, as we are doing now, the entire nation to delve, to debate, to discuss the process and the future content.

As the hon. Attorney General rightly pointed out, one does not bury a problem by holding public sittings, and public sittings across the country, by inviting every citizen, every party, every union, every NGO to put their case on record, by undertaking to bring back the results to this House in the full glare of debate.

We are not going to hide it but the cynic's danger is real, let's not shy away from it, but the cynic's remedy – to stand aside, not to participate – as some have done on electoral reforms. I invite every Member of this House and every Mauritian to do exactly what has to be done, that is, to be an actor, to participate in that debate.

Madam Speaker, I opened the debate by saying that a Constitution alone does not save a democracy. What saves it is the strength of its institutions and the vigilance of its citizens, as hon. Dr. Ms Jeetun, rightly pointed out. This debate, and the wider debate now alive in the press and among the public, has been an exercise in exactly that vigilance, and we are better for it.

Independent strong institutions are the litmus test of a democracy. As hon. Dr. Ms Jeetun rightly said, we are not rewriting history, but we are preparing for the future. We are building the bridge to the future, Madam Speaker.

At the time of our independence, Sir Seewoosagur told this nation that we had chosen the democratic way of life, to be guided by fair play, by justice and the rule of law. We are, as hon. Junior Minister Narsinghen said, a liberal democracy. The Constitution of 1968 has

served us well. Hon. Ramful is right, it was not imposed totally on us. There were wide debates, discussions, but it has served us well that Constitution. It has also, over time, nearly six decades now, exposed vulnerabilities of our time that we cannot and should not ignore.

As I said when introducing the Bill, a Constitution cannot remain frozen in time while society is evolving. Some people are saying you should not touch the Constitution at all. It is wrong. A Constitution is a living instrument. It must be adapted to the realities of today. I like the reference hon. Dr. Ms Jeetun made to the compass on a ship. You know the direction, it shows the way, but you must adapt to the changing conditions when you are at sea.

Madam Speaker, we will not reopen the debate on electoral reform. As I said, this has already been done. Although, I must add, and I did say that in my introduction, there are certain matters that the Commission will examine. For example, to strengthen the powers of the Electoral Commissioner and the Electoral Supervisory Commission.

The Commission will have to examine the package of reforms; they can make comments. The Electoral Commissioner and the ESC, for example, they have made comments. I have circulated this in Cabinet. We did not see it that way, but there are unintended consequences sometimes, about the non-declaration of your community. They have pointed this out. This is why this cannot stand alone. We have to have the whole package of electoral reform to make it. Otherwise, what hon. Shakeel Mohamed said, he mentioned this, just the one bit alone does not stand; it has to be the whole.

The Government, and we intend to do it, Madam Speaker, has kept the promise it made to establish the Commission.

Je dirais, Madame la présidente, le projet de loi traduit directement un engagement pris dans le programme gouvernemental 2025-2029. Le projet de loi institue une commission indépendante chargée de revoir notre loi suprême, notre constitution, de proposer des réformes majeures qui devront être votées ici. Et moi, je l'espère.

I can understand the worries of the former Deputy Prime Minister that it may go on for ages, two years, three years, four years or whatever, and you have another election.

Moi, je l'espère, Madame la présidente, qu'avant que nous célébrions le 60^e anniversaire de notre indépendance, la réforme sera là.

It now falls to this House to let the Commission do its work. It now falls to the nation to make its voice heard within it. We have to move forward, Madam Speaker, with the reforms. It is a defining moment in our history.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a second time and committed.

COMMITTEE STAGE

(Madam Speaker in the Chair)

Clauses 1 to 3 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 4 (Functions and powers of Commission)

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

The Prime Minister: Madam Chairperson, I move for the following amendment in clause 4 –

In clause 4, in subclause (1), by inserting, after paragraph (f), the following new paragraph, existing paragraphs (g) to (s) being renumbered as paragraphs (h) to (t), respectively –

- (g) the creation of an Electoral College to elect the President of the Republic, in order to increase the legitimacy and independence of the office;

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 4, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 5 to 17 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

The title and enacting clause were agreed to.

The Bill, as amended, was agreed to.

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

Third Reading

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

Madam Speaker: Hon. Prime Minister, adjournment!

ADJOURNMENT

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Friday 19 June 2026 at 5.00 p.m.

The Deputy Prime Minister rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Madam Speaker: The House stands adjourned!

