No. 24 of 2026

REPUBLIC OF MAURITIUS

EIGHTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES (HANSARD) (UNREVISED)

FIRST SESSION

TUESDAY 21 JULY 2026

CONTENTS

PAPERS LAID

QUESTIONS ***(Oral)***

MOTION

BILLS ***(Public)***

ADJOURNMENT

QUESTIONS ***(Written)***

THE CABINET

(Formed by Dr. the Hon. Navinchandra Ramgoolam)

Dr. the Hon. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, GCSK, FRCP	Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands
Hon. 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
Hon. John Michaël Tzoun Sao Yeung Sik Yuen	Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection
Dr. the Hon. Kaviraj Sharma Sukon	Minister of Tertiary Education, Science and Research
Hon. Sayed Muhammad Aadil Ameer Meea	Minister of Industry, SMEs and Cooperatives
Dr. the Hon. Mahend Gungapersad, PDSM	Minister of Education and Human Resource
Dr. the Hon. Avinash Ramtohul	Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation
Hon. Lutchmanah Pentiah	Minister of Public Service and Administrative Reforms
Hon. Ranjiv 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. 24 of 2026

Sitting of Tuesday 21 July 2026

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

The National Anthem was played

(Madam Speaker in the Chair)

PAPERS LAID

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

A. Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change

The Annual Report and Report of the Director of Audit on the financial statements of the Beach Authority for the year ended 30 June 2024. (In Original)

B. Ministry of Agro-Industry, Food Security, Blue Economy and Fisheries

The Annual Report and Report of the Director of Audit on the financial statements of the Mauritius Cane Industry Authority for the year ended 30 June 2025. (In Original)

C. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade

The Africa Finance Corporation (Privileges and Immunities) (Amendment) Regulations 2026. (Government Notice No. 128 of 2026)

D. Ministry of Labour and Industrial Relations

The Workers' Rights (Labour Contractor) (Agricultural Sector) Regulations 2026. (Government Notice No. 129 of 2026)

E. Ministry of Local Government

(a) The Annual Report and Audited financial statements of the Municipal City Council of Port Louis for the year ended 30 June 2025. (In Original)

(b) The Annual Report and Audited financial statements of the District Council of Black River for the year ended 30 June 2025. (In Original)

(c) The Annual Report and Audited financial statements of the District Council of Riviere du Rempart for the year ended 30 June 2025. (In Original)

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

MIGRANT WORKERS HIRE – WORKERS' RIGHTS ACT 2019 – GOVERNMENT NOTICE NO. 129 OF 2026

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr G. Lesjongard) *(by Private Notice)* asked the Minister of Labour and Industrial Relations whether, in regard to the hiring of migrant workers, he will state the measures put in place by his Ministry, following the coming into operation of Government Notice No. 129 of 2026 of the Workers' Rights Act 2019, to –

(a) prevent the registration of shell associations, federations or co-operative societies created solely to bypass direct employer liabilities, and

(b) enforce compliance, audit remuneration and prevent illegal sector hopping of migrant workers and table specimen copies of the service agreement between the registered labour contractor and the hirer employer and the employment contract between the labour contractor and the migrant worker.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Minister of Labour!

Mr Uteem: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. Leader of the Opposition for his Private Notice Question, which gives me an opportunity to explain one of the major decisions taken by this Government to ensure food security in Mauritius and ensure that small planters do not abandon their arable land.

I am informed by the Ministry of Agro-Industry, Food Security, Blue Economy and Fisheries that presently, there are more than 8,000 arpents of sugarcane fields which are currently under abandoned state. 9,000 tonnes of sugarcane were left unharvested in the fields mainly due to shortage of labour. Furthermore, there are 10,486 small planters in non-sugar sector, 1,125 breeders and 870 tea planters registered with the Small Farmers Welfare Fund. There are also 8,140 sugarcane small planters registered with the Sugar Insurance Fund Board.

My Ministry is already facilitating the recruitment of foreign workers for the agricultural sector under the supervision of the Ministry of Agro-Industry, Food Security, Blue Economy and Fisheries, through the Work Permit Committee of my Ministry.

However, for small planters, it is not economical to recruit individually the number of foreign workers required as these workers are seasonal workers, in seasonal demand, and you do not need those workers all year round.

So, as a solution, it was proposed that one worker would employ migrant workers and then the same migrant workers would work for more than one hirer employer.

Madam Speaker: You mean one employer?

Mr Uteem: This is the concept of labour contractor.

Madam Speaker: You said one…

Mr Uteem: The labour contractor is one employer. He will recruit migrant workers, and then those migrant workers would be supplied by the labour contractor to the hirer employer, which are going to be small planters and small breeders.

Now, under the Workers' Rights Act, back in 2024 before I took office, there was already a provision relating to labour contractors. However, there was never any regulation proclaimed to give effect to this concept of labour contractor because a number of concerns have been raised by trade unions.

So, accordingly, a tripartite meeting was called under my chairmanship on 10 March 2026 to gather the views of trade unions, small planters, Mauritius Cane Industry Authority and other stakeholders.

After discussion, the following points were agreed, and I stress, representatives of trade unions were at that meeting. So, the agreed points were as follows –

(i) regulation will be made for the registration of labour contractors, and labour contractors will be permitted to supply migrant workers to qualified hirers only in the agricultural sector, subject to certain eligibility criteria being applicable to them;

(ii) only cooperative federations and associations having small planters and farmers as members would be eligible to act as labour contractors;

(iii) the migrant workers will be assigned to small planters and breeders as defined in the Small Farmers Welfare Fund Act 2002;

(iv) safeguards will be introduced to uphold the principle of equal remuneration for work of equal value as provided for under section 26 of the Workers' Rights Act;

(v) the employment contract between the labour contractor and the worker would also clearly specify the occupation in which the worker will be engaged and the rate of remuneration applicable;

(vi) the labour contractor and the hirer shall jointly and severally be liable for occupational safety and health of the worker, including for diseases potentially contracted by workers related to his occupation;

(vii) the lodging accommodation shall be provided by the labour contractor who should also apply for relevant permits;

(viii) the worker should have the choice to either arrange for his own food or opt for the labour contractor to provide same, and in the latter case, the amount to be withheld from his remuneration must be specified in the employment contract and should not exceed Rs3,000 per month, and finally

(ix) the Mauritius Cane Industry Authority would act as a facilitator, and together with my Ministry, the Mauritius Cane Industry Authority will be responsible for ensuring that the rights of the migrant workers are respected and upheld, and employers as well as their hirers deliver on their obligation.

The Ministry of Agro-Industry, Food Security and Blue Economy concurred with the points of consensus and also informed –

(a) a list of qualified hirers, that is, the small planters and small breeders, will be compiled and provided for this pilot project by the Mauritius Cane Industry Authority, and

(b) upon their arrival. training on local agricultural practices will be provided by the Mauritius Cane Industry Authority and the Food and Agricultural Research and

Extension Institute to all migrant workers on the occupation that they will engage thereafter.

On 27 March 2026, Government agreed to regulations being made under sections 29A, 29B and 124 of the Workers' Rights Act for the registration of labour contractor and to enable the supply of migrant workers to small planters and small farmers by the labour contractors in the agricultural sector.

Madam Speaker, subsequently, my Ministry held further consultation with the Ministry of Agro-Industry, and the Mauritius Cane Industry Authority, with a view to finalising the draft Workers' Rights (Labour Contractor) (Agricultural Sector) Regulations 2026, and further provisions were included in the regulations to ensure the occupational safety and health of workers, that adequate safeguard will be provided in the regulations. The registration for labour contractor would be valid for three years initially. On 18 July 2026, the regulations were published in the Government Gazette.

As regard to part (a) of the question, following extensive consultation with the Ministry of Agro-Industry, Food Security, Blue Economy and Fisheries, the Mauritius Cane Industry Authority, the trade unions, and representatives of small planters, Government decided that only registered federation, association or co-operative society, having as members small planters and small breeders, may apply to be registered as labour contractor. No private company, no employment agency, no recruitment agency or other service providers will be eligible to act as labour contractor under the regulation.

Pursuant to Regulation 5(1), the labour contractor can only supply migrant workers to small planters or small breeders who are registered. Now, as you know, small planters and small breeders are limitatively defined in the Small Farmers Welfare Fund Act.

Furthermore, all sugarcane planters need to be registered with the Sugar Insurance Fund Board, which operates under the aegis of the Ministry of Agro-Industry, to supply the cane to the mills and benefit from subsidies and income after sales.

For vegetable, tea plantation and other crop, small planters need to be registered through the Small Farmers Welfare Fund, and they are given a membership card with an identification number. Therefore, it is very easy to identify who are the small farmers and who are the small planters. So, we are not opening the floodgate for any hirer in the

agricultural sector. It will be only the registered small farmers and small breeders who will be able to act as hirer.

Now, before a federation, association or co-operative society may even apply to my Ministry to register as a labour contractor, it must be validly registered with the Registrar of Associations or the Registrar of Co-operative Societies.

For associations, before an association is registered, the association for small planters or small breeders needs to file a copy of their rules with the Registrar of Associations. The Registrar of Associations will have to verify under the rules whether membership is for small breeders and small farmers.

In addition, they need to supply a list of members to the Registrar of Associations. Again, the Registrar of Associations can verify that they are only small breeders and small farmers. The Registrar of Associations can ask for further information in case of uncertainty. For example, it can require a copy of the registration card of the small breeder and the small planter to ensure that only the federation and association, who has as members small planters and small breeders, will qualify under this regime, and a similar regime is applicable for co-operative society. Again, the Registrar of Co-operative can ask for all information to ensure that the members are small breeders and small planters.

In addition, Madam Speaker, my Ministry will verify the authenticity of the document submitted, including legal registration of the organisation, its membership and composition and financial standing before we will license a labour contractor.

There would be a technical committee which is going to examine application for labour contractor, which will consist, among others, representatives of my Ministry, representatives of Agri-Industry and the Prime Minister's Office. So, again, acting as another filter to ensure that only labour contractors who have as members small planters and small breeders would be given the permit to recruit for hirer.

After registration, oversight will continue. Registration is valid for three years. In that period of time, there would be inspection carried out by officers of my Ministry, the Labour Division and the Employment Division. The Mauritius Cane Industry Authority will also carry out the necessary investigation to ensure that the foreign workers are only recruited to work for small planters and small breeders.

Now, with regard to the risk of labour contractor being used to bypass direct employer liabilities as set out in the PNQ, with due respect, this risk is totally misconceived. As per Section 29B (2) (b) of the Workers' Right Act, the labour contractor is the employer of the migrant workers and assumes the corresponding employer obligations under the Workers' Right Act.

Section 26 (1) (b) of the Workers' Right Act provides clearly that –

> "Where an employer has recourse to the services of a job contractor, the job contractor shall ensure that the remuneration of any worker employed by him shall not be less favourable than the remuneration of a worker employed by the principal employer and performing work of equal value."

That section was applicable for job contractors. Now, in the regulation, we have a similar provision applicable to labour contractors.

So, now, the labour contractor must ensure that the hirer pays at least the same remuneration to the migrant worker than the remuneration that they are paying to their own employees to ensure the concept of same pay for same work.

In addition, Section 29C of the Workers' Right Act provides for joint liability – joint liability – between the labour contractor and the hirer employer in specified circumstances such as the payment of remuneration, safety, health and welfare of workers, thereby ensuring that the rights and entitlements of migrant workers remain fully protected. The liability of hirer employer is also clear from Section 29C (6) of the Workers' Right Act.

Therefore, Madam Speaker, the possibility of an employer trying to avoid liability by having recourse to a labour contractor simply does not arise because the hirer will also be jointly and severely liable with the labour contractor if there is any breach of occupation health and safety rules or non-payment of remuneration or overtime not being paid. All these are under the Workers' Right Act. There will be joint liability for the labour contractor and the hirer employer.

As regards part (b) of the question, concerning enforcing compliance and preventing illegal sector hopping by migrant workers. As I mentioned previously, there will be post-registration inspections carried out by officers of my Ministry at the level of the Labour Division and the Employment Division. These inspections will, of course, include verifying that the migrant workers have been assigned exclusively for small planters and small

breeders, and that the work actually being performed corresponds to the occupation and job description specified in the employment contract.

With regard to remuneration, Regulation 6 is clear that the remuneration relating to the job category or occupation will be regulated by the applicable remuneration regulations applicable to the agricultural sector. The applicable remuneration regulations are, for example, the Field-crop and Orchard Workers (Remuneration) Regulations, the Livestock Workers (Remuneration) Regulations, the Sugar Industry (Agricultural Workers) Regulations, the Sugar Industry (Non-Agricultural Workers) Regulations, the Tea Industry Workers Regulation.

Furthermore, pursuant to Regulation 5(2), the rate of remuneration applicable to the job category, which the migrant worker has agreed to perform, will already be listed in the employment contract. For example, if a migrant worker, according to his employment contract, will have to work for a small planter for a certain period of time and then for a small breeder for another period of time, for the work he is performing with the small planter, he has to be paid at least the same rate as provided in the applicable remuneration.

Similarly, for the work performed with the small breeder, he will have to be paid at the rate specified in the applicable remuneration. All this have to be set out in his employment contract.

Now, as regards the contract of employment between labour contractor and migrant worker, a template is currently being worked out by officers of my Ministry in consultation with the State Law Office. The regulations at Regulation 5 (2) already provides the information to be included in that employment contract and includes –

(a) the qualifications and skills of the migrant worker;

(b) the job description of the task or occupation to be performed by the migrant worker;

(c) the rate of remuneration applicable to the job category in respect of which the worker is offered employment and other terms and conditions of his employment;

(d) a clause prohibiting the migrant worker taking up employment outside agricultural sector, and

(e) the corresponding monthly deduction to be made from his remuneration where a migrant worker opts to be provided with food.

There is also other information to be provided by the labour contractor to the worker under Section 29B (4) of the Workers' Right Act.

As regards the contract between the hirer and the labour contractor, which is also specified in the PNQ, there is no prescribed format for the agreement between the labour contractor and the hirer. Therefore, we do not have the template at the level of the Ministry.

However, the labour contractor must ensure that the hirer employer does not request the migrant worker to perform tasks which fall outside the scope of his job description and which requires qualification or skills other than those specified in his employment agreement.

Madam Speaker: Thank you. First supplementary question!

Mr Lesjongard: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I thank the hon. Minister for his reply.

He stated in his reply that tripartite meetings were held and that trade unions were agreeable to the new concept of labour contractor with certain conditions. Can I ask the hon. Minister how many such meetings were held? And will he table the notes of meeting where the trade unions said that they are agreeable to the concept of labour contractor upon certain conditions.

Mr Uteem: There was one meeting held on 10 March 2026. Representatives of workers organisations including representatives of the Joint Negotiating Panel, the CTSP, FPU and Federation of Agricultural, Allied Industries and other Workers Unions. I will have to check with the State Law Office, if there is no issue with tabling the minutes, I will table same.

Madam Speaker: Okay. Second question.

Mr Lesjongard: Madam Speaker, can the hon. Minister inform the House whether the first recruitment of workers under these new regulations, first, he said, will be done on a pilot basis; does he confirm that? And whether the first importation will be restricted to 1,000 labourers only or more?

Mr Uteem: I confirm that this is being done on a pilot basis. May I remind the hon. Leader of the Opposition that this is an initiative by the Ministry of Agro-Industry to try to ensure that small planters do not desert their arable land. So, we will see on a first step. We

have not set a limit on the number of workers to be recruited and we have not yet received any application for job contractor.

So, we will have to see how many federations, associations, co-operatives are applying to be registered for labour and then, in consultation with the Ministry of Agro-Industry, we will see whether we need to restrict the necessary permits.