At 8.27 p.m., the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Friday 19 June 2026 at 5.00 p.m.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

DRUG-RELATED OFFENCES – REPORTED CASES & MEASURES ENVISAGED

(No. B/867) Mr B. Babajee (First Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to drug-related offences, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the –

- (a) number of reported cases thereof since 2025 to date, indicating the types of drugs concerned, and
- (b) additional measures being envisaged to tackle same.

(Withdrawn)

HORSE RACING – ORGANISER LICENSE – ILLEGAL HORSE RACING

(No. B/868) 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 horse racing, he will –

- (a) state whether his Office is in presence of any representation for the granting of a –
 - (i) second Horse Racing Organiser license for the Champ de Mars Racecourse, and
 - (ii) licence for a second racecourse at Petit Gamin, and
- (b) for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to whether any illegal horse racing activities are being carried out at Petit Gamin.

(Withdrawn)

CONSTITUENCY NO. 18 – SAFE CITY CAMERAS – SURVEILLANCE

COVERAGE AREAS

(No. B/869) Ms S. Anquetil (Second Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the Safe City Surveillance System Cameras, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number thereof installed in Constituency No. 18, Belle Rose-Quatre Bornes, indicating the –

- (a) locations thereof, and
- (b) whether an assessment has been carried out to identify additional areas requiring surveillance coverage and, if so, indicate whether due consideration will be given thereto.

(Withdrawn)

MR G.M. – FCC INQUIRY – ALLEGED MONEY LAUNDERING

(No. B/870) Mr B. Babajee (First Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the inquiry initiated by the Financial Crimes Commission in February 2026 against one Mr. G. M. in connection with an alleged money laundering offence, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to where matters stand.

(Withdrawn)

POLICE INQUIRIES – OUTSTANDING CASES

(No. B/871) Mr E. Juman (First Member for Port-Louis Maritime & Port-Louis East) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to police inquiries, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the current number thereof, indicating the number thereof which have been ongoing for a period exceeding three years.

Reply: I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that as at 28 May 2026, the current number of cumulative cases whereby Police is conducting inquiries is 305,926, of which, 23,198 cases have been ongoing for a period exceeding three years.

This figure includes 52,339 declarations made to the Police on other occurrences which do not constitute an offence but require an inquiry.

I am informed that the duration of an inquiry varies depending on the nature and complexity of the offence committed. Some of the reasons why inquiries take months or even years are as follows –

- (i) accused is unknown or has absconded, or the complainant is unavailable or reluctant to give further statements;

- (ii) long waiting time for the reception of relevant documents, such as, Medico-Legal report, Forensic Science Laboratory report, report from Banks, Judge's Order and reports of examinations of exhibits conducted by competent authorities abroad such as in South Africa and France;
- (iii) cases having international ramifications or cases of transnational nature;
- (iv) cases of missing persons, and
- (v) cases wherein human remains have not been identified.

Police have issued Standing Orders and Guidelines which lay down clear instructions regarding procedures for Declarations, Enquiries, Prosecutions and Disposal of cases. The Standing Orders also require Enquiring Officers to submit all their cases on a fortnightly basis to the Police Station Enquiring Officer for perusal and instructions, if any.

Moreover, the Deputy Commissioner of Police 'Operations' chairs a monthly coordinating meeting with all the Police Divisions and Units, where outstanding cases are discussed and analysed.

In August 2025, Divisional Enquiry Panels have been set up in each Police Division to address outstanding cases. The Panels, under the supervision of an Assistant Superintendent of Police or Superintendent of Police, has the following responsibilities, amongst others –

- (i) to ensure that all inquiries comply with due process;
- (ii) to identify investigative gaps as well as evidentiary weaknesses, and to propose remedial actions;
- (iii) to facilitate legal coordination and timely feedback on all case files;
- (iv) to review complex and sensitive cases; and
- (v) to return incomplete files to relevant Police Stations with clear instructions for corrective actions.

MINISTRIES & GOVERNMENT BODIES – CASHLESS PAYMENTS

(No. B/872) Mr L. Caserne (Third 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 Cash Offices of Ministries and Government Bodies, he will state whether consideration will be given for the –

- (a) extension of the opening hours thereof beyond 14 30 hours on weekdays and, if so, when and, if not, why not, and
- (b) introduction of cashless payments through mobile applications.

Reply: I wish, at the outset, to state that Government is fully committed to modernising the way public services are delivered and paid for.

Today, an ever-growing proportion of payments are being effected through electronic transfers, mobile applications, bank cards and other cashless instruments, offering greater speed, convenience, traceability and security.

It is against this backdrop that Government is actively advancing the digital transformation of public service delivery by expanding the provision of services through online platforms, with payments increasingly being made electronically. This transition is not merely a technological upgrade but forms part of a broader strategic vision to modernise public administration and align service delivery with the realities and expectations of a digital economy.

This transformation is centred on facilitating the lives of citizens by making Government services more seamless, accessible and user-friendly, while ensuring that public service delivery remains efficient.

With regard to part (a) of the question, despite the ongoing digitalisation of Government services, I am informed by the Treasury that several cash offices already operate beyond 14.30 hours. These include the main cash office at the Treasury, the National Land Transport Authority, the Registrar General, the Corporate and Business Registration Department, the Ministry of Labour and Industrial Relations, and the Mauritius Revenue Authority.

I am informed by the Treasury, however, that payment counters at sub-offices, across the island, operate up to 14.30 hours. This arrangement is mainly due to operational, banking and security considerations.

Cashiers must be given sufficient time, after the closure of counters, to reconcile the amounts collected with their records, prepare the relevant documentation and ensure that collections are deposited at banks on the same day. Banks generally close at around 15.15 hours on weekdays. It is therefore important that adequate time be available for the safe and proper completion of these processes before the close of business.

I am further informed that, although safes are available at these sub-offices, it would not be prudent to retain large amounts of cash on the premises after banking hours. Such a

practice may increase security and operational risks and could also have implications in terms of insurance coverage and related costs.

The direction of travel actually is to move away from cash transactions to more electronic forms of payment. With the gradual adoption of this mode of payment, that is, online or cashless payment systems, opening hours of the cash offices will not be a barrier for effecting payment transactions by the public.

As regards to part (b) of the question, Government has already made significant progress in introducing cashless payment facilities across the public sector. Some ministries and Government bodies are already operating cashless payment systems such as payment by debit or credit cards, online bank transfer and mobile payment through Scan and Pay facilities.

I am informed by the Treasury that, as at date, 60 cash counters have already been equipped with Point-of-Sale machines, enabling members of the public to effect payments by debit or credit cards.

The Treasury is also in the process of rolling out Scan and Pay facilities across Government Cash Offices. This will enable payments to be made through mobile applications and will provide an additional convenient payment channel to citizens. This project is expected to be completed by the end of this year.

Government will continue to pursue reforms that make public services more accessible, secure and efficient. While the extension of Cash Office opening hours will continue to be considered in light of operational realities, the priority is to expand cashless payment options so that citizens can increasingly make payments without having to physically attend Government Cash Offices.

FINANCIAL YEAR 2025-2026 – OVERSEAS MISSIONS – EXPENDITURE

(No. B/873) 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 Centrally Managed Expenses of Government in respect of Mission Expenses for financial year 2025-2026, he will state the total amount disbursed thereunder as at to date, indicating the aggregate amount thereof incurred for overseas missions undertaken by Ministers and Junior Ministers, including any cost incurred in terms of airfare, inland transport, accommodation and *per diem* allowances.

Reply: A total amount of Rs113,081,629 has been disbursed, as at date, under the Centrally Managed Expenses of Government in respect of all Mission Expenses for Financial Year 2025-2026.

With regard to overseas missions undertaken by Ministers and Junior Ministers, from July 2025 to date, a total amount of Rs33,534,097 has been incurred. This amount includes airfare, inland transport, accommodation and *per diem* allowances.

The remaining Rs79,547,532 relates to Overseas Missions undertaken by Government Officials, which represents around 70% of the total expenditure on mission expenses as at date.

AIR MAURITIUS LTD – AIRCRAFTS SOLD, PURCHASED & HIRED

(No. B/874) Mr N. Beejan (Second Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the aircrafts, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from Air Mauritius Ltd., information as to, since 2014 to 2024, the number thereof –

- (a) sold, indicating in each case, the proceeds thereof and time of service at time of sale, and
- (b) purchased and hired, indicating in each case the –
 - (i) cost thereof;
 - (ii) time in service at the time of purchase/hire, and
 - (iii) number of times same was grounded, indicating the reasons and duration thereof.