Mr Lesjongard: Your colleague stated that there will be a first batch of 1,000 workers and then a second batch of 2,500 workers. Can the hon. Minister inform the House when the first batch of labourers is expected to reach the country and where will they be accommodated? Because his colleague stated that they might be accommodated in the quarters of Metro Express workers. Will you confirm that?

Mr Uteem: Like I said, Madam Speaker, we have not received, as at today, any request for registration of labour contractor. But what is already provided in the regulation is that the labour contractor will obviously need to make arrangement for the accommodation of all the migrant workers and the appropriate lodging accommodation permit will have to be sought. Clearance will have to be received from the Ministry of Health to see the state of the building, clearance will have to be sought from the Fire Clearance Department, and from the Local Government Authorities to see whether there is a Building and Land Use Permit, and then, my Ministry will issue the lodging accommodation permit.

So, I do not know. If, for example, you mentioned the use of the Metro Express, which had been used previously, which has...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Do not talk to him.

Mr Uteem: … which has been used previously....

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Do not talk to him.

Mr Uteem: With regard to the accommodation, which had been used by Larsen & Toubro when they were constructing the Metro Express, if there is a request to use these

premises as lodging and accommodation for the migrant workers. of course, this will be given due consideration by my Ministry.

Madam Speaker: Yes, now you talk. Your next question!

Mr Lesjongard: Yes. Can the hon. Minister confirm whether the first batch – I put it this way – of 1,000 workers will be exclusively for the sugar sector and will it be only for small planters or also for the corporate sector?

Mr Uteem: As I said, Madam Speaker, I did not venture for the figure of 1,000. Okay? The labour contractor will be given a permit only to supply the migrant workers to small planters and small breeders. Now, small planters include small planters in the sugar sector and non-sugar, vegetables, tea, planters, all these will be eligible as long as they fall within the definition of 'small planter' under the law.

Madam Speaker: Next question!

Mr Lesjongard: Thank you, Madam Speaker. With regard to the rate of remuneration, which we understand will be as per Remuneration Orders, can the hon. Minister inform the House whether there will be two different salary levels, that is, the migrant workers salary based on remuneration orders and that of local workers as per collective agreement signed?

Mr Uteem: Absolutely not! In Mauritius, we do not discriminate between Mauritian workers and foreign workers.

So, if there is a collective agreement and the rate applicable is more favourable to the employee than for the migrant worker, then that will be applicable because, I mentioned it, Madam Speaker, we made a specific provision and that was one of the requests made by the trade unions that we need to have equal pay for equal work.

So, in the regulation that we have enacted, it is clear that the hirer cannot pay more to a Mauritian worker than it is paying to a migrant worker. It will be the same rate, same value, same pay.

Madam Speaker: Thank you. Yes, your next question.

Mr Lesjongard: The hon. Minister admitted sometime back in this House that his Ministry currently lacks the administrative power to impose penalties on employers who fail to renew work permits and that the law will be amended to give the Ministry power to sanction these illegal employers. May we know where matters are with regard to the new legislation?

Mr Uteem: Yes, we have already made a request to the State Law Office and we have received legal advice from the State Law Office and officers of my Ministry are currently working on a series of administrative sanctions that can be imposed. When the text is ready, we will come to Parliament because that will require a legislative amendment; we cannot do it by way of regulation.

Madam Speaker: Yes.

Mr Lesjongard: On another note, Madam Speaker, may I ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware that many seasonal workers of the sugar sector have not benefited from the Workfare Programme Fund since the beginning of this year?

Mr Uteem: I am not aware of it, but I will certainly ask my officers to look into the matter because the whole purpose of the Workfare Programme is to come to the rescue of workers who have found themselves out of job through no fault of theirs and give them at least for one year a minimum allowance so that they can keep on paying their debt, their obligations.

Madam Speaker: Yes, another question.

Mr Lesjongard: Will the hon. Minister inform the House how his Ministry will monitor compliance across multiple specific remuneration regulations, for example, sugar sector versus tea sector rates, when migrant workers will be deployed across different plantations in the country?

Mr Uteem: This is why, Madam Speaker, the regulations make it clear that in the employment contract, we need to already specify what occupation, what grade the migrant worker is going to perform. Therefore, we will have the corresponding salary and this work contract like all work agreements between migrant worker and an employer in Mauritius will be vetted at the level of my Ministry.

So, the officers of my Ministry will ensure that in the employment contract for the grade that is specified in the contract, you will have the corresponding remuneration payable under the applicable Remuneration Order.

Madam Speaker: Yes, we are nearing the end. Do you have another question? Yes?

Mr Lesjongard: Yes, I have got two more questions, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Okay, I will give you two more questions.

Mr Lesjongard: Thank you. Can the hon. Minister inform the House what safeguards have been put in place by his Ministry to prevent labour contractors from forcing migrant workers into performing tasks outside their scope of work?

Mr Uteem: Again, this is already in the law. Neither can the labour contractor nor the hirer employer, force a worker to perform work that is outside the scope of their employment contract. Now, we will carry out spot inspections, but I understand that officers from the Mauritius Cane Industry Authority also will be carrying out spot checks to ensure compliance.

Madam Speaker: Thank you. Last question!

Mr Lesjongard: When he mentions spot checks, he has only 10 officers in the Migrant Unit of his Ministry.

Now, last question, Madam Speaker. Will the hon. Minister confirm that the agreement between the labour contractor and the migrant worker guarantees a minimum of working hours or a guaranteed basic salary if a small planter or breeder temporarily has no work available?

Mr Uteem: Yes, well, if we look at, for example, Regulation 7 of the Regulations, Duties of the hirer employer: the hirer employer shall comply with the conditions of employment, including the number of working hours and rest period for the migrant worker. And subsection 9: any person who contravenes these regulations shall commit an offense. So, it is already catered for in the regulations.

But I agree with the hon. Leader of Opposition, we will need to have additional staff to ensure proper monitoring and inspection, and we can only turn to the Ministry of Finance to give us additional staff.

Madam Speaker: Thank you very much, everybody. So, now we go to questions addressed to the hon. Prime Minister.

Hon. First Member for Vacoas and Floréal, please!

CAPITAL PROJECTS IMPLEMENTATION – RE-PRIORITISATION COMMITTEE

(No. B/1081) 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 the Committee set up to reprioritise the implementation of capital projects, chaired by the Secretary to Cabinet, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to –

(a) the criteria applicable for the determination of the projects to be postponed, scaled down or reprioritised, and

(b) whether the Committee is reviewing the M4 Motorway Project and, if not, why not.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, as I have previously stated in the House, Government has already initiated a number of measures to make up for the higher expenditure expected from the removal of the means testing of the State Age Pension, so that we can bring down the budget deficit and the public sector debt.

One of the key measures being undertaken is the re-prioritisation of capital projects outlined in the Budget, and the high-level Committee, chaired by the Secretary to the Cabinet, has been set up to look into the re-prioritisation of the implementation of the capital projects, while ensuring that economic growth is not adversely affected.

This is one of the mitigation measures that is expected to rationalise spending in the capital budget that would potentially attenuate the impact of the expected additional spending on the State Age Pension for the fiscal year 2026-2027, which amounts to about Rs6.2 billion, that is, additional expenditure that we have to see.

Government is pursuing an investment-led growth model rather than a consumption-driven approach and as such, investment in public sector projects, especially those that crowd in public investment, is vital to economic growth.

With regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that the criteria applicable for the re-prioritisation of projects are as follows –

(i) assessment of a project's preparedness and readiness for implementation. Projects with significant implementation challenges and risks, or persistent bottlenecks such as land acquisition issues, way-leaves, clearances and permits and procurement delays, may be re-prioritised until the necessary conditions for successful delivery are in place;

(ii) we are reviewing a project's expected economic and social costs and benefits, value for money, and the availability of alternative options that could achieve similar objectives more effectively or at a lower cost;

(iii) consideration of the alternative financing models to ensure that the public sector investment projects are implemented as planned while reducing the fiscal burden;

(iv) assessment of the affordability and fiscal sustainability of a project, taking into account future funding requirements, operating and maintenance costs, cash flow implications, and any contingent liabilities. Projects that place excessive pressure on fiscal resources may be considered for rescheduling or scope reduction.

With regard to part (b) of the question, the House may wish to note that the Motorway M4 project dates back to 2009 and forms part of the broader National Road Decongestion Programme. In 2009, there were about 366,000 vehicles on our roads compared to some 760,000 vehicles in 2026, which is an increase of almost 100%, Madam Speaker.

The Motorway M4 has been identified by Government as a priority national infrastructure project to enhance regional connectivity, improve traffic circulation between the eastern, central and northern regions of the island, and promote balanced socio-economic development.

Previous feasibility and detailed engineering studies have confirmed the project's technical feasibility and economic viability, and established a preferred alignment extending approximately 29.7 kilometres from Bel Air Road to the Forbach Roundabout on Motorway M2.

It will certainly contribute to rebalancing economic development, stimulating investment, creating employment during construction, supporting tourism, and promoting commercial and residential development along the north eastern corridor of the Island.

Madam Speaker, regarding the criteria on preparedness and readiness for capital projects, I am informed that the M4 Highway Project is fully ready in terms of land acquisition, updated technical and feasibility reports, and tender documents.

The funding for this Project has already been secured after successful discussions with the Government of India under the concessionary financing terms.

Deferring such a project would also lead to more increase in costs in the future.

I am also informed that the environmental issues raised in the region of Ferney have been addressed. I am further informed that the original plan has been modified so that the proposed corridor would not go through any environmentally sensitive areas in the region of Ferney.

Madam Speaker, I would think the hon. Member is too young to remember but in 2005, as Prime Minister, I took prompt action to prevent the Highway project which had already started to go through the Valley de Ferney despite objections from environmentalists, very valid objections. I went there to look for myself. Also, I must say, Madam Speaker, the African Development Bank refused to stop the project. They said it has already been funded, all the work has been done, therefore, they would want to continue with the project. I summoned the representative of the African Development Bank to my office to explain to him why I will maintain my decision in spite of the fact that funds have already been provided for. We cannot allow this because it will be a textbook example of an ecological disaster.

So, Madam Speaker, Government is also working on several other measures including –

(a) examining the expenditure of each Ministry, acting on the findings of the Director of Audit Report and identifying areas where expenditure could be rationalised. This will be under the chairmanship of the Deputy Financial Secretary;

(b) identifying areas of duplication, inefficiency and wastage and implementing concrete actions to improve efficiency without compromising on the service delivery;

(c) reviewing our overall tax system with a view to enhancing its fairness, efficiency and international competitiveness, and

(d) disposing of selected non-strategic assets, as well as the potential listing of certain State-owned enterprises on the stock exchange, with a view to unlocking value and monetising its shareholdings.

The Committee will ensure that, in spite of very stringent budget constraints, public sector investment projects will remain impactful and transformational.

Madam Speaker, the High-Level Committee, chaired by the Secretary of the Cabinet, will also look into the M4 Motorway project, as part of the broader assessment of capital projects included in the Budget and the Public Sector Investment Programme. It takes into account the importance of this transformational project, its strategic value and the long-term benefits to the country.

I also wish to inform the House, Madam Speaker, that a Project Monitoring and Implementation Unit will be set up shortly in my Office. This Unit will be headed by a professional from the private sector and he will be empowered to have recourse to foreign expertise with a view to ensuring that major infrastructural projects are delivered in a timely manner and within the approved budget.

Madam Speaker: Thank you. Do you have a question? Yes?

Ms J. Bérenger: Je vous remercie, j'en ai quelques-unes.

Madam Speaker: On va dire une pour commencer.

Ms J. Bérenger: Okay, merci. L'honorable Premier Ministre a mentionné l'augmentation du parc automobile pour justifier la construction de la nouvelle autoroute M4. Il a aussi mentionné les *long-term benefits*.

Est-ce que l'honorable Premier ministre peut nous dire si le comité a ou va examiner l'augmentation du trafic induit qui risque d'arriver suite à la construction de la nouvelle autoroute ?

Je m'explique. L'honorable Premier ministre est certainement au courant du phénomène qu'on appelle le '*induced demand'*. Une étude avait été commandée cette année même par le gouvernement britannique et a conclu au fait que lorsqu'on augmente la…

Madam Speaker: Put your question!

Ms J. Bérenger: J'ai déjà posé la question. J'explique simplement. Lorsqu'on augmente la…

Madam Speaker: Let him answer, then!

Ms J. Bérenger: Lorsqu'on augmente la capacité routière, le trafic s'ajuste à la nouvelle offre et le parc automobile continue de croître et la congestion routière revient. Est-ce que ce phénomène a été pris en considération par le comité ou le sera pour l'avenir ?

The Prime Minister: In fact, we are aware. This already happens in Mauritius. In certain areas, the traffic is flowing correctly, and then, you get all these *bouchons de trafic à l'extérieur*. They are looking at this. I do not know the details of what they are actually looking at, but I know this is one of the things they are looking at.

Madam Speaker: But you will bear it in mind?

The Prime Minister: Yes.

Madam Speaker: Of course, yes.

Ms J. Bérenger: C'est un phénomène international. Ce n'est pas juste à un pays. L'honorable Premier ministre peut-il nous dire si le comité a vérifié que le projet de l'autoroute M4 dispose d'une étude d'impact environnemental actuelle, mais surtout pour l'ensemble du projet, c'est-à-dire sur un tracé définitivement arrêté ?

The Prime Minister: In fact, on 24 April of this year, an Environmental Impact Assessment Report was submitted to the Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change. Subsequently, the Ministry provided comments on that EIA report. In parallel, a detailed project report for the motorway is undergoing an independent review by the Export-Import Bank of India, that is, the Exim Bank, who are financing this project.

Following the approval of the detailed project report by the Indian authorities, I understand that the EIA report will be revised as necessary to incorporate comments of the Ministry and any changes arising from the approved report. Therefore, it will be resubmitted in accordance with the Environment Act.

Madam Speaker: Okay.

Ms J. Bérenger: D'un point de vue environnemental, le projet n'est pas encore réellement prêt.

Madam Speaker: No comments! Please, ask a question!

Ms J. Bérenger: L'honorable Premier ministre pourrait confirmer la valeur totale du projet, et si les 10.8 milliards concernent uniquement le trajet Forbach-Bel Air?

The Prime Minister: In fact, I can confirm that, Madam Speaker. I am looking whether I can find the exact figure, but I can confirm these details.

Madam Speaker: Yes, last question!

Ms J. Bérenger: L'honorable Premier ministre pourrait informer la Chambre comment ce projet va bénéficier à l'économie locale concrètement, c'est-à-dire si les prestataires seront locaux ? Mis à part le consultant qui travaille déjà sur le projet depuis plusieurs années, est-ce que les prestataires seront locaux et comment cela va bénéficier concrètement à l'économie locale et à la croissance ?

Madam Speaker: Can you answer this question, Prime Minister?

The Prime Minister: I have answered it in my reply. The feeling is that it will definitely benefit us. First of all, for traffic congestion, as I explained earlier on. Secondly, it will create economic activity in that region. It will be a rebate, yes. Local people will get jobs.

Thirdly, the tourism sector will benefit as well.

Madam Speaker: Yes, Mr Beechook!

Mr Beechook: Yes, *merci, Madame la présidente*. Can the hon. Minister please inform the House...

Madam Speaker: Prime Minister!

Mr Beechook: Can the hon. Prime Minister please inform the House when this project, which is warmly welcomed by the people of the rural Constituencies of No. 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10, start?

Madam Speaker: Question!

Mr Beechook: Thank you.

Madam Speaker: When can it start?

The Prime Minister: It will have to be subject to all these things that I said. It is nearly ready, as hon. Ms Joanna Bérenger just said. It is actually nearly ready. But we have to take into consideration what the final report will say and also what the Exim Bank will say.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Third Member for Port Louis South and Port Louis Central!