(Withdrawn)

GAMBLING REGULATORY AUTHORITY – MR. V.C., FORMER CHAIRPERSON – RESIGNATION & INQUIRY

(No. B/875) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to Mr. V.C., former Chairperson of the Gambling Regulatory Authority, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the reasons for his resignation, giving details of the –

- (a) severance package or otherwise paid or payable thereto, if any, and
- (b) outcome of the inquiry/disciplinary proceedings, if any, initiated against him.

Reply: Mr Veeshal Chumroo, the former Chairperson of the Gambling Regulatory Authority was appointed as part-time Chairperson for the Authority in accordance with section 5(2) of the Gambling Regulatory Authority Act on 09 January 2025.

I am informed by the Gambling Regulatory Authority that a series of serious allegations were published in the press regarding Mr Veeshal Chumroo, to the effect that he was seen driving a Porsche car.

These allegations were published in Week-End newspapers dated 12 and 19 April 2026. The articles alleged that the Porsche car bearing registration number 227 JN 24, belongs to a poultry farming company owned by Mr D.S. and Mr I.J.S. These individuals are also Directors and Shareholders of a betting company namely Bookies Hub Ltd which holds a bookmaker licence issued by the Gambling Regulatory Authority.

According to the article, the matter was reported to the Financial Crimes Commission.

I am further informed that the former Chairperson informed the Gambling Regulatory Authority Board at its meeting held on Wednesday 23 April 2026, that he was the one driving the black Porsche car bearing registration number 227 JN 24. The Board took the decision to refer the press article to the Financial Crimes Commission.

I am informed that the former Chairperson then submitted his resignation on Friday 24 April 2026 without mentioning the reasons behind his decision.

Regarding part (a) of the question, I am informed that since the part-time Chairperson resigned from his position, there was no payment made or due to him.

Concerning part (b) of the question, I am apprised by the Gambling Regulatory Authority that the Financial Crimes Commission has informed the latter that a preliminary investigation has been initiated against the former Chairperson for using a company car belonging to a GRA's licensee.

**DRUG TRAFFICKING OFFENCES – POLICE OFFICERS
ARRESTED/SUSPENDED (2014-JUNE 2026)**

(No. B/876) Mr R. Jhummun (Second Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to drug trafficking offences, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of Police Officers arrested and/or

suspended in connection therewith since 2014 to date, indicating the number thereof convicted and where matters stand regarding the remaining cases.

(Withdrawn)

INTER-MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE – MONOPOLISTIC & QUASI-MONOPOLISTIC MARKETS – ANTI-COMPETITIVE PRICES & UNFAIR PRICING

(No. B/877) Ms J. Bérenger (First Member for Vacoas & Floréal) 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 Cabinet decision to set up an Inter-Ministerial Committee to address issues pertaining to pricing in monopolistic and quasi-monopolistic markets, he will state whether Government considers that the Competition Commission has been ineffective in dealing with anti-competitive prices and unfair pricing and, if so, indicate –

- (a) the shortcomings, if any, identified in the functioning thereof, and
- (b) why the setting up of the Inter-Ministerial Committee is deemed required instead of strengthening the powers and operational capacity thereof.

Reply (The Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection): I wish to inform the House that Government has not taken the view that the Competition Commission of Mauritius has been ineffective in the discharge of its statutory mandate. The Competition Commission remains an independent statutory body established under the Competition Act, with the responsibility to investigate anti-competitive conduct, abuse of monopoly situations, collusive agreements and other restrictive business practices.

I am informed that as at May 2026, the Competition Commission had received and processed some 1,400 issues, including complaints, referrals, merger notifications, cartel screenings, monopoly screenings and internally generated matters.

A comprehensive list and the corresponding reports on all the issues investigated by the Competition Commission is available on its website. I am placing, in the Library of the National Assembly, a list of the achievements of the Competition Commission since its establishment to date.

I would like to invite the hon. Member to visit the web page of the Competition Commission to obtain further details on the different issues looked into by the Commission.

As regards part (a) of the question, Government has not identified shortcomings warranting any conclusion that the Competition Commission has failed in its mandate. However, it is recognised that competition investigations are, by nature, complex, highly technical and often lengthy processes requiring extensive economic assessment and evidential analysis.

The objective of the Inter-Ministerial Committee is to provide a broader policy and coordination platform at Government level to examine issues which may not fall solely within the remit of competition enforcement legislation. In many instances, pricing issues are influenced by a combination of factors, including import dependency, freight and insurance costs, exchange rate fluctuations, supply chain disruptions, market concentration, regulatory constraints and international market developments.

Notwithstanding the above, I am informed that the Competition Commission has endeavoured to ensure the effective enforcement of competition law and to reinforce the Competition Commission's role as an independent body promoting competitive markets for the benefit of consumers and the Mauritian economy.

The Competition Commission has continued to deliver on its core functions through its enforcement activities, merger review processes, advocacy initiatives and institutional development efforts. Particular emphasis has been placed on improving operational efficiency, fostering a performance-oriented culture, enhancing stakeholder engagement, and ensuring that the Competition Commission remains responsive to emerging market challenges.

As regards part (b) of the question, as mentioned earlier, the setting up of the Inter-Ministerial Committee is intended to complement existing institutional mechanisms through enhanced policy coordination among relevant Ministries and public bodies. The Committee will allow Government to assess broader structural and policy issues impacting prices and consumer welfare, while the Competition Commission continues to exercise its statutory functions independently under the law.

Government remains committed to ensuring fair market practices, safeguarding consumer interests and maintaining an appropriate balance between effective competition enforcement, economic realities and broader public interest considerations.

**INTERNATIONAL DRIVING LICENCE – MAURITIAN CITIZENS –
ONLINE APPLICATIONS**

(No. B/878) Mr L. Caserne (Third 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 International Driving Licence issued to Mauritian citizens, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to whether consideration will be given for the –

- (a) extension of the validity period thereof from one to three years and, if so, where matters stand, and
- (b) provision for applications therefor to be made online and at other Driving Test Centres.

Reply: I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that, in accordance with Regulations 57 and 58 of the Road Traffic Regulations, Mauritians who are already holders of a Driving Licence are, on application, issued with an International Driving Permit by the Licensing Office of the Mauritius Police Force, against a prescribed fee of Rs 800.

The International Driving Permits issued to Mauritians are valid for a period of one year. The 1968 Vienna Convention on Road Traffic provides that an International Driving Permit is valid for 3 years. However, Mauritius has not signed and ratified this Convention.

As regards to part (b) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that since 02 September 2022, an online platform is available for scheduling of appointment only. Following an application for an International Driving Permit, the applicant calls personally at any of the three Driving Test Centres located at Line Barracks, Port Louis, Flacq or Curepipe for verification of the original Driving Licence. International Driving Permits are issued at all the three Driving Test Centres.

An Integrated Driving Licence Management System (IDLMS) is currently being developed at the Traffic Branch. The new system will allow the applicant to submit online applications for driving tests, driving licences and International Driving Permits, payment of the prescribed fees and the processing of the applications. The new system is being tested and it is expected to be fully operational by December 2026.

GENDER SECTOR TECHNICAL GROUPS – COMPOSITION & MEASURES

(No. B/900) Ms S. Anquetil (Second Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the four Gender Sector Technical Groups for the private sector, the media, academic institutions and civil society organisations established under her Ministry, she will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to, in each case since November 2024 to date, the –

- (a) composition thereof, and
- (b) specific measures taken.

(Withdrawn)

ELECTRIC-POWERED AUTOCYCLES, BICYCLES & SCOOTERS – PUBLIC ROADS – LEGISLATION

(No. B/901) Mr T. Apollon (Second Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Land Transport whether, in regard to the use of electric-powered autocycles, bicycles and scooters on public roads, particularly by minors, he will state whether consideration is being given for the introduction of an appropriate legislative and/or regulatory framework in relation thereto.

(Withdrawn)

SSRN HOSPITAL – PREGNANT WOMAN DEMISE – INQUIRY & OUTCOME

(No. B/902) Ms S. Anquetil (Second Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the recent death of a 21-year-old pregnant woman at the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam National Hospital, he will state whether an inquiry has been initiated thereinto to determine the causes thereof and, if so, indicate the outcome thereof.

(Vide Reply to PQ B/881)

“NATATION SCOLAIRE” (SCHOOL SWIMMING) PROGRAM – PROJECT COST

(No. B/903) Mr S. Jugurnauth (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resource whether, in regard to the “Bassin

d'Apprentissage” initiative, operating under the broader “Natation Scolaire” (School Swimming) Program, he will state the total costs thereof over the period 2019 to 2025, indicating, in respect of each such project, the initial project cost and variation cost, if any, and, if so, indicate the reasons and the name of the corresponding contractor/s responsible therefor.