CRIMES INVOLVING BLADED WEAPONS – REPORTED CASES – LEGISLATIONS/ACTIONS

(No. B/1082) Dr. F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to incidences of violent crimes wherein knives and/or sabres/other bladed weapons were used in the perpetration thereof, he will –

(a) for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of reported cases thereof over the past five years, indicating the number of –
    (i) injuries, and
    (ii) fatalities in connection therewith, and

(b) state whether consideration will be given for the introduction of new legislation to regulate the sale and possession of knives, sabres and other bladed weapons.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, in regard to parts (a)(i) and (a)(ii) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that from 01 January 2021 to 15 July 2026, a total of 731 reported cases of crime involving the use of knives, sabres and other bladed weapons were reported to the Police. Of these, 697 persons were injured, and 40 persons have lost their lives.

As regards to part (b), the manufacture, sale and possession of offensive weapons are already regulated under sections 233, 233A and 233B of the Criminal Code and Section 29 of

the Criminal Code (Supplementary) Act as well. There is a supplementary act. The Criminal Code, *inter alia*, regulates specified offensive weapons such as stilettos, daggers, knives in the shape of daggers, bayonets, and swordsticks, as well as the sale of knives, cutlasses and other bladed or pointed instruments.

The penalties for offences under the Criminal Code are as follows –

- Section 233(1): imprisonment not exceeding five years;
- Section 233(2): fine not exceeding Rs25,000;
- Section 233A: fine not exceeding Rs25,000 and imprisonment not exceeding 10 years, and
- Section 233B: fine not exceeding Rs25,000 and imprisonment not exceeding four years.

Madam Speaker, the Criminal Code (Supplementary) Act also makes it an offence to possess an offensive weapon in a public place without lawful authority or reasonable excuse. This legislation provides for penalties, including imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years and a fine not exceeding Rs100,000.

I am also informed, Madam Speaker, that the Police regularly carry out targeted crack down operations, intelligence-led policing, and joint patrols by the SMF and the SSU in crime prone areas and in public places to, *inter alia*, detect and deter the unlawful possession of offensive weapons, including knives and other bladed weapons. These operations form part of the Police duties to combat crime and maintain public order. I should add that from January to June of last year, the Police have established 65 cases of 'Bearing offensive weapon'.

Let me also take this opportunity, Madam Speaker, to thank PC 5525 Legris for having courageously intervened while he was driving his motorcycle going home, near London Supermarket in Vacoas, and was off duty. He saw a crowd of people who had gathered around an individual who was assaulting a lady with a "sabre" and tried to run his vehicle over that lady. Everyone was watching passively. Nobody was doing anything. He got off his motorbike and intervened courageously. He even got injured with a weapon, but he still intervened and stopped what was happening.

This is the kind of behaviour we expect from Police Officers. And these are the Police Officers that would be high on the list for promotions. I also wish to make an appeal to people who witness such behaviour: they have to take action. They cannot just stand there and watch because *"non-assistance à des personnes en danger"* is an offence under our laws.

Madam Speaker: One question? Yes.

Dr. Aumeer: Thank you, Madam Speaker. May I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether due consideration will be given for the regulation of online sale of offensive weapons, swords, daggers, pointed knives and also, firearms which are becoming something very easy to acquire these days? Thank you.

The Prime Minister: I will ask the Commissioner of Police to look into that.

Madam Speaker: You want another question? I could give you four if you want.

Yes, next question! Hon. Second Member for Savanne and Black River!

PARASTATAL BODIES – OUTSTANDING LOAN REPAYMENTS – GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE & CORRECTIVE MEASURES

(No. B/1083) Mr S. Jugurnauth (Second 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 parastatal bodies, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the number thereof having outstanding loan repayments with commercial banks and/or other financial institutions, indicating –

(a) the quantum of financial assistance given and/or capital injected by Government thereinto, and

(b) whether consideration will be given for the implementation of any restructuring and/or corrective measures to address the financial losses sustained.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, the House will recall that the State of the Economy document, prepared by the Ministry of Finance, highlighted the precarious financial position of a number of public bodies and State-owned enterprises. Their substantial and growing indebtedness, together with the increasing contingent liabilities they pose,

particularly in terms of the significant accumulated level of actuarial deficits in their pension funds, constitute significant risks to the sustainability of public finances.

The report further noted that years of inadequate financial oversight and a growing dependence on borrowing had placed considerable strain on Government finances. Hence, the need for decisive actions to restore fiscal discipline, strengthen governance, and improve the financial resilience of these entities.

Madam Speaker, according to information compiled by the Ministry of Finance, as at end of June 2026, five parastatal bodies had outstanding loans of a total of Rs18.6 billion, of which Rs15.4 billion were from commercial banks and Rs 3.2 billion from other financial institutions.

The House will note that, under the previous regime, the outstanding debt of parastatal bodies more than doubled, increasing from Rs6.2 billion as at end of December 2014, when we were out of office, to Rs15.9 billion as at end of December 2024.

Ms Anquetil: Shocking!

The Prime Minister: That is, practically more than doubled. Debt has more than doubled. They were just giving money. No control, no fiscal responsibility at all!

This sharp increase in indebtedness was driven primarily by the borrowing requirements of the Central Electricity Board, whose outstanding debt rose from Rs3.4 billion to Rs10.3 billion, and the State Trading Corporation, whose debt increased from Rs1.1 billion to Rs 5.3 billion.

This is kind of government the MSM led and we are paying the consequences now.

I must also highlight, Madam Speaker, that in addition to these five parastatal bodies, a further 20 State-owned enterprises had a total outstanding debt amounting to Rs48.9 billion as at end of June of this year. Of this amount, Rs16.5 billion was owed by commercial banks, while Rs32.4 billion was from other financial institutions, including Rs7.2 billion borrowed from the Bank of Mauritius.

The level of debt of State-owned enterprises more than tripled – not doubled, tripled – under the previous Government, increasing from Rs15.1 billion in December 2014 to Rs 54.3 billion as at end of December 2024. The main drivers of this substantial increase in debt were the Metro Express Ltd, the MauBank Holdings Ltd and Mauritius Telecom, amongst others.

In addition, the debt levels of the Development Bank of Mauritius, the Industrial Finance Corporation of Mauritius Ltd, and the State Investment Corporation Ltd increased significantly following the implementation of the various very dubious support schemes introduced in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. These schemes were financed through a line of credit again provided by the Bank of Mauritius.

Madam Speaker, the significant increase in the indebtedness of the parastatal bodies and State-owned enterprises reflects the consequences of the previous Government's total lack of fiscal discipline, as I said, and its reckless and systemic failure to control public sector borrowing.

The accumulation of debt obligations has placed additional pressure on public finances, reduced fiscal space for priority investments, and increased the Government's exposure to financial risks, including contingent liabilities.

Madam Speaker, with regard to part (a) of the question, since 2020, Government has had to provide a total of Rs14.4 billion as support mainly to the State-owned enterprises so that they can honour their debt repayment obligations.

These include –

(a) Rs7.9 billion provided to the National Property Fund Ltd in financial year 2020-2021 to enable the company to settle syndicated loans taken for the repayment to Super Cash Back Gold Scheme policyholders;

(b) another Rs3.6 billion provided to NPFL during the past two financial years to enable the company to repay the line of credit extended by the Bank of Mauritius for the settlement of claims of SCBG policyholders and investors of Bramer Assets Management Ltd;

(c) Rs1.5 billion provided to Metro Express Ltd since 2021 to enable the company to pay interest on the line of credit from EXIM Bank of India for implementation of the Metro project, and

(d) Rs1.4 billion provided to MauBank Holdings Ltd in the financial year 2025-2026 to enable the company to meet its debt obligations towards the African Development Bank Ltd and the MauBank Ltd.

Madam Speaker, if we consider the amounts injected for the repayment to policy holders of the Super Cash Back Gold Scheme, this comes to a total of Rs11.4 billion of public money injected under the previous MSM regime.

In the aftermath of the deliberate and brutal decision by the previous regime to liquidate the ex-BAI conglomerate, the former Prime Minister and his Minister of Good Governance had publicly stated that not a single rupee from public funds would be injected into any bail-out activity.

(Interruptions)

Blinded by the political vendetta, their action led to a direct hit on public sector debt. This is the truth, Madam Speaker! They said no rupee from the public funds; it turned out that the then Minister of Good Governance... That was a lie, a total lie! I have mentioned the figure that was used from public funds. Billions of rupees, Madam Speaker, billions of rupees from public funds were used. It was a deliberate lie and today, some are trying to get political virginity as if they are saints. These are the people that we have to be careful about and I hope the population of Mauritius will remember all those things when the time comes.

In this financial year, a total provision of Rs1.9 billion has been made to provide funds to MauBank Holdings Ltd and Metro Express Ltd to enable them to meet their debt repayment obligations.

Clearly, Madam Speaker, the situation underscores the urgent need, there is an urgent need for corrective measures in order to save the long-term financial sustainability of our parastatals and State-owned enterprises.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that a number of public bodies are currently preparing or implementing restructuring plans aimed at strengthening their financial position, improving operational sustainability, and minimising their impact on public finances. These will include –

(a) Metro Express Ltd, which is currently preparing a Transformation Plan focused on enhancing its financial performance by strengthening operational efficiency and diversifying revenue streams;

(b) Mauritius Post Ltd is expanding its sources of revenue and optimising its branch network. As part of these measures, the prices of postage stamps and the fees charged for the payment of utility bills have already been revised upwards;

(c) MauBank Holdings Ltd is currently working on measures to accelerate recoveries of arrears in loan repayments, expenditure rationalisation, review of fees charged and the disposal of its non-core assets, and

(d) the Development Bank of Mauritius is reviewing its processes and procedures for recovery of arrears, revamping the loan and leasing products, and monetising its unused building space. The bank has already reviewed the interest rate charged on loans and leasing facilities.

Madam Speaker, as announced in the 2026–2027 Budget Speech, a Steering Committee on Public Sector Efficiency, which I will chair, will be established to identify areas of duplication, inefficiency, and waste across the public sector. Every Ministry and Department will be required to submit to the Committee a concrete action plan setting out measures to enhance efficiency and eliminate waste, while maintaining the quality and continuity of public service delivery.

Madam Speaker, Government remains committed to restoring the financial sustainability of public bodies and strengthening fiscal discipline across the public sector. The restructuring measures being implemented are intended to improve operational efficiency, enhance financial performance, and reduce reliance on Government support. These reforms will contribute to safeguarding public finances while ensuring that public bodies continue to deliver essential services effectively and sustainably.

Madam Speaker: Thank you. Do you have a question? Yes? No? Okay.

Ms Anquetil: I have got one, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Yes, of course.

Ms Anquetil: *Je vous remercie, Madame la présidente.* Would Dr. the hon. Prime Minister inform the House who was the Minister of Good Governance at that time? Thank you.

The Prime Minister: We all know. It was Mr Roshi Bhadain who was the Minister.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Thank you. First of all, hon. Members, we have been advised that B/1084 has been withdrawn.

I will allow one last question. That is, hon. Fourth Member for Rodrigues.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE TRANSACTIONS – ALTERNATE CURRENCIES

(No. B/1084) Mr R. Etwareea (Third 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 international trade transactions, he will state whether Government is considering encouraging the use of currencies other than the US Dollar and the Euro, namely, the Indian Rupee and the Chinese Yuan therefor.

(Withdrawn)

INDIAN GRANT FOR RODRIGUES ISLAND – SMALL DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

(No. B/1085) Mr J. Edouard (Fourth 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 small development projects funded under the Indian Grant for Rodrigues Island, he will state the projects listed thereunder totalling some Rs 19 million, indicating the –

(a) expected completion dates thereof;

(b) schedule for the release of the remaining funds of Rs18 million, and

(c) reasons for the allocation of an amount of Rs1 million for financial year 2026-2027.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, as regards part (a) of the question, as the House is aware, in January 2022, the Government of the Republic of India provided a grant of Rs400 million for the implementation of Small Development Projects.

Out of this grant, an amount of Rs19 million has been allocated for the implementation of infrastructural and sustainable development projects in Rodrigues.

I can table the list, it is a bit long otherwise I can read it, but I propose to table the list of projects being funded under the Indian Grant for Rodrigues Island, including the completion dates.

As regards part (b) of the question, it is to be noted that funds are released by the Government of India on a reimbursement basis.

As at date, some Rs18.4 million has been spent, of which, Rs13 million in Financial Year 2024-2025 and the remaining Rs5.4 million in Financial Year 2025-2026.

As regards part (c) of the question, I am informed by the Rodrigues Regional Assembly that the provision of Rs1 million for Financial Year 2026–2027 relates to retention money in respect to the Eau Clair Community Centre Project.

Madam Speaker: Thank you.

Now, the Table has been advised that following PQs have been withdrawn: B1086, B/1088, and B/1091.

Now, we go to questions addressed to hon. Ministers.

Hon. Third Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière!

WATER LEAK REPAIRS – KPI/TARGETS SET – RESPONSE CAPACITY

(No. B/1093) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to water leak repairs, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Water Authority, information as to the –

(a) key performance indicators or targets set for reducing response and repair times, if any, following the launch of the water leaks repairs reporting facility on the KOREK App, giving details thereof;

(b) number of leak repair teams currently in operation nationwide, and

(c) whether the capacity to respond to requests therefor has been increased.

Mr Assirvaden: Madame la présidente, avec votre permission, je répondrai ensemble aux questions B/1093 et B/1111 de l'honorable Caserne.

Madame la présidente, KOREK est une application numérique dotée d'un service de signalement des fuites d'eau. Elle permet au public de signaler directement les fuites en

indiquant leur localisation et en joignant des photos. Cette plateforme permet également aux utilisateurs de suivre l'état de leur signalement en temps réel.

Au niveau de la CWA, la plateforme de signalement numérique devrait améliorer la gestion des opérations de réparation des fuites en permettant la réception, l'enregistrement, l'attribution et le suivi rapide des fuites signalées. Elle complète également les canaux de signalement des plaintes déjà disponibles à la CWA, le CX.

Madame la présidente, depuis le lancement de l'application KOREK, j'ai appris qu'entre le 13 et le 16 juillet 2026, la CWA a reçu 39 signalements de fuites d'eau sur la plateforme.

Les fuites signalées sont évaluées, classées selon leur gravité, leur impact opérationnel, leurs conséquences sur la sécurité publique et le volume d'eau perdu. La CWA m'informe également que l'application classe les fuites par niveau de gravité – faible, moyen, élevé, critique. Les fuites critiques sont supposées faire l'objet d'une intervention immédiate afin de minimiser les pertes d'eau et de rétablir l'approvisionnement. Les fuites de gravité moyenne, élevée sont considérées comme urgentes et peuvent s'aggraver rapidement si elles ne sont pas traitées. C'est pourquoi le délai d'intervention est supposé être de 24 heures.

La catégorie faible concerne les fuites courantes. Il s'agit des défauts mineurs présentant des risques opérationnels ou la sécurité minime et ayant un impact limité sur l'approvisionnement en eau. Ils doivent être réparés dans les 72 heures, ce qui n’est souvent pas le cas.

Madame la présidente, concernant les points (b) et (c) de la question B/1093, la CWA m'informe qu'elle a actuellement 42 équipes internes, soit 126 agents répartis sur l'ensemble des zones d'approvisionnement, les six zones du pays en eau. Ces équipes sont déployées quotidiennement pour intervenir en cas de fuite signalée. Madame la présidente, afin de renforcer ses capacités opérationnelles, suite à l'introduction de KOREK, la CWA propose de faire appel à des entreprises spécialisées privées pour les travaux de réparation des fuites en complément de ses équipes internes.

À cet égard, les dossiers d'appel d'offres pour les contrats de réparation des fuites sont en cours de finalisation au niveau de la CWA. Cette stratégie garantira la disponibilité de ressources dédiées à la réparation des fuites – donc une équipe dans chaque zone pour réparer

les fuites, que pour réparer les fuites – en améliorant ainsi les délais d'intervention qui sont bien plus longs de ce qu'on préconise, réduisant le nombre de fuites en attente, permettant une intervention rapide.

Pour la zone d'approvisionnement d'eau dans le nord, le contrat a été attribué déjà et les travaux devraient commencer d'ici fin juillet 2026. Donc, une équipe pour le nord en ce qui concerne la réparation des fuites, outre l'équipe interne. Pour les autres zones, la procédure d'appel d'offre est en cours et les contrats devraient être attribués d'ici fin août 2026. Les entreprises sous-traitées devraient intervenir sur 15 fuites par jour.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Quirin!

Mr Quirin: Merci, Madame la présidente. L'honorable ministre peut-il indiquer à la Chambre si de nouveaux véhicules, équipements, matériels ont été acquis et afin de renforcer les équipes d'intervention de la CWA ?

Mr Assirvaden: Nous avons des équipes internes, une chose. Des équipes internes, donc nous avons 126 agents. Donc ils sont équipés pour travailler avec les véhicules que nous avons. Mais ce que nous allons faire, c'est que nous allons aussi prendre des contracteurs privés dans chaque zone. Donc les contracteurs privés vont être là avec leur transport, avec leurs équipements, avec la main d'œuvre et aussi des ouvriers qualifiés pour pouvoir intervenir rapidement selon KOREK, selon la gravité des fuites. Bien souvent, moi personnellement, je rapporte des cas. Beaucoup de ministres, beaucoup de personnes me rapportent des cas et je rapporte ces cas-là à la CWA.

Mais je dirais que les interventions bien souvent tardent, je ne suis pas personnellement satisfait. Ça tarde des fois. Donc dépendant la gravité, s'il y a des gravités quand même critiques, nous demandons à ce que l'équipe interne de la CWA intervienne assez rapidement. Mais pour répondre à ce que KOREK va mettre de supplément sur la plateforme, nous avons décidé de prendre des contracteurs privés pour intervenir.

Madam Speaker: Honorable Caserne !

Mr Caserne: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Though I fully welcome the measures announced by the hon. Minister, may I ask also the hon. Minister, to indicate whether an escalation mechanism will be established for water leakage that remains unattended beyond a

prescribed period, as he mentioned? Some leakages are supposed to be resolved within a period of 24 hours. Thank you.

Mr Assirvden: Je dirais que selon le protocole de la CWA – critique, moyen, faible, élevé, mais supposé être 24 heures ; je mentirais si je disais à la chambre qu'effectivement la CWA agit en 24 heures. On me donne des dizaines de raisons. L'équipe était ailleurs, il y a eu pas mal de fuites et nous avons dû intervenir sur des sites critiques. Mais que ce soit 24 heures, que ce soit 72 heures, je sais très bien que bien souvent, on n'arrive pas à tenir. C'est pour cette raison que la décision a été prise de renforcer l'équipe. Mais disons que KOREK va nous permettre de suivre en temps réel sur cette plateforme ce qui se passe quand quelqu'un signale une fuite quelque part en temps réel, qu'est-ce qui s'est passé après 12 heures, 13 heures, 24 heures. Donc nous avons avec KOREK, cette possibilité de suivre.

Madam Speaker: Yes, second question!

Mr Quirin: Yes. Merci, Madame la présidente. Donc il est clair que le nombre de cas signalés par le public va certainement augmenter suite à la mise en place de l'application KOREK. De ce fait, l'honorable Ministre peut-il préciser si la CWA suit des indicateurs de performance pour chaque équipe de réparation et si ces résultats sont régulièrement évalués ?

Mr Assirvaden: Oui, les résultats sont régulièrement évalués. Oui, mais cela vaut ce que cela vaut à la CWA. Donc, je mentirai encore une fois pour dire que tout est rose, tout est bon. Loin de là ! C'est pour cette raison que j'ai demandé au conseil d'administration de louer les services des contracteurs privés qui seront tenus de faire 15 fuites par jour. L'équipe de la CWA ne fait pas que des fuites. L'équipe de la CWA fait entre autres les fuites, mais autre chose aussi : les raccordements et autre chose. C'est pour cette raison que nous avons des rapports venant de la CWA nous disant que oui, effectivement, ils l'ont fait.

Pour vous donner un exemple, permettez-moi, Madame la présidente, j'ai reçu l'équipe du Nord avec le ministre Woochit et l'honorable Rookny dans la semaine concernant les problèmes dans la circonscription no. 5 du Premier ministre. J'étais étonné et estomaqué d'entendre qu'il y avait une pièce à changer, et les gens de la circonscription no. 5 m'ont fait savoir que la pièce qu'on changeait était endommagée le lendemain. Donc, en quatre reprises, il fallait refouiller et rechanger. J'ai fait appeler les responsables de la CWA en présence des deux honorables membres, et on m'a confirmé effectivement que cette pièce est défectueuse.

J'ai demandé combien de ces pièces nous avons actuellement pour le pays. On m'a dit qu'on a 6 000 unités dans le store. Nous avons fait une commande de 24 000. J'ai demandé au *General Manager* de la CWA : « Qu'est-ce que vous avez fait depuis que vous avez su ? » Depuis un mois, vous savez déjà que la pièce ne pouvait pas être utilisée. Il a fait savoir au *procurement*. J'ai dit que je ne suis nullement satisfait. Là, les 6 000 pièces défectueuses vont être retournées aux quincailleries et on va devoir changer. Pour vous donner une idée de comment cela était pendant longtemps.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Okay. Hon. Third Member for Grand' Baie and Poudre d'Or!

CAP MALHEUREUX, FOOTBALL PLAYGROUND – EVACO GROUP –MOU SIGNATURE

(No. B/1094) Mr R. Etwareea (Third Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding signed between his Ministry and the Evaco Group for the construction of a new football playground at Cap Malheureux, he will state where matters stand following the placing of the said Group under receivership.

Mr Nagalingum: Madam Speaker, I am informed that on 17 December 2020, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the then Ministry of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation and Evaco Ltd for the construction of a football ground, a pétanque court and outdoor gym, a kid corner and related amenities and infrastructure on a plot of land of some 13 000 square metres, which is vested in my Ministry at Chemin Vingt Pieds, Cap Malheureux.

I am informed that as at date, only the football ground and fencing around the football has been completed. Infrastructural works such as the construction of the changing room, administrative block and stand are still pending as well as the construction of other amenities such as outdoor gym, kid corner among others. Since May 2025, regular meetings and follow-up were made by my Ministry with the company for the completion of the project. Unfortunately, in May 2026, Evaco Ltd was placed under receivership.

Madam Speaker, in view of this situation, my Ministry sought the advice of the Attorney General's Office on 12 June 2026 regarding the MoU signed with the company on 23 June 2026. The Solicitor General advised my Ministry that the Receiver Manager of Evaco Ltd be informed that my Ministry no longer wishes to proceed with the construction of

the amenities as per the MoU, taking into consideration the present circumstances, and the necessary procedures will be undertaken for taking back the plot of land.

Accordingly, on 06 July 2026, my Ministry issued a letter to the joint receiver and manager of Evaco Ltd, requesting them to inform whether the project would be completed as planned. They were further informed that should they not proceed with the completion of the project; my Ministry would initiate necessary actions to retrieve the said plot of land. The managers have, on 16 July 2026, verbally informed my Ministry that they have duly received the letter. An official reply will be made in two weeks' time.

Madam Speaker, it is to be noted that the public is authorised to use the football playground for physical activities. It is also used for *école de foot*, where training sessions for young players are regularly conducted. Temporary solar floodlights have also been installed for the youth of the playground in low light conditions.

Madam Speaker: Yes, one question!

Mr Etwareea: Can the hon. Minister provide information on the reasons why the MoU was signed between the Ministry of Sports and Evaco at the first stage?

Mr Nagalingum: Madam Speaker, I am informed that a fast-track committee was being chaired by the former Prime Minister in 2018 for facilitating implementation of property development projects. One of the projects on the agenda of that committee was the development of 163 residential units, 54 duplexes, restaurants and retail spaces on freehold land and an extent of 45 a. 30 p. at Cap Malheureux by Evaco Ltd under the Property Development Scheme. The proposed project was adjacent to the public football ground located on the extent on State land of 4,350 m^2 vested in the Ministry of Youth and Sports. Part of the public football ground to an extent of 1,500 m^2 was overlapping the proposed PDS project, which ultimately affected the construction of four villas by Evaco Ltd.

The promoter has requested, in June 2018, the Ministry of Housing and Lands the following –

(i) to lease State land on an extent of 5,820 m^2 for the development of a football ground and related amenities located adjacent to the Cap Malheureux Government School;

(ii) to lease State land of an extent of 1,500 m^2 which was vested in the Ministry of Youth and Sports for the construction of a badminton sports centre.

In December 2018, the Ministry of Housing and Lands issued a correspondence to Evaco Ltd, copied to the Ministry of Youth and Sports, its no objection for the latter Ministry to allow the promoter to construct a badminton centre 1,500 metres over part of the existing football ground. On the other hand, the promoter would construct a new football ground with related infrastructure comprising, among others, a pétanque court and a jogging track on the State land vested in the Ministry of Youth and Sports, located adjacent to the Cap Malheureux Government School. A Memorandum of Understanding was accordingly signed in December 2020.

However, as at date, only the football playground and fencing have been constructed around the playground within the land of an extent of 13,361 m^2 vested in the Ministry of Youth and Sports and located adjacent to the Cap Malheureux Government School.

Madam Speaker: Okay. Do you have another question? No? Okay!

We will now break for one and a half hour!

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

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

The Deputy Speaker: Please be seated!

The hon. Third Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka!

TMRSU – ROAD MARKING DEPARTMENT – STAFF

(No. B/1095) Mr G. P. Venkatasami (Third Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Minister of Land Transport whether, in regard to the Road Marking Department of the Traffic Management Road Safety Unit, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the number of employees posted thereat, grade-wise, indicating their –

(a) respective scheme of duties;

(b) deployment, and

(c) number thereof employed on a permanent, temporary and contractual basis, respectively.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to present my apologies because I have a sore throat.

I am informed that the road marking…

The Deputy Speaker: So, try to be short then because of your voice.

Mr Osman Mahomed: No, but the reply is going to be what it is because it is quite technical.

I am informed that the road marking team of the TMRSU operates with a local workforce of 8 employees, consisting of 3 painters and 5 Tradesman Assistants. To maximise this efficiency, the team executes road safety and traffic management improvements through two distinct operational arms, that is –

(i) an in-house civil works team, and

(ii) an in-house road marking team which does centre lines, edge lines, yellow lines, pedestrian crossings, and directional arrows which are critical for road safety.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, for major highly specialised and large-scale projects, my Ministry avails the services of two specialised contractors under a framework agreement. The services of these contractors are engaged to supplement our in-house capacity.

For the benefit of the House, I wish to clarify that the statutory responsibility for the maintenance of road markings, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is clearly demarcated under section 4 of the Road Traffic Act, section 28 of the Roads Act and section 50 (2) (a) the Local Government Act. Under these legal frameworks, the statutory responsibility for the re-marking and maintenance of road markings is explicitly divided based on road classification, that is –

- for classified roads and main roads, it is under the responsibility of the Road Development Authority, and

- for subsidiary and secondary roads, it is under the Local Government, meaning municipal councils and village councils.

I am stressing on this point because, time and again, there is a misconception among the public, that the TMRSU of my Ministry is responsible for all of that, but that is not the case. The law is very clear on this.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as a matter of established operational practice, the TMRSU holds direct responsibility for the initial provision however, and layout of road markings associated with on-street parking restrictions, while the ongoing upkeep and maintenance of all lines, like I said earlier, fall under the responsibility of the highway authority. Furthermore, the TMRSU retains the end-to-end operational responsibility.

Turning to part (a) of the question, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am tabling a copy of the Scheme of Service of painters and Tradesman Assistants, which is here.

I would like to highlight that the daily output of the road marking team is governed by a predetermined, approved task work.

Regarding part (b) of the question, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the road marking team is deployed island-wide. My Ministry receives a vast number of requests from MPs, local authorities, public bodies and citizens. Given our current in-house manpower and budgetary provisions, it is not always possible to satisfy every request. However, we do our best within the budgetary provision – I am nearing the end soon – while all requests are fully justified and have some degree of urgency. It is tackled on a case-to-case basis.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in response to part (c) of the question, I am informed that the Establishment of the Road Marking Team consists of three permanent painters, two permanent Tradesman Assistants and three temporary Tradesman Assistants. None of these positions are currently held on contract basis, as originally sought in the question.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, hon. Member!

Mr Venkatasami: Will the Minister inform the House about the timeframe between the approval and the implementation of the road markings and raised pedestrian crossing?

Mr Osman Mahomed: Like I said, if it is a matter of urgency, I can talk to the hon. Member. If the team at the locality there is not performing to the extent possible – hon. Ms Anquetil also spoke to me lately –, I am going to, perhaps, contemplate a reshuffling of engineers and technical officers so that things get moving in a more dynamic way.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Third Member for Vieux Grand Port and Rose Belle!

CONSTITUENCY NO. 11 – FISHERMEN CARDS – PAST YEAR APPLICATIONS

(No. B/1096) Mr A. Ramdass (Third Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle) asked the Minister of Agro-Industry, Food Security, Blue Economy and Fisheries whether, in regard to the fishermen cards, he will state the number of applications therefor received from the inhabitants of Constituency No. 11, Vieux Grand Port and Rose Belle, over the past year, indicating the outcome thereof.

Dr. Boolell: Thank you very much, hon. Member.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed that out of the 14 fisheries posts under the purview of the Ministry, three are located in the Constituency No. 11, Vieux Grand Port and Rose Belle, namely Grand River South East Fisheries Post, Bambous Virieux Fisheries Post and Mahebourg Fisheries Post. A total of 21 applications for fisherman cards has been received at these three fisheries post during the past year –

- 5 applications at Grand River South East;
- 8 applications at Bambous Virieux, and
- 8 applications at Mahebourg.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed that all these 21 applications cannot be processed for the time being as they do not meet the eligibility criteria as follows, and I will highlight those criteria –

(i) The applicant fishers ought to have submitted a valid Certificate of Character. Unfortunately, none of them has submitted such a certificate.

(ii) The applicant fisher has to submit a recommendation letter from a registered line and fish aggregating device off-lagoon fisher, attesting that the applicant fisher is fishing along with a registered fisher in his boat. In 16 applications, the applicants have not submitted such recommendation letter.

(iii) The fishing activities of the applicant fisher shall be monitored for a consecutive period of 6 months and the fisher shall have fished at least 75% of the fishing

days, excluding bad weather days, Sundays and public holidays, in a month. None of these 16 applicant fishers has provided a record of the catch and, therefore, they are deemed not to be engaged in fishing activities.

The applicants have been informed to submit the required documents, following which the applications will be considered.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I refer the hon. Member to replies made to PQ B/987 at the Sitting of 11 November 2025 and PQ B/38 at the Sitting of 17 March 2026, respectively, where I had informed the House that our lagoons have been over-exploited and depleted over the years. In fact, during the period 2022-2024, a total 1,190 fisherman cards were issued, out of which, 709 fisherman cards were issued in the year 2024 only. It is to be highlighted that in September 2024, 416 new fisherman cards were issued just prior to general elections.

Now, with a view to allow our lagoons to rejuvenate –

- registered artisanal fishers are being encourage to fish off-lagoon and around fish aggregating devices;

- a grant of Rs300,000 per eligible fisher for the purchase of a *canot* and Rs1 million for individual fisher for the purchase of semi-industrial fishing vessels are being provided;

- Rs6 million are being allocated to cooperative societies for the purchase of semi-industrial fishing vessel of less than 24 metres.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, hon. Member!