(Withdrawn)

SAINT-CROIX SOCIAL WELFARE CENTRE – NEW BUILDING CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/904) Mr L. Caserne (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the demolition of the building housing the Saint-Croix Social Welfare Centre to make way for a Multi-Use Games Area project, she will state whether provision has been made for the construction of a new building to house the said Centre and, if not, why not and, if so, where matters stand, indicating the –

- (a) reasons for the delay in the implementation thereof, and
- (b) expected start and completion dates thereof.

(Withdrawn)

FORBACH ROAD – FLOODING & ROAD SAFETY CONCERNS

(No. B/905) Mr R. Etwareea (Third Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure whether, in regard to the Forbach Road at the level of the three stone crushing companies, especially, during heavy rainfalls, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit, information on whether it is in presence of representations in relation thereto and, if so, indicate the remedial measures being envisaged, including whether consultations will be held with companies operating thereat with a view of finding remedial solution.

(Withdrawn)

ALPHA COLLEGE BUILDING – INFRASTRUCTURAL INTEGRITY ASSESSMENT

(No. B/907) Mr A. Duval (Fourth Member for Port-Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resource whether, in regard to the Cabinet decision of 25 July 2025 for the setting up of an Independent Technical Committee to assess the infrastructural integrity of the building of Alpha College, he will state where matters stand, indicating –

- (a) whether the report thereof has been submitted, and
- (b) the actions taken and/or being envisaged in relation thereto.

(Withdrawn)

FESTIVAL INTERNATIONAL KREOL – CONTENT & ORIENTATION REVIEW

(No. B/908) Ms A. Savabaddy (First Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Tourism whether, in regard to the Festival International Kreol, he will state whether consideration will be given for a review of the concept and orientation thereof with a view to enhancing its cultural heritage and content, incorporating symposiums and conferences, increasing local and foreign participation and developing same into a major annual tourist attraction.

(Withdrawn)

BUS ROUTE NO. 137 – CARREAU ACACIA TO CUREPIPE – COMPLAINTS & MEASURES

(No. B/909) Mr T. Apollon (Second Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Land Transport whether, in regard to the bus service along Route No. 137, Carreau Acacia to Curepipe, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Land Transport Authority, information as to the –

- (a) number of complaints received in respect thereof, indicating the reasons therefor and
- (b) measures being envisaged to ensure regular and reliable service for commuters thereat.

(Withdrawn)

POLYTECHNICS MAURITIUS LTD – FINANCIAL SITUATION & EMPLOYMENT CONDITIONS

(No. A/53) Dr. Ms B. Thannoo (Second Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Minister of Tertiary Education, Science and Research whether, in regard to Polytechnics Mauritius Ltd, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the –

- (a) financial situation thereof, indicating –

- (i) the number of lecturers who have ceased to serve thereat since March 2026 to date, and
 - (ii) particulars of increments not granted to lecturers with more than two years' continuous service, and
- (b) measures being envisaged to guarantee job security thereat and ensure the implementation of remuneration packages as per the terms and conditions of contracts of employment.

Reply:

(a) Financial Status of Polytechnics Mauritius Ltd

The financial review of Polytechnics Mauritius Ltd (PML) revealed increasing operational and liquidity pressures in recent years, largely driven by rising operational expenditure, expansion of campus infrastructure, increased staffing commitments and dependence on FTES-related revenue streams.

Despite fluctuations in revenue performance over the years, operational expenditure continued to rise significantly, putting pressure on the institution's financial sustainability. While the institution recorded operational surpluses in 2022 and 2024, it recorded substantial operational deficits in 2023 and 2025.

As at 01 July 2025, the institution had accumulated trade creditors of Rs101.9 million owed to 214 creditors and suppliers. In 2025, operational expenditure reached Rs374.95 million, while actual revenue stood at Rs288.97 million, resulting in an operational deficit of Rs85.98 million. For the period 2022 to 2025, cumulative operational expenditure exceeded cumulative revenue by approximately Rs87.02 million.

The institution was also operating under significant fixed operational commitments, including annual rental costs of approximately Rs60 million for the Ébène and Rose-Belle campuses. In January 2026, a campus occupancy survey revealed that the average space utilisation rate across institutions was just 24.4%.