Mr Ramdass: I thank the hon. Minister. From a reply to a previous PQ addressed to the hon. Minister, I recall that it was not a prerequisite to obtain a valid certificate, save and except for conviction in respect of drug dealing cases. Is that still the case?

Dr. Boolell: No, of course, for drug dealing cases, we cannot entertain, but in relation of what you have said, I have taken up the issue with the officers and the Permanent Secretary. This is the advice and reply given to me. But nothing stops us, if you want to come to the office, we certainly can have a talk and see what can be done to entertain the applications of some of the apprentice fishers.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes!

Mr Ramdass: Can the hon. Minister indicate to the House whether his Ministry intends – obviously, I have taken note of his reply – to issue new fisherman cards, and if so, a timeline, as if to say?

Dr. Boolell: If there are cases which deserve to be processed – I know, probably, there are deserving cases. Otherwise, I have highlighted a problem that we are currently facing. Our lagoon is depleted and we have to allow our lagoons to be restored, giving it the necessary time and measures taken to…

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Third Member for Port Louis South and Port Louis Central!

ELECTRICITY DEMAND – PROJECTED DECREASE – ENERGY EFFICIENCY REGULATIONS 2026

(No. B/1097) Dr. F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the demand for electricity on the national power grid, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the projected decrease therein following the promulgation of the Energy Efficiency (Control of Non-Essential Grid-Powered Activities) Regulations 2026, indicating the –

(a) targets set therefore and the mechanism envisaged to monitor compliance therewith, and

(b) actions and/or sanctions envisaged in case of non-compliance therewith by activities falling under the 'red category.'

Mr Assirvaden: M. le président, le règlement 2026 sur l'efficacité énergétique est entré en vigueur le 01 mai 2026 et demeurant applicable jusqu'au 01 novembre 2026. Ce règlement vise à limiter l'utilisation de l'électricité du réseau pour certaines activités non-essentielles notamment –

(a) L'éclairage décoratif ;

(b) L'illumination extérieure des bâtiments lorsqu'elle n'est pas requise pour des raisons de sécurité ;

(c) L'utilisation de l'acclimatation dans les locaux non résidentiels à une température de 24 °C ;

(d) Ainsi que le maintien de l'éclairage du terrain de jeu extérieur lorsqu'ils ne sont pas utilisés.

Il convient de souligner que ces dispositions ne s'appliquent pas au secteur résidentiel. De même, les services essentiels et les infrastructures critiques tels que les hôpitaux et les cliniques, les aéroports etc. etc., ne sont exemptés de ces restrictions.

Cette mesure a été approuvée par le gouvernement dans le contexte des tensions géopolitiques persistantes au Moyen-Orient et de leurs répercussions sur les marchés mondiaux. Elle vise à atténuer les effets de la volatilité des prix de *fuel.*

M. le président, concernant la partie (a) de la question, le règlement vise une réduction durable de la demande d'électricité d'environ 5 MW par jour. En hiver, on arrive à le faire. J'espère qu'en été, c'est le cas. Sur l'ensemble de la période d'application soit le 01 mai au 01 novembre 2026, cette réduction devrait permettre une économie estimée à 4500 métriques tonnes de *fuel oil*, HFO, 4500 métriques tonnes.

M. le président, les mesures que comprennent notamment ces règlements, un système de signalement par le public, donc un numéro de téléphone, la collaboration de la police, nous travaillons en collaboration, EEMO et la police, des inspections ciblées sur les terrains, des actions de sensibilisation et d'information.

Concernant la partie (b) de la question, je tiens à préciser que le règlement prévoit une approche progressive en matière d'application, privilégiant d'abord les mesures correctives avant toute sanction. Lorsqu'un cas de non-conformité est constaté à la suite d'une inspection et après réception d'une plainte, l'EEMO de mon ministère, émet un avis formel de conformité précisant la nature de l'infraction et accordant généralement un délai de cinq jours pour y remédier.

M. le président, l'EEMO, comme je disais un peu plus tôt, privilégie avant tout une approche basée sur la sensibilisation, la coopération et l'accompagnement des opérateurs. Donc, depuis l'entrée en vigueur du règlement, nous avons eu 92 plaintes qui ont été enregistrées, 81 inspections ont été réalisées. L'EEMO a émis 29 avis de conformité. Parmi les organisations concernées, 17 ont déjà mis en œuvre les mesures correctives, donc c'est un bon signe et informé l'EEMO. Des inspections du suivi sont actuellement en cours de vérifier et actuellement, il n'y a aucune poursuite.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, hon. Dr. Aumeer!

Dr. Aumeer: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. May I ask the hon. Minister whether his Ministry will consider extending this programme after 01 November of this year, taking into consideration the whims and fancies of the warring parties in the Middle East, particularly in the Strait of Hormuz?

Mr Assirvaden: Disons que ce règlement est – c'est pour six mois. J'ai emmené ça au Cabinet, au Conseil des Ministres qui a été approuvé pour six mois dans le cadre de ce qui s'est passé au Moyen-Orient avec le prix des cargaisons que nous recevons. Certainement, nous allons étudier, l'EEMO, MARENA et le CEB vont utiliser la possibilité d'étendre. Si c'est nécessaire d'étendre, on va *extend,* bien sûr.

Dr. Aumeer: Last question.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay last question.

Dr. Aumeer: May I ask the hon. Minister whether his Ministry will consider the mandatory use of solar panels to lighten designs, publicities on most shopping malls and also on classified roads?

Mr Assirvaden: Très bonne proposition. Je transmettrai cela aux collectivités locales et au ministère des Infrastructures nationales.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. First Member for Vacoas and Floréal!

LA TOUR KOENIG/RESIDENCE COQUILLAGE – ATMOSPHERIC POLLUTION – REMEDIAL MEASURES

(No. B/1098) Ms J. Bérenger (First Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change whether, in regard to La Tour Koenig/Résidence Coquillage area, he will state –

(a) whether his Ministry is in presence of complaints regarding atmospheric pollution thereat and, if so, indicate the number thereof received over the past five years, and the number of investigations/air quality monitoring exercise carried out, including one recently and table copy of the findings thereof, and

(b) the enforcement actions initiated and/or sanctions imposed, if any, and, if so, give details thereof.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the House may wish to note that the atmospheric pollution issue in the area of La Tour Koenig/ Résidence Coquillage is not a new one. I am aware that recurrent complaints have been received from inhabitants regarding

odour nuisance, black smoke, and deposits of black soot emanating from industries in the industrial area adjoining the residential zone of La Tour Koenig.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that over the past five years, 22 complaints relating to odour and black smoke nuisances, including deposit of black soot, have been received in the concerned area, and a total of 10 ambient air monitoring exercises have been carried out during that period by the National Environmental Laboratory of my Ministry.

Recently, odour complaints were received at the level of my Ministry on 08, 09, 10 and 11 July 2026. The complaints were promptly attended by officers of my Ministry, including Police de L'Environnement and the National Environmental Laboratory.

I am informed that on 8 July 2026, the odour nuisance was caused by an accidental overflow of oil from the thermal oil tank at one of the industries in the region. The oil was contained and collected on the same day in an Intermediate Bulk Container tank. Additionally, on 10 and 11 July 2026, there were alleged Liquefied Petroleum Gas-like odour nuisances reported by the inhabitants of La Tour Koenig.

Accordingly, the National Environmental Laboratory of my Ministry carried out four ambient air monitoring exercises by using gaseous analysers during the period 09 July 2026 to 11 July 2026 in the La Tour Koenig area. No dangerous levels of the toxic gases were detected at the time of measurement.

I am tabling a copy of the report submitted by the National Environmental Laboratory. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that conscious of the need to ensure the safety of inhabitants, my Ministry has, since 2022, installed two Air Quality sensors at La Tour Koenig to monitor ambient air quality in real time. The sensors continuously monitor four parameters, namely, Particulate Matter (PM 10 and PM 2.5), Sulphur Dioxide, Nitrogen Dioxide, and Ozone. It is to be noted that the monitoring results from the sensors for that period were also compliant with the Environment Protection (Standards for Air) Regulations 1998.

I am further informed that the two industries in the area, namely CMT and Fine Crush Ltd, are being monitored through post Environmental Impact Assessment monitoring and Industrial Waste Audit mechanisms.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (b) of the question, under the post Environmental Impact Assessment monitoring mechanism, the industries are required to submit Environmental Monitoring Reports, comprising stack and ambient air monitoring on a quarterly and yearly basis, respectively.

The industry, where recent complaints have been received, had submitted its last Environmental Monitoring Report on 17 March 2026. Air monitoring results for both stack and ambient, conducted in February 2026, showed that the parameters measured are within the norms of the Environment Protection (Standards for Air) Regulations 1998.

I wish to point out that the concerned industry is monitored on a monthly basis. The last report was submitted in March 2026 for monitoring tests conducted in February 2026 at the level of the Preliminary Environmental Report, Environmental Impact Assessment and Strategic Environmental Assessment Monitoring Committee.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, under the Industrial Waste Audit mechanism, there are two listed industries in the immediate vicinity of the Residence Coquillage, which are required to submit Progress Reports on their Environmental Management Plan to my Ministry annually. As part of this report, they have to submit ambient air and stack emission monitoring results, as applicable.

I wish to inform the House that one non-compliance was observed during the period 05 to 28 October 2021 (level of sulphur dioxide was not compliant on several occasions) with regard to one of the industries (CMT). Accordingly, the industry was requested to implement remedial measures.

Thereafter, additional conditions with respect to air monitoring were imposed in 2022 in the EIA licence, namely submission of stack monitoring on a quarterly basis and ambient air quality monitoring to be carried out within the nearest residential agglomeration on a yearly basis.

To date, no non-compliances have been noted.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, hon. Ms J. Bérenger!

Ms J. Bérenger: Je vous remercie. L'honorable ministre a mentionné les *Standard Air Regulations* qui datent de 1998. Pourrait-il nous dire quand est-ce que le ministère va revoir ces *standards,* puisqu'ils sont clairement obsolètes ?

Mr Bhagwan: These standards are in the process of being reviewed, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. They are long overdue.

The Deputy Speaker: Dernière question !

Ms J. Bérenger: J'ai pris note qu'il a mentionné qu'il y a des stations qui ont été positionnées à La Tour Koenig précisément. Je voudrais savoir si l'honorable ministre est au courant que les émissions de fumée de cette usine dont il a fait mention deviennent plus denses et plus importantes aux alentours de 19 h ? Donc, est-ce que le ministère a mis en

place dans son programme de *monitoring* une surveillance spécifique à cette heure-là et dans cette région ? Est-ce que les résultats pourraient être rendus publics sur le site du ministère pour rassurer les habitants ?

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there is constant monitoring with regard to CMT and other industries. This industry is new. Coquillage was set up well after the industries were there. So, we are monitoring. There is no problem in putting on the website.

As far as I am concerned, I did not receive any complaint as such and even the MPs of the constituency. So, we will be monitoring constantly. We cannot prevent the industries working as well.

Ms J. Bérenger: Une dernière question.

Une dernière, s'il vous plaît. Parce qu'il a mentionné qu'il n'a pas eu de complaintes.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay, a last one. Be quick and short !

Ms J. Bérenger: L'honorable ministre a fait mention qu'il n'y a pas eu de complaintes des *MPs*. Vous-même vous aviez déjà fait des complaintes dans le passé. Il y a eu des complaintes des députés de cette circonscription depuis 20 ans. Du coup, je devais demander à l'honorable ministre : est-ce que son ministère a fait la liaison avec le ministère de la Santé pour évaluer les impacts sur la santé de ses habitants qui se plaignent de problèmes de bronches, de toutes sortes de problèmes de santé depuis des années ?

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am not sure if you have talked to the then Junior Minister, but you have not talked to me. I have not been informed as far as you are concerned. I have not received any complaints as such with my colleague. So, if I had received complaints, I would have acted. I would have acted promptly. You know my way of working!

So, anyway, we are monitoring. The question of La Tour Koenig and the industries is not a new problem. There is permanent monitoring. If we have to update whatever norms, we will. We also care for the inhabitants.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. First Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE!

CATCH-NEUTER-RELEASE PROGRAMME – CAPTURED DOGS – MSAW REPORTING MECHANISM

(No. B/1099) Mr C. Baboolall (First Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE) asked the Minister of Agro-Industry, Food Security, Blue Economy and Fisheries whether, in regard to the Catch-Neuter-Release Programme, he will –

(a) for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the –

(i) number of dogs captured thereunder over the past twelve months, region-wise;

(ii) mechanism in place to ensure that each dog is released in the locality where it was captured;

(b) state to whom the Mauritius Society for Animal Welfare is accountable for reporting on the outcomes thereof, indicating whether such reports are rendered public.

Dr. Boolell: I wish to thank the hon. Member for bringing this question before the House. The Mauritius Society for Animal Welfare operates within existing budgetary and human resource constraints. Despite these constraints, the MSAW remains fully committed to fulfilling its statutory mandate of promoting animal welfare, enforcing the relevant provisions of the law, responding to complaints and encouraging responsible pet ownership.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the MSAW and the Ministry continue to explore measures aimed at strengthening animal welfare and addressing the issue of stray dogs in a more sustainable manner. It is noted that assistance from experts through the Indian High Commission has already been solicited to support these efforts, and collaboration with other international experts and organisation with proven experience in the management of stray dog population is being explored.

As the House is aware, the Ministry has secured grant assistance from the Government of India, estimated at Rs2 billion, for the implementation of the animal hospital and veterinary school project. In this context, the project is being revised to extend its scope to include the construction of a sizeable sanctuary for dogs, thereby enhancing the country's capacity to provide appropriate care and welfare for stray and abandoned dogs. Discussions have been initiated with the Indian High Commissioner of India in Mauritius to revise the scope of the project.

With regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by MSAW that a total of 3,790 dogs were captured under the Catch-Neuter-Release Programme over the past 12 months all over the island.

As regards part (a)(ii) of the question, I am informed that the exact location of the captures recorded using GPS, pin location at time of catch. After being microchipped with details, identifying them as 'unowned dogs,' ear tagged, sterilised with status regarding capture-release location, 1,966 stray dogs have been released following full recovery from surgery into the same locality where they were originally captured.

1,486 dogs have been handed over to the care of volunteers and rescuers who regularly look after them in their respective localities. All information is recorded in the database of MSAW. However, some dogs are retained at the MSAW based on specific circumstances under the CNR programme. Stray dogs, which cannot be released, are accommodated at MSAW shelter facilities. During the financial year 2025-2026, MSAW sheltered around 160 dogs.

Other circumstances include ongoing police cases, persistent aggressive behaviour or severe illness. Euthanasia is also carried out where deemed necessary based on humane veterinary grounds in accordance with the provisions of the Animal Welfare Act 2013 as well as established veterinary protocol. 178 dogs have been euthanised in the financial year 2025-2026.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (b) of the question, you may wish to note that MSAW is accountable to my Ministry for the implementation and outcome of its programme.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, hon. Member!

Mr Baboolall: I thank the hon. Minister for his answer. Given that each dog is ear tagged or microchipped with geolocation recorded at capture, will the hon. Minister ask MSAW to publish the auditable register matching capture location to release location for every dog processed?

Dr. Boolell: Well, I have no problem to impress upon them to give us the information. Then, I will circulate it.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, you have another one?

Mr Baboolall: Hon. Minister, there has been reference to serious allegations of transfer of captured dogs and cats from the MSAW to a private company. Has any investigation been carried into that effect?

Dr. Boolell: As far as I know, I have not heard any adverse report. But if you have substantive cases, please, by all means, give them to me.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. First Member for Piton and Rivière du Rempart! I understand the hon. Minister of Health will reply to that question.

STILLBIRTHS – NATIONAL PREGNANCY LOSS & BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT POLICY

(No. B/1100) Dr. S. Prayag (First Member for Piton & Rivière du Rempart) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the increase in the number of stillbirths recorded in the Republic of Mauritius in 2025, she will state whether, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Wellness, a National Pregnancy Loss and Bereavement Support Policy is being envisaged to provide comprehensive medical, psychological and social support to affected families.

The Minister of Health and Wellness (Mr A. Bachoo): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall reply to this question.

Stillbirth is defined as birth of a baby showing no signs of life at or after 28 completed weeks of gestation. It is a tragic event with significant emotional, psychological and social consequences for the mother and the family. The cause of stillbirth is multifactorial and may be related to maternal, foetal or placental factors.

These include maternal conditions such as hypertension, diabetes, infections, obesity and other chronic diseases, foetal abnormalities, growth restrictions and infections as well as placental insufficiency, placental adoption and umbilical cord complications.

Despite thorough investigations, the cause remains unexplained in a proportion of cases. According to Statistics Mauritius, the overall number of still birth has shown a declining trend over the recent years, decreasing from 141 cases in 2020 to a provisional figure of 105 cases in 2025. The predicted figure for 2026 is 97 cases based on data available from January to April 2026.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the principle and provision of a National Loss and Bereavement Support Policy is fully embedded within our comprehensive National Sexual

and Reproductive Health Policy 2022 and its accompanying implementation plan 2022 to 2027 prepared with the technical support of WHO. The documents are available at the Ministry for perusal.

Within this comprehensive framework, the delivery of medical, psychological and social support to women and families experiencing pregnancy loss is provided for, *inter alia* –

- psychological care and referral pathways to hospital psychologists and psychiatrists, where required;
- support from medical social workers for families experiencing social or emotional difficulties;
- strengthening the training of healthcare professionals in maternal health and bereavement sensitive care;
- home visits by midwives and community healthcare officers for assessment, counselling and support;
- a patient-centred respectful and life course approach to sexual and reproductive health services;
- integration of post natal clinics at primary healthcare level to ensure continued follow-up of mothers, and

to summarise, a comprehensive antenatal intrapartum and postnatal care.

Following a stillbirth, mothers receive comprehensive medical care, including delivery and postnatal management, appropriate investigation to identify the likely causes of the stillbirth where indicated, counselling regarding the findings and advice for future pregnancies. Emotional and psychological support is provided by the attending obstetric and midwifery teams. Where necessary, women and their families are referred to psychologists, psychiatrists or medical social workers for specialised assessment and counselling. Particular attention is given to women exhibiting prolonged grief, depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, suicidal ideation or difficulties in subsequent pregnancies so that timely intervention and follow-up can be provided.

In addition, under the Workers' Rights Act, women who experience a stillbirth are entitled to the same statutory maternity leave as mothers of liveborn babies, thereby allowing adequate time for physical recovery, emotional healing and appropriate follow-up. My

Ministry is also examining the introduction of a Maternal and Perinatal Death Surveillance and Response (MPDSR) Programme, which will enable every maternal and perinatal death, including stillbirth to be systematically reviewed in order to identify avoidable factors, improve quality of care and reduce preventable death.

Finally, prevention remains the cornerstone of our strategy. All pregnant women continue to have access to free, comprehensive antenatal and obstetric care, including preconception care, early booking, regular antenatal follow-up, laboratory investigation, obstetric ultrasound examination, screening and treatment of maternal conditions, foetal growth monitoring, specialist surveillance of high-risk pregnancies and timely referral to specialist obstetric services. My Ministry remains fully committed to continuously strengthening maternal and newborn health services, in line with international best practices.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, hon. Member!

Dr. Prayag: I wish to thank the hon. Minister for his reply but I wish also to know in his substantive capacity, whether the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare is collaborating with the Ministry of Health in working on a national pregnancy loss and bereavement support policy.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the answer is in the positive. Definitely, we have got regular meetings with officers of the Ministry.

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

PUBLIC SERVICE VEHICLE (TAXI) LICENCES – ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

(No. B/1101) Ms S. Anquetil (Second Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Land Transport whether, in regard to Public Service Vehicle (Taxi) Licences, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Land Transport Authority, information as to whether consideration is being given to inviting applications from interested and eligible persons therefor and, if so, indicate the –

(a) eligibility criteria and terms and conditions thereof, respectively;

(b) expected timeframe for the processing and issuance thereof, and

(c) number thereof to be issued to persons from Constituency No. 18, Belle Rose and Quatre Bornes.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the allocation of Taxi Licences for any locality is determined based on the level of bus services available thereat, the number of taxi licences already granted (if any), and the adequacy or otherwise of taxi services available to residents to meet their 24-hour needs, along with other relevant considerations such as population figure and existence of social, residential and economic activities within the area.

With regard to part (a) of the question, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the NLTA that once the need for granting Taxi Licences is identified in a specific area, applications are invited through public communiqué issued by the NLTA. Interested applicants must satisfy the following eligibility criteria –

(i) residence;

(ii) licencing – they must be licenced taxi operators;

(iii) commitment to service;

(iv) prior history;

(v) employment status;

(vi) student status;

(vii) record of conviction.

That means they must not be employed, they must not be students, they should not have criminal records.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (b) of the question, these applications are subsequently enquired into individually by the inspectorate of the NLTA, heard by the Licencing Board which then submits its recommendations to the Chief Commissioner for approval or rejection, in accordance with the relevant provisions under the National Land Transport Authority Act and applicable regulations.

Due to the acute shortage of Road Transport Inspectors, with only 15 inspectors in post out of 45 on establishment, considerable delays have been registered in the completion of assessments of needs, enquiries and processing of applicants in respect of taxis and other licences. We are doing our level best to recruit because prior to the elections, no recruitment was done and in 2014, there were 51, which I am told, and today, we have only 15 Road Transport Inspectors. That is why the level of service at the NLTA has dropped considerably.

In regard specifically to taxis, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am advised that my Ministry instructed the NLTA some six months ago to carry out an island-wide survey in order to assess the required number of licences to be issued, including at commercial centres and hotels. While seeking information for the purpose of this PQ, my Ministry has been informed by the NLTA that no island-wide survey has been carried out to assess the demand for Taxi Licences at various localities. I am given to understand that the survey relating to commercial centres is being carried out but that has not been completed. As regard to hotels, a report on the survey has been carried out in September 2022. It has been submitted and this report is being considered valid for present assessing needs.

As the House is aware, the NLTA besides issuing licences, conducts a lot of other activities. But then, while acknowledging the fact that the NLTA is working with a significant level of inspectorate staff, I am convinced that the office was given a reasonably long time to complete the island-wide survey taxi-wise. I must say that I am utterly disappointed by the inaction of the NLTA on that issue and I have given the Officer-in-Charge a strong piece of my mind on this very embarrassing matter.

In the context, giving a tentative timeframe for the processing and issue of the licences for taxis as requested by the hon. Member may be difficult, but I wish to reassure the House that the PSC, following advertisement last year – only last year – has conducted interviews and additional inspectors will soon be appointed. The OIC NLTA has meanwhile been officially requested to complete the survey and to come up with a work plan to expedite the processing and determination of all pending and new applications.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to end, with regard to part (c) of the question, I am informed that there are 293 Taxi Licences already granted to residents in Constituency No. 18, which has a population of around 81,000 inhabitants. These taxis ply for hire from 30 bases of operation. As mentioned earlier, the NLTA has been requested to complete the survey on the needs for taxis, including in Constituency No. 18. It will be, therefore, premature at this stage to know how many licences will eventually be granted for that constituency. Based on the outcome of this exercise, applications will, if deemed necessary, be invited from residents of the localities concerned, and this is applicable island-wide.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes? Go on.

Ms Anquetil: Je vous remercie, M. le président. Je remercie le ministre pour sa réponse...

The Deputy Speaker: Put your question!

Ms Anquetil: Given the increasing population, commercial activities and transport demands in Constituency No. 18, will the hon. Minister consider allocating an adequate number of Taxi Licences to residents of Belle Rose-Quatre Bornes? Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, like I mentioned earlier, there are 293 taxi operators for 80,000 population. This amounts to about 276 persons for one taxi but then, the rule of thumb is one to 600. But then, there are many out of them who maybe are not operating anymore, either because of age, because they have passed away or whatever reason. That is why the survey is important to determine the real need of the moment.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Ms Anquetil: Une dernière, M. le président!

The Deputy Speaker: Allez-y!

Ms Anquetil: *Je vous remercie, M. le president*. Can the Minister inform the House on how many applications or expressions of interest for taxi licences are currently pending at the National Land Transport Authority? Thank you.

Mr Osman Mahomed: From my understanding, it is quite a bit. That is why I have impressed on the Officer-in-Charge of the NLTA, Mr Nabheebucus, to complete this exercise as soon as possible.

Ms Anquetil: Okay.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, hon. Beechook!

Mr Beechook: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. In the same vein, may I request the hon. Minister of Land Transport to also look into all the applications that emanate from the people of Constituency No. 9, namely Flacq, Lalmatie Market Fair, Flacq Super U, NHDC Camp Ithier, NHDC Quatre Cocos; in all these areas, whereby I confirm that surveys have been carried out and are dormant at the NLTA?

The Deputy Speaker: Excuse me, hon. Member, the hon. Minister has answered this question by saying that there is a survey to be done nationwide and then he will come…

Mr Beechook: But I am informing the hon. Minister that a survey has been carried out.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, you have made your request.

Mr Beechook: Therefore, can he urge the NLTA and his equally dormant Officer-in-Charge to, please, look into it? Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: You have already replied to it.

Mr Osman Mahomed: We will give the Officer-in-Charge a wake-up call on this.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. Now your question, hon. Beechook!

BHOJPURI CULTURAL HERITAGE – PRESERVATION & PROMOTION

(No. B/1102) Mr R. Beechook (Second Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil) asked the Minister of Arts and Culture whether, in regard to the preservation and promotion of the Bhojpuri cultural heritage, he will state whether consideration will be given for the establishment of a Bhojpuri Cultural Centre.

Mr Gondeea: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, at the outset, I wish to thank the hon. Member for raising this important question. A dedicated Bhojpuri Cultural Centre is indeed a good idea. It would provide a permanent platform for the promotion of the Bhojpuri music, traditions and cultural expressions, and should find its place in our future cultural landscape.

The Bhojpuri language and the traditions associated with it form an integral part of our national identity – an intangible cultural heritage. Since 2012, their promotion has been entrusted to the Bhojpuri Speaking Union, operating under the aegis of my Ministry. However, when we assumed office, we inherited a union that had been left largely dormant under the previous government and had not even been provided with a dedicated office from which to operate.

This Government has given new momentum to the union through the appointment of Mrs Varsharanee Bissessur-Doolooa as its Chairperson. As well-known Mauritian singer with a strong connection to Bhojpuri culture, she has an artistic experience and ability to give greater visibility to the language and its cultural expressions. The Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund is also playing a vital role, under this Government, through its work in research, education,

documentation and the preservation of the cultural heritage inherited from the indentured labourers.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there are currently 34 parastatal bodies operating under the aegis of my Ministry. As announced by the hon. Prime Minister in the Budget Speech 2026-2027, Government will review and streamline these institutions to strengthen governance, avoid duplication and ensure the optimal use of public resources. The proposal for a Bhojpuri Cultural Centre will naturally form part of this broader reflection on the future institutional landscape of the cultural sector. As this exercise progresses, my Ministry will continue to explore the most appropriate configurations to give the Bhojpuri language and culture a stronger and more permanent framework.

The Deputy Speaker: No question?

Hon. Members, the Chair has been advised that B/1104 and B/1112 have been withdrawn.

So, the hon. Fourth Member for Rodrigues!

RODRIGUES-MAURITIUS – FRUITS MARITIME TRANSPORTATION – SPOILAGE & DELIVERY DELAY – MEASURES

(No. B/1103) Mr J. Edouard (Fourth Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Agro-Industry, Food Security, Blue Economy and Fisheries whether, in regard to the maritime transportation of fruits from Rodrigues Island to Port Louis, he will –

(a) for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the number of reported cases of fruits spoilage and delays in the delivery of cargo thereof over the past twelve months, and

(b) state the measures being envisaged to –

  (i) expedite same;

  (ii) upgrade the cold storage facilities, and

  (iii) mitigate the financial losses incurred by the planters in Rodrigues Island.

Dr. Boolell: Thank you very much, hon. Member. I do not know whether the reply I will give to your question will be music to your ears, but this is the answer that has been related to me.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Agricultural Marketing Board and Mauritius Shipping Corporation Ltd that over the past 12 months, there has been no reported case of spoilage and no reported delay in the delivery of imported fruits and vegetables through maritime transportation from Rodrigues to Port Louis.

I wish to point out that vessels from Rodrigues arrive at Port Louis usually in the late afternoon, with priority necessarily given to the unloading of livestock pens in compliance with animal welfare conventions. Vegetable carriers and reefer containers are accordingly processed on the following day, following which, the Associated Container Services liaises with the National Plant Protection Office for the required phytosanitary inspection. Upon verification of the inter-island Phytosanitary Certificate and no damage observed on the consignment, the National Plant Protection Office's clearance is then granted. The consignments are, therefore, released to the importers for onward distribution after completion of the mandatory National Plant Protection Office and Customs clearances.

With regard to part (b) (i) of the question, I am informed that the Mauritius Shipping Corporation Ltd is working towards improving the efficiency of the shipment and handling of agricultural produce between Rodrigues and Mauritius and has made available additional chill containers to shippers. However, I must point out, despite these facilities being made available, many shippers have continued to opt for ventilated or aerated containers for the carriage of the fruits.

With regard to part (b) (ii) of the question, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the Mauritius Shipping Corporation Ltd is maintaining and making available a fleet of 18 reefer containers, including dedicated units for chilled and frozen products, to support the cold chain requirements of shippers. At this stage, the emphasis is on the effective utilisation and management of existing reefer capacity rather than the provision of additional fixed cold storage facilities.

With regard to part (b) (iii) of the question, I am informed that whenever a claim relating to loss or spoilage is reported, the Mauritius Shipping Corporation Ltd assesses the claim and investigates the supporting evidence submitted by the claimant. Where the

evidence satisfactorily substantiates the loss, compensation is considered in accordance with the applicable procedures. As of now, no reported claim has been obtained.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Ministry remains committed to ensuring the efficient maritime transportation and proper handling of perishable agricultural produce between Rodrigues and Mauritius while continuing to monitor the supply chain closely.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, hon. Edouard!

Mr Edouard: Yes, thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I thank the hon. Minister for his reply. May I ask the hon. Minister, what are the procedures for complaints of spoilage, please?

Dr. Boolell: If there is any complaint, it can be reported to the Ministry or even to the Commissioner responsible for agriculture in Rodrigues. As you know, there are good interactive meetings. If you have a reliable case, I will certainly look into it and see to it that corrective measures are taken. And if there is a claim, the Mauritius Shipping Corporation Ltd will certainly look into it.

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

QUEEN VICTORIA COMMUNITY CENTRE – RENOVATION

(No. B/1104) Mr R. Beechook (Second Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the Queen Victoria Community Centre, she will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the current infrastructural state thereof, indicating whether consideration will be given for the urgent renovation thereof.

(Withdrawn)

LASERINGUE AVENUE, PALMA, QUATRE BORNES – ROAD WIDENING

(No. B/1105) Ms S. Anquetil (Second Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to Laseringue Avenue, in Palma, Quatre-Bornes, he will state whether his Ministry is in presence of a request for the granting of the necessary access over State land thereat to facilitate the widening thereof for the

purpose of alleviating traffic congestion occurring thereat and, if so, indicate whether consideration is being given thereto.