Treasury Accounting Basis ('Rs Millions)

Financial Year	Budgeted Revenue	Actual Revenue	Variance	Operational Expenditure	Surplus / (Deficit)
2022	201.88	231.27	29.39	229.54	1.73

Financial Year	Budgeted Revenue	Actual Revenue	Variance	Operational Expenditure	Surplus / (Deficit)
2023	291.22	253.35	(37.87)	271.72	(18.37)
2024	395.50	396.94	1.44	381.33	15.61
2025	232.40	288.97	56.57	374.95	(85.98)
Total	1,121.00	1,170.53	49.53	1,257.54	(87.02)

The Government had bailed out PML on 2 occasions: 1st in 2023, by allocating an advance of Rs60 million, and 2nd in June 2025, with an additional recurrent grant of Rs65 million to sustain its operational expenses. Had this Rs125 million cash injection not been made, PML would have been in a bankrupt position.

(i) The number of Lecturers who have ceased to serve thereat since March 2026 to date

As part of the operational review and restructuring exercise undertaken by Polytechnics Mauritius Ltd, the contracts of 38 employees were not renewed as of April 2026. The posts concerned were in the following categories –

Post	Total
Academic Affairs Officer	2
Associate Lecturer	8
Associate Officer	6
Attendant	6
Attendant Driver	3
Digital Marketing Officer	1
Executive Officer	1
Facilities Assistant	2
Front Desk Officer	1
HR Officer	2
Internship and Placement Officer	1
Lab Tech	3
Lecturer	1

Quality Assurance Officer	1
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Eight lecturers and Associate Lecturers have ceased to serve thereat since March 2026 comprising four resignations and four non-renewal of contracts.

- (ii) Particulars of increments not granted to lecturers with more than two years' continuous service

With a financial situation requiring immediate attention and action, the urgency was to offer permanent employment to those who had completed 2 years or more. Thus, the last batch of 48 employees was placed on permanent employment in April 2026 without any salary review based on the recommendation of an HR Consultancy exercise initiated in 2022. Prior to the same, 77 employees were placed on permanent employment upon completing their two years of the first fixed-term contract of employment at PML. Moreover, the salary of any grade of employee at Polytechnics Mauritius follows a range rather than a scale and incremental and it is anticipated that with the turnaround of the financial situation and Polytechnics Mauritius becoming resilient again, a salary review would be initiated that would eventually compensate the employees on permanent employment, particularly those who have not been provided an increase in the current exercise.

The particulars of Lecturers and Associate Lecturers not granted increments with more than two years' continuous service are –

Category	Details of years of service	Number
Lecturer	2 years to 3 years	3
	More than 3 years	2
Associate Lecturer	2 years to 3 years	12
	More than 3 years	2

- (b) Measures being envisaged to guarantee job security thereat and ensure the implementation of remuneration packages as per the terms and conditions of contracts of employment

In response to rising operational costs, underutilised campuses with uneven enrolment patterns, weak programme viability in selected clusters, and identified governance gaps in

workload management, procurement, and quality assurance, Management had established a Monitoring Committee in January 2026 to conduct a comprehensive institution-wide review.

The Committee's mandate is to assess operational, academic, financial, and governance practices, and to implement targeted corrective measures to restore efficiency, sustainability, and institutional performance across PML.

Rather than pursuing isolated or ad hoc interventions, the Monitoring Committee adopted a structured, strategic approach, clustering reforms into five priority pillars, namely –

- (1) Financial Stability and Revenue Expansion;
- (2) Workforce Efficiency and Teaching Delivery;
- (3) Academic Quality and Programme Viability;
- (4) Governance, Quality Assurance and Compliance, and
- (5) Campus and Resource Rationalisation.

Each pillar was assigned clear ownership and accountability to ensure coordinated execution, effective monitoring, and measurable outcomes. The work of the Monitoring Committee is already converging around several high-impact priorities –

Financial Stability and Revenue Expansion –

- (1) New revenue streams through short courses and corporate training;
- (2) Tight cash flow controls and cost discipline;
- (3) Clear enrolment targets linked to financial planning.

Workforce Efficiency and Teaching Delivery –

- (1) Verified academic workload data;
- (2) Formal oversight of part-time staffing;
- (3) Revised organisational structure and clearer accountability.

Academic Quality and Programme Viability –

- (1) Programme cost-benefit and viability analysis;
- (2) Curriculum alignment with industry needs;
- (3) Strengthened moderation and assessment systems.

Governance, Quality Assurance and Compliance –

- (1) Regular audits of processes and standards;
- (2) Statutory payment discipline;
- (3) Transparent procurement controls.

Campus and Resource Rationalisation –

- (1) Full utilisation reviews across all campuses;

(2) Evidence-based consolidation and restructuring proposals.