Mr Mohamed: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I wish to refer the hon. Member to my reply to PQ B/1088 at the Sitting of 25 November 2025. The initial request was for the widening of the road from Palma roundabout to the Palma Marathi Sabha.

As a matter of priority, I am informed that the widening of the access road will, in the first instance, be limited to the part from Sainte Marie College to Palma Marathi Sabha. I am given to understand that this project would necessitate the relocation of electric and telecom poles. To that effect, discussions are ongoing with the Central Electricity Board and Mauritius Telecom.

Once this issue is sorted out, the Ministry of Local Government will be in a position to revert to my Ministry for acquisition of the private land that would be required for the project.

Ms Anquetil: *Je vous remercie, M. le président*. Given that phase one of a proposed widening of Laseringue Avenue involves both State land and private lands, would the hon. Minister indicate whether discussions with the private land owners have started, and if not, when they are expected to begin? Thank you.

Mr Mohamed: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as I have stated in my reply, at this particular juncture, it is too early to start those discussions. However, once the issues that I have raised are sorted out in terms of the obstructions that would need to be moved from Telecom and the Central Electricity Board, the Ministry of Local Government will then revert to my Ministry for the acquisition of the land that would be required.

So, since all this is interconnected, once we get that note from the Ministry of Local Government, we will be in a better position to know the size of the land. Then, we will be in a better position to decide how to apply the law to such acquisition.

Ms Anquetil: Une dernière, M. le président. Merci.

Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether the request for access over State land *a été examiné* by his Ministry, and if so, at what stage of consideration it presently stands? Thank you.

Mr Mohamed: I think I have said that in the past: there was a site visit that was carried out on the spot by various other ministries. I believe the hon. Member was also present at one

point in time. So, we have said that we are agreeable. We are agreeable. That is very clear. I know that for this particular subject, people living in the vicinity, people from that constituency and that particular area have waited for many years. We have considered these requests positively because they are very constructive and positive requests. So, that is why we have said yes.

Obviously, hon. Members of Parliament of that region have also convinced us that it is important. So, we will be going along that line. Let us now wait for the letter from the Ministry of Local Government. Then, we can take things forward.

Ms Anquetil: Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The Hon. Third Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue!

CITÉ BRIQUETERIE & BATTERIE CASSÉE – ROAD SAFETY

(No. B/1106) Mr L. Caserne (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Land Transport whether, in regard to Cité Briqueterie and Batterie Cassée, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to whether his Ministry is in presence of representations regarding road safety concerns thereat and, if so, indicate the preventive measures being envisaged, including installation of speed breakers and other traffic-calming measures and, if so, whether a traffic and road safety assessment has been carried out prior thereto, indicating the findings thereof.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the TMRSU of my Ministry that representations regarding the pressing road safety concerns in Cité Briqueterie and Batterie Cassée have indeed been received. Moreover, proposals and valuable feedback on the issues have also been received from hon. Caserne, for which I wish to express my thanks to him.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, both Cité Briqueterie and Batterie Cassée are highly urbanised, densely populated areas adjacent to Roche Bois. Their road networks are characterised by narrow lanes and significant pedestrian movement. In such environments, speeding vehicles pose an immediate and severe threat to vulnerable road users and accidents risk are high indeed.

To address this undesirable situation, the TMRSU has carried out a comprehensive traffic safety assessment in both localities to identify immediate, targeted and preventive interventions.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am pleased to inform the House that the TMRSU will soon implement a robust package of traffic calming and regulatory measures as follows –

(i) traffic conflicts at critical junctions will be resolved by repainting stop lines with high durability thermoplastic paint and installing retro- reflective diamond grade stop signs to drastically improve night-time visibility;

(ii) heavy duty rubber speed humps will be installed at strategic locations across both neighbourhoods to naturally regulate vehicle speeds;

(iii) designated speed zones will be established across the wider Roche Bois region, enforced by high visible retro reflective diamond grade 30 km speed limit signs.

With your permission, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am tabling the detailed list of these upcoming works.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, these swift cost-effective interventions are fully aligned with the United Nations Global Road Safety Target 3 and 4 by reducing operating speeds to 30 km per hour and securing our junctions. We will not only protect pedestrian lives, but also elevate the Roche Bois Road network to a three-star rating in an International Road Assessment Programme (IRAP) or even better.

However, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, infrastructure alone is not enough. Road safety is a shared responsibility that requires the active cooperation of the public, and above all, more compliance and discipline from all road users. To underline the need for public cooperation, may I mention that in May 2025, the association *Group Dibout* Roche Bois proactively proposed to be put on the road, in capital letters, 'SLOW' markings 30 km/h signs and a zebra crossing. Regrettably, the TMRSU was unable to implement these measures at that time due to objections from certain residents.

I, therefore, avail this opportunity to make, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, an earnest appeal to the residents and other stakeholders of Cité Briqueterie and Batterie Cassée as well as the Mauritian community at large, in the spirit of prioritising collective safety on the roads, in particular to our children, elderly and vulnerable.

I hope to have the support of elected representatives of the locality, including that of hon. Caserne, which I consider as being de facto because he came forward with a very well-motivated question on the subject. Thank you.

Mr Caserne: *Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir*. M. le président, compte tenu du flux de véhicules qui empruntent ces routes latérales, Batterie Cassée et Briqueterie, à vitesse excessive souvent des fois, est-ce que l'honorable ministre peut considérer avoir des concertations avec la force policière et les autres autorités afin qu'il y ait un exercice de conscientisation pour protéger les habitants de ces régions, en attendant que les mesures annoncées puissent être implémentées ? Merci.

Mr Osman Mahomed: The measures will be quite safe in nature, like I mentioned. But I can task the engineer in charge of the Port-Louis region to arrange for the meeting being proposed by the hon. Member. We will do so.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, hon. Lobine is absent for medical reason. So, I take it there will be a written reply.

So, we move to the next question. The hon. Fourth Member for Rodrigues!

RODRIGUES – CAMP DU ROI STADIUM – HOMOLOGATION

(No. B/1108) Mr J. Edouard (Fourth Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the proposed homologation of the Camp du Roi Stadium in Rodrigues Island, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to where matters stand, indicating the reasons for any delay in connection therewith and the expected timeframe for the finalisation thereof in accordance with international standards.

Mr Nagalingum: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir I will refer to my reply to PQ B/738 of the Sitting of 19 May 2026 where reference was made to the homologation of Jean Daniel André Stadium, previously Camp du Roi Stadium.

As per established procedures, the request for homologation of any facility should emanate from a country's national sport federation, representing the sports for which homologation is required. In the case of Jean Daniel André Stadium, the Rodrigues Regional Sport Committee should make a request to the concerned National Sport Federation in Mauritius so that the latter make an application to the respective international sport homologation body.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, however, I am informed by the Rodrigues Commission for Youth and Sports that as at date, no official request has been obtained from the Rodrigues Regional Sport Committee for the homologation of Jean Daniel André Stadium.

I am informed that the commission is ready to provide the necessary assistant required for the materialisation of the project. As such, it is premature as this stage to establish a timeframe for the homologation Jean Daniel André Stadium as same will depend on a time at which the request for homologation is made by the Rodrigues Regional Sports Committee.

Subsequently, to follow all the processes that are required by the international sport homologation body.

To note, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that my Ministry is ready to provide its full technical support to the Rodrigues Commission for Youth and Sports in this endeavour. The hon. Member may request the Rodrigues Regional Sport Committee to liaise with the Rodrigues Commission for Youth and Sport if the Committee feels that there is a need for homologation.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, you have a question?

Mr Edouard: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. May I ask the hon. Minister, what are the criteria that must be satisfied for homologation to be entertained and how can the Ministry accompany the Commission to achieve same?

Thank you.

Mr Nagalingum: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in order for a sports facility to be homologated there are mandatory requirements that need to be met. For instance, in the case of a football stadium, the requirement includes compliance with, *inter alia* –

- administration and documentation;
- pitch or field of play;
- technical areas and equipment;
- dressing room;
- team and official facilities;
- match official;
- doping and Video Assistant Referee (VAR);
- spectator area and seating;

- safety, security and emergency services;
- media, press and broadcast, and
- lighting power and communications.

Mr François: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, just one supplementary.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes.

Mr François: May the hon. Minister specify whether it is the Regional Assembly who has to contact the World Athletics or is it the Rodrigues Regional Sport Committee who has to contact RRA? Then, there is also the Mauritius Athletics Association – I am not quite sure which one has to directly contact the World Athletics to get this homologation.

Mr Nagalingum: I have just answered in my reply. I clearly stated that the National Sports Federation representing the sport for which homologation is required. So, we have to give it to the Federation so that they can do the needful.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Third Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka!

MOKA OLD DISTRICT COURT – STRUCTURAL CONDITIONS – SAFETY HAZARD

(No. B/1109) Mr G. P. Venkatasami (Third Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure whether, in regard to the building that historically housed the old District Court of Moka, he will state –

(a) when was an inspection thereof last carried out, indicating the findings thereof, and

(b) whether the present conditions thereof constitute a safety hazard and risk of further deterioration respectively and, if so, indicate the preventive measures being envisaged, further indicating the timeframe set therefor, if any, and, if not, why not.

Mr Gunness: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the building which was housing the old Moka District Court was built in the early 1870s under the tenure of Sir Arthur Hamilton-Gordon, Governor of Mauritius. In the year 2009, the land, together with the building of the old District Court of Moka, was retrieve from the Judicial Department and was vested in the Prime Minister's Office for use by the Police Department.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, following a request from the National Heritage Fund, the Civil Engineering Section of my Ministry had, in the first instance, carried a site inspection at the old District Court of Moka on 15 February 2013.

A report comprising the observation made on site, conclusion and recommendation was subsequently submitted to the National Heritage Fund.

The site inspection concluded that almost all the structural elements expect the concrete part of the rear of the building were in advanced stage of deterioration. As such the building was found to be beyond economic repairs and represented a threat as timber planks and other timber sections might fall at any time. Consequently, it was advised that nobody should have access to the building for security reasons. It was therefore recommended to pull down the building.

I am informed that in July 2013, the National Heritage Fund had advised not to demolish the building that accommodated the ex-Moka District Court on the ground that the site is a potential heritage site and bears historical and architectural value even though the site is not listed as national heritage.

I am also informed that in the year 2016, the National Heritage Fund had recommended the restoration of the old Moka District Court and had informed the Police Department that it was working on a programme to have an experienced restoration architect to prepare the scope of works.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am further informed that another survey was subsequently carried out by the Civil Engineering Section of my Ministry along with the officers of the National Heritage Fund in 2023, whereby the National Heritage Fund had recommended the renovation of the building. During the recent survey, it was noted that the building which is bounded on three sides by tarred accesses is in a very deplorable state.

The Police Department has informed that it is still awaiting the scope of works from the National Heritage Fund. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (b) of the question, as I mentioned earlier, a first survey was carried out in 2013 followed by another survey in 2023. It is very sad that despite the findings of the 2013 survey, no remedial action was taken by the previous government to restore a building of such historical importance.

Consequently, as one would expect in the absence of remedial measures, the condition of the building could only deteriorate further as was confirmed by the findings of the 2023 survey.

Furthermore, the National Heritage Fund would be requested to expedite matters at its end and to submit the scope of works at the earliest to the Prime Minister's Office to allow them to secure the necessary funding.

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

NATIONAL WHOLESALE MARKET – OPERATIONG COSTS

(No. B/1110) Mr S. Jugurnauth (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Agro-Industry, Food Security, Blue Economy and Fisheries whether, in regard to the National Wholesale Market at Wooton, in Belle-Rive, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Agricultural Marketing Board, information as to the –

(a) date of coming into operation thereof;

(b) annual management and operation costs thereof, indicating the profitability thereof, and

(c) impact thereof on the working conditions of planters and vendors and difficulties, if any, encountered thereat.

Dr. Boolell: Thank you very much. I thank the hon. Member for putting this question. I am sure it will be music to his ears when I lay on the table, the National Wholesale Market loss incurred by the Agricultural Marketing Board.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Agricultural Marketing Board than the National Wholesale Market came into operation on 27 July 2023.

With regard to part (b) of the question, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I am tabling the requested information and the operating loss incurred for Financial Year 2023-2024 is as high as Rs21,844,000.

I am informed that the total expenditure incurred for the construction of the National Wholesale Market amounted to around almost Rs393 million. Now, I am further informed that the National Wholesale Market was expected at its conception to generate income to the tune Rs22 million annually with an annual operating cost of around Rs15 million.

However, the figures tabled show that the National Wholesale Market has consistently been incurring substantial lost since its coming into operation, eroding systematically the

profit made the Agricultural Marketing Board (AMB) thus, reducing its capacity to fulfil its mandate. The cumulative loses since the coming into operation of the National Wholesale Market amount to around Rs57.7 million, almost like an elephant up on a sand castle.

Now, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (c) of the question, I wish to inform the House that with a view to addressing this alarming situation, the AMB will appoint an independent consultant to work out a turnaround plan, which will ensure that the AMB, including the National Wholesale Market, will, over time, become financially viable to fulfil its mandate of serving planters, vendors and consumers.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, the hon. Third Member for Grand' Baie and Poudre d'Or!

CWA – WATER LEAKAGES – KOREK APP

(No. B/1111) Mr L. Caserne (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the reporting of water leakages with the introduction of the 'KOREK' App for the lodging of complaints in relation thereto, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Water Authority, information as to whether consideration is being given for the deployment of additional repair resources to cater for the anticipated increase in reported cases and improve the response time in connection therewith.

(Vide Reply to PQ B/1093)

POSTGRADUATE SPECIALIST MEDICAL TRAINING – AUTHORISATION – ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

(No. B/1112) Dr. F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Tertiary Education, Science and Research whether, in regard to postgraduate specialist medical training, he will state whether any institution has been authorized for the dispensation thereof or is being considered in Mauritius and, if so, indicate –

(a) the criteria used to assess the competence and readiness thereof, and

(b) whether an independent international evaluation of its academic, clinical and training capacity was carried out prior thereto.

(Withdrawn)

SMALL & MEDIUM ENTERPRISES – PROMOTION – MEASURES

(No. B/1113) Mr R. Etwareea (Third Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of Industry, SMEs and Cooperative whether, in regard to the small and medium enterprises, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the SME Mauritius Ltd., information as to the –

(a) measures taken since November 2024 to date for the promotion thereof, indicating the outcomes thereof, and

(b) main impediments to the growth thereof.

Mr Ameer Meea: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, I wish to inform the House that since November 2024, SME Mauritius Ltd has supported 1,271 SMEs directly through its support schemes for a total amount of Rs117 million. Entrepreneurs, on their side, have committed to an investment of almost Rs90 million on projects and the cumulative turnover for SMEs supported since November 2024 is Rs7.7 billion and they have jointly employed 6,594 persons.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to further inform the House that since November 2024, SME Mauritius has interacted with 17,836 entrepreneurs or aspiring entrepreneurs for advice, consultancy, support, walk-ins, e-advice or on-site visits. SME Mauritius Ltd, being a registered training institution with the Mauritius Qualification Authority, has conducted a series of training programmes for both entrepreneurs and aspiring entrepreneurs. These programmes aim at improving the knowledge, competencies, skills and functional capabilities of entrepreneurs. Accordingly, 756 entrepreneurs and aspiring entrepreneurs have been trained to date.