Collectively, these initiatives reflect the Monitoring Committee's shift from fragmented corrective actions to a coordinated institutional turnaround framework, underpinned by clear strategic priorities, defined accountability, and data-driven reviews aimed at stabilising finances, improving efficiency, strengthening academic relevance, enhancing governance, and optimising resources with the Board being kept regularly informed as implementation progresses and measurable outcomes are achieved.

In spite of a compelling financial situation, Polytechnics Mauritius has stood by its commitment towards its statutory obligations and ensuring that the salaries and benefits of its staff are paid on time as required by law. Moreover, it has also been compliant with Mauritian Labour Laws in paying the compensations as decided by the Government.

Going forward, Polytechnics Mauritius will continue to stand by its commitments regarding salaries, benefits, and compensation, ensuring that staff are remunerated on time and in accordance with their contracts of employment.

The financial situation of Polytechnics is anticipated to result in a turnaround in due course, and Polytechnics Mauritius is also envisaging, in time, through the reforms initiated, to become resilient and sustainable. Thus, overall, guaranteeing job security and respecting remuneration packages at Polytechnics Mauritius would eventually lead to a salary review being implemented to compensate staff appropriately and in compliance with Mauritian labour laws. In the meantime, the requirement is for stronger institutional governance to be put in place and monitored to eventually restore employee confidence and operational stability.

Polytechnics Mauritius Ltd remains fully committed to its national mandate of developing skilled, industry-ready graduates and contributing meaningfully to the socio-economic development of Mauritius through accessible, high-quality technical and professional education.

The Board and Management recognise and value the contributions of all employees who have participated in the institution's growth and development over the years. However, the findings from the Monitoring Committee exercise revealed serious financial, operational, and governance deficiencies that required urgent corrective action to safeguard the institution's long-term viability and credibility.

The reforms were, therefore, considered necessary to strengthen expenditure control, improve operational efficiency, reduce recurrent costs and restore the long-term financial sustainability of Polytechnics Mauritius Ltd.

CALODYNE – ILLEGAL QUARRYING WORKS

(No. A/55) Dr. Ms B. Thannoo (Second Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change whether, in regard to illegal quarrying works being carried out at Calodyne, he will, state whether –

- (a) an Environmental Impact Assessment permit has been secured therefor;
- (b) any breach of the Environment Protection Act or any other relevant land use or planning regulations has been noted;
- (c) any stop order, enforcement notice or prosecution has been initiated in connection therewith and, if so, where matters stand, and
- (d) an assessment has been carried out in respect of reports concerning the transportation and commercial removal of large quantities of rocks and earth materials from the site.

Reply: With regard to part (a) of the question, no Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Licence has been issued by my Ministry in respect of rock quarrying activity being carried out at Calodyne.

As regards part (b) of the question, following advice tendered by the Office of the Attorney General, a joint site inspection was carried out on 21 May 2026 in the presence of an Officer from the Geo Technical Unit of the Ministry of National Infrastructure. According to the Geo Technical Unit, there is a substantial change of the topography and massive excavation of rocks from the site, and this activity constitutes rock quarrying.

Rock quarrying is a scheduled undertaking listed under Part B of the Sixth Schedule of the Environment Act 2024 warranting an EIA Licence. Since no EIA Licence has been issued, there has been a breach of the Environment Act 2024.

Concerning parts (c) and (d) of the question, section 112 (1) of the Environment Act provides the following –

“Where a person commences or carries on any development or activity without the relevant licence, permit or approval issued under this Act, the Director may cause to be served on that person or any person responsible for the giving of instructions for the

carrying out of such development or activity, a stop order prohibiting the development or the activity.”

Stop Orders were accordingly issued on 21 May 2026 to the following persons –

- (i) Mr Mohammed Shahmeem Goolam Hussen Raja, owner of the plot of land;
- (ii) Mr Doorvesh Sookun, Contractor SOS Pride Co Ltd, and
- (iii) Mr Chandradeo Hallooman, Operator of excavating machinery.

Since the issue of the Stop Orders, regular follow-up site inspections have been carried out by the *Police de l'Environnement* confirming compliance to the Stop Orders. Moreover, neither the presence of lorries nor excavators was noted and the excavated rocks were still on site.

An enquiry has been initiated on the illegal activity by the *Police de l'Environnement* and the local Police Station, namely the Grand Gaube Police Station.