Moreover, SME Mauritius Ltd has reached out to 3,156 potential entrepreneurs through its outreach programme. Additionally, in order to improve the visibility of SMEs, SME Mauritius Ltd organises SME fairs to provide SMEs with a platform and the opportunity to display a range of locally manufactured products, thereby creating awareness and showcasing their *savoir-faire*. Thus, in the 18 months, SME Mauritius has organised several *Salon de PME* with 152 entrepreneurs participating therein and welcoming at least 40,000 visitors.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that, in an endeavour to encourage the enterprise culture, as soon as I took office as Minister in December 2024, I launched the Entrepreneurship Awareness Programme across Mauritius to encourage the entrepreneurial spirit among the population, especially the youth and women, and to encourage them to start

their own businesses. The Entrepreneurship Awareness Programme was kicked off in Plaine Verte, Plaine des Papayes, Plaine Magnien, Rose Hill, and Rodrigues. Together, all these editions have brought more than 1,750 citizens into direct contact with the institutions that exist to support them.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (b) of the question, I wish to inform the House that the main impediments, among others, to the growth of SMEs are as follows –

- limited access to affordable finance;
- labour shortages;
- high cost of doing business;
- competition from imports;
- regulatory and administrative burden;
- limited innovation;
- limited access to export markets, and
- supply chain vulnerabilities.

Having said that, these impediments are well known. What matters is the response. I wish to assure the House that these are being addressed in large part through measures announced in the Budget 2026-27.

On the regulatory and administrative burden, I will introduce a new SME Bill to make the business environment friendlier for small enterprises, which will be accompanied by a new Business Facilitation Bill, which will cut through the procedures and bottlenecks that hold small operators back. Turning to finance, SME Mauritius Ltd will build a single digital platform, bringing together in one place all the support that Government has to offer, namely –

- schemes;
- grants;
- tax incentive, and
- finance.

Government Back Credit Guarantee schemes are being re-engineered and we are working with financial institutions to widen access to funding for technology adoption, business expansion and sustainable investment. For digital transformation and innovation, an eligible startup will enjoy a 10-year income tax holiday from its very first day of operation and will comprise a Dedicated Startup Act and a Startup Council and an Accelerator Scheme, together with stronger support for innovation. We are also broadening the exemption from custom duty on eligible utility vehicles so that registered SMEs in transformative sectors qualify, helping them cut costs, move goods and equipment and invest in capacity. Addressing these priorities will improve SMEs' competitiveness and resilience and strengthen their contribution to the economic growth and employment.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, some measures have already been adopted such as startups and MSMEs are now able to claim a tax deduction on their investment in AI technologies up to an amount of Rs150,000. Women have been empowered to start their own businesses and thus, all DBM loans under the Women Entrepreneur Loan Scheme now carries a grace period of 18 months for repayment instead of 12 months. Additionally, the maximum credit limit on these loans has been raised from Rs500,000 to Rs1.2 million. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. First Member for Vacoas and Floréal!

WATER SECURITY – RECORDED RAINFALL – NON-REVENUE WATER REPORTS

(No. B/1114) Ms J. Bérenger (First Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to water security, he will –

(a) for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the rainfall recorded on a regional basis over the past ten years, and

(b) table copies of the reports on Non-Revenue Water prepared by the –

  (i) Climate Resilient Infrastructure Development Facility, with the assistance of the British High Commission and

  (ii) Agence Française de Développement, respectively.

Mr Assirvaden: M. le président, en ce qui concerne la partie (a) de la question, je dépose les données demandées. Ce sont des données fournies par la météo, relatives aux pluies enregistrées au cours des 10 dernières années par région.

M. le président, en ce qui concerne la partie (b)(i) de la question, je dépose le *Climate Resilient Infrastructure Development Facility Report* financé par *the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office*.

En ce qui concerne la partie (b)(ii) de la question, l'étude de l'AFD est actuellement en cours et le rapport final devrait être soumis d'ici novembre 2026.

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

MV MAURITIUS TROCHETIA – AGE – DECOMMISSIONING

(No. B/1115) Mr J. F. François (Second Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Agro-Industry, Food Security, Blue Economy and Fisheries whether, in regard to the MV Mauritius Trochetia Vessel, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Shipping Corporation Ltd., information as to the –

(a) age thereof;

(b) expected timeline for the decommissioning thereof, and

(c) actions being envisaged for the replacement thereof by a passenger, general cargo and livestock vessel.

Dr. Boolell: Thank you very much, hon. Member.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Mauritius Shipping Corporation Ltd that MV Mauritius Trochetia was built and commissioned in 2001 and is now 25 years old, as young as Johnny Walker walking without the stick.

As regards part (b) of the question, it is to be noted that the vessel is approaching the end of its economic service life and its replacement is a matter of national priority and strategic importance for Mauritius. However, the expected decommissioning and replacement of MV Mauritius Trochetia are dependent on the procurement of a new vessel. In light thereof, I cannot give a definite timeline for the decommissioning of MV Mauritius Trochetia.

Concerning part (c) of the question, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Mauritius Shipping Corporation Ltd is working on a procurement plan for the acquisition and construction of a modern multi-purpose passenger-cum-cargo vessel, specifically designed to service Mauritius, Rodrigues and Agalega for the next 25 years. The estimated cost of acquiring such a vessel is Rs1.5 billion. The delivery is expected by April 2029.

In that respect, on 10 June 2026, discussions have been held by the Ministry with the High Commission of India, whereby a list of six shipyards in India were provided to the Mauritius Shipping Corporation Ltd. An expression of interest for the design and construction of a modern multi-purpose passenger-cum-cargo vessel was launched to these shipyards.

So far, four shipyards have responded and expressed their interest in the project, namely –

(i) Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers (GRSE) Ltd;
(ii) Synergy Shipbuilders;
(iii) Hindustan Shipyard Limited (HSL), and
(iv) Yeoman Marine Services Private Company Limited.

The Mauritius Shipping Corporation Ltd will start discussion with these shipyards by the end of July this year.

However, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Ministry is also exploring financing options for the acquisition of a new vessel available under the UK Export Finance Programme. On 18 May 2026, the Mauritius High Commission in London was requested to seek details pertaining to the financing option, eligibility criteria, indicative terms and conditions, financing structures and instruments, and other associated requirements applicable to such a project. A reply is awaited.

Similarly, on 14 July 2026, the Ministry has also submitted a project for the design and construction of a new passenger-cum-cargo vessel to replace MV Mauritius Trochetia for consideration by the EU and the EU Global Green Bond Initiative and Sustainable Finance Advisory Hub. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: PQ B/1116 will be a written reply.

So, we go to the hon. Third Member for Pamplemousses and Triolet!

MAURITIAN FOOTBALL REVIVAL & DEVELOPMENT – PROJECTS & INCENTIVES

(No. B/1117) Mr K. Rookny (Third Member for Pamplemousses & Triolet) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the Government strategy for the

revival and development of football in Mauritius, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the –

(a) projects identified therefor, indicating the implementation timeframe therefor, and
(b) incentives, if any, being envisaged for football clubs and football academies.

Mr Nagalingum: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Member for this continued interest in the revival and sustainable development of football in Mauritius.

When I took office, Mauritian football was in deep crisis. This situation has been mainly due to the lack of political vision under the MSM-led government regime. Instead of harnessing football's unifying power, the regime allowed poor governance and quick political fixes to undermine the sport. This lack of political vision included, among others, failure to build structured training centres, scouting system, or coaching programme as well as poor maintenance, lack of planning, and absence of community facilities meant that infrastructure failed to serve as a sustainable backbone for football.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as I outlined in my replies to Parliament Questions B/999 and B/1021 of November 2025, the Government's strategy for the revival of development of football in Mauritius is comprehensive, forward-looking, and built on a clear vision to make football in our country inclusive, exciting, and competitive at both regional and international level.

Our approach in this endeavour rests on five pillars –

- youth development;
- capacity building;
- improved infrastructure;
- enhanced governance, and
- a stronger partnership with the Mauritius Football Association.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the project *Relance du football*, jointly spearheaded by my Ministry and the Federation, is the engine driving this vision. Since 2025, we have moved from planning to action, and a number of key measures have been implemented.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my Ministry is currently rolling out additional projects under a structured five-year Football Development Framework.

As regards part (a) of the question, several projects are being identified. These projects include –

- Grassroots and youth development, strengthening the network for the development of youth sports through 41 *écoles de foot*, which comprises the following –
    (i) grassroots under 9 and under 11 categories;
    (ii) *écoles de foot* under 13 and under 15 categories;
    (iii) 12 regional technical centres across the island.
- The FIFA grassroots football 2026, which started in May 2026 with 230 primary schools participating and the final was held on Wednesday, 15 July 2026.
- The setting up of the Centre for Excellence in Football in October 2025 with 75 young football players across three boys age categories: under 15, under 17 and under 18.
- Coaching – a new National Technical Director has been appointed.
- The Mauritius Football Association is now delivering CAF Licence C and D with a view to raising technical standard. 150 participants have already graduated. CAF Licence B course will be held during the period of August to December 2026 and will target 30 participants.

With the collaboration of the Mauritius Football Association, my Ministry is expanding participation of girls in football and developing regional structures to support them. Women competition are being strengthened and talent pathway are being established to ensure our female players have equal opportunities to develop.

We also have the upgrading of the *centre technique*…

The Deputy Speaker: If you have long to go, you can file the reply.

Mr Nagalingum: I am not going to be too long.

The Deputy Speaker: Because…

Mr Nagalingum: It is very important so that the population may know what we are doing.

The Deputy Speaker: Each and every question is important and each answer is important. But if your answer is too long, please, file it! You have already taken five minutes.

Mr Nagalingum: If you say so, I am going to table it.

The Deputy Speaker: Table it!

Mr Nagalingum: Of course.

The Deputy Speaker: Do you have a supplementary question?

Mr Nagalingum: Like I said, it is something that is very important for the population to know.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, it is important. The hon. Member will ask a question.

Mr Rookny: Can the hon. Minister, please provide information about how much of the sports budget will be dedicated to revival of the sports, and if that budget includes providing financial incentives to local Super League teams?

Mr Nagalingum: The answer is lengthy. I will go according to your ruling. Like you said, I am going to table it.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, table it. Very good! Any more question? No.

The hon. First Member for Piton and Rivière du Rempart!

BUGGIES & QUAD BIKES ROAD USE – SURVEY & REGULATION

(No. B/1118) Dr. S. Prayag (First Member for Piton & Rivière du Rempart) asked the Minister of Land Transport whether, in regard to buggies and quad bikes, he will –

(a) for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to whether any survey or feasibility study has been carried out on the use thereof on public roads, and

(b) state whether consideration is being given for the regulation thereof, exclusively in coastal regions and on designated roads around the island.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, at the very outset, I wish to point out that buggies and quad bikes are designed and manufactured for off-road use. While no person

is authorised to operate a quad bike on public roads in Mauritius, I am given to understand that the NLTA was, until February 2019, registering buggies for use on our public roads.

I am informed that buggies were allowed contrary to quad bikes as they have similar features as motor cars in terms of steering and other automotive controls, seating arrangements and safety requirements. Their comparatively low centre of gravity makes these vehicles more stable and less risky to tipping over. As the NLTA has ceased to register buggies, these vehicles are now not being imported. As per records from the NLTA, about 121 buggies have been registered. That is why buggies may still be seen to be operating here and there.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Police that quad bikes are not authorised to run on public roads as they are not registered. Any person contravening this prohibition may be prosecuted for the offence of using an unregistered motor vehicle in breach of section 5(1)(a) of the Road Traffic Act, which provides that –

> "(…) no person shall use, on a road or otherwise, a motor vehicle or trailer unless the vehicle or trailer is registered in accordance with this Act."

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the TMRSU of my Ministry that no survey for feasibility study has been conducted on the use of buggies or quad bikes on public roads. As regards quad bikes, from a safety perspective, the design characteristics include a high centre of gravity, therefore more narrow track width, the absence of occupant protection systems, lock rear axle system, and their particular handling characteristics render quad bikes unsuitable for use alongside conventional motor vehicle on public roads.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, due to these fundamental design conflicts between off-road performance and on-road safety, regulatory bodies in most jurisdictions restrict quad bike use for off-road use only. As such, they may be allowed to run in off-road environments and on private properties intended for recreational, agricultural or commercial purposes.

The House will recall that the use of unregistered quad bikes led to a fatal accident in Barkly in the recent past. These vehicles have also been seen on public roads in some regions of Port Louis and elsewhere. Following my request last year, the NLTA had issued a reminder in a communiqué dated 03 December 2025 last year to draw the attention of the public on the unlawful use of quad bikes on public roads and the penalties applicable for such offences.

Unfortunately, some persons are still persistently using quad bikes illegally as evidenced recently where such a vehicle was used on a public health track which became a cause of public unrest. For reasons I have mentioned, my Ministry does not find any need to regulate or allow the use of quad bikes in any designated region or any road.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to end, as for buggies, the underlying reasons for which the registration of these vehicles was stopped by the NLTA in 2019 are unclear. These vehicles offer all the comfort and safety that any conventional car provides and also have similar automotive control system. Their use in Mauritius has not given rise to any known unfortunate accident. These vehicles are allowed for private commuting needs in other countries and may be interesting from a touristic perspective.

Taking these factors into consideration, my Ministry will request the NLTA to consider the availability to reintroduce the registration and licensing of buggies for use on public roads after giving due consideration to all required safety requirements as laid down in the Road Traffic (Construction and Use of Vehicles) Regulations 2010. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Third Member for Rivière des Anguilles and Souillac!

PRIMARY SCHOOLS – SEN UNITS

(No. B/1119) Dr. Ms R. Daureeawo (Third Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resource whether, in regard to students with special education needs, he will state the –

(a) primary schools and respective location thereof wherein SEN Units have been set up to cater therefor, and

(b) number of additional SEN Units and SEN Regional Development Centres earmarked for implementation in financial year 2026-2027, indicating the proposed locations thereof.

Dr. Gungapersad: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Member for interest in the SEN sector. I wish to reaffirm my Ministry's commitment to ensuring equitable access to quality and inclusive education for all learners with a special attention for those with a special education needs.

In this regard, my Ministry continues to expand specialised educational facilities and support services to all children who require special education needs. I wish to inform the

House that my Ministry takes into account the following while planning for the specialised services in the SEN sector –

1. the demand for placements;
2. the educational needs of learners, and
3. the availability of financial resources with a view to ensuring that every child receives appropriate educational support in a conducive learning environment.

As regards part (a) of the question, there are presently 12 Special Education Needs integrated units operating in 11 Government Primary Schools to cater for learners with a special education needs. One school namely D. Hurry Government School, Goodlands operates two SEN integrated units. I am tabling the list of these schools together with their respective locations. In addition, my Ministry operates seven SEN Resource Development Centres. I am also tabling the list of these centres together with their respective locations.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (b) of the question, I wish to inform the House that for the financial year 2026-2027, four additional SEN integrated units are scheduled to be established at –

(i) Noé Nemorin Government School, Trou Aux Biches;

(ii) Beau Séjour Government School, Belle Rose;

(iii) Barlow Government School at Barlow;

(iv) Quinze Cantons Government School, Vacoas.

Furthermore, a new SEN Resource Development Centre will be established at Montagne Ory. The above locations have been identified following an assessment of requests for admission, the demand for specialised educational services, the needs of learners according to the nature and severity of their disabilities, and the objective of improving equitable geographical access to a special education need services. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, hon. Member.

Dr. Ms Daureeawo: Can Dr. the hon. Minister state how many children with special education needs are expected to benefit from the additional units and centres?

Dr. Gungapersad: I can tell you, hon. Member, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir for the time being, we have around 3,000 children who are concerned by the SEN sector and definitely,

the figures will differ depending upon the level, the severity of their disability and the region where they will be located.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes.

Dr. Ms Daureeawo: Can Dr. the hon. Minister also confirm whether consideration is being given to establish a SEN unit in each educational zone to ensure equitable access to all students?

Dr. Gungapersad: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there is a lot of coherence in whatever the hon. Member is saying. Definitely, we want to bring the centre closer to these children because we do not want them, given their physical or mental situation, bring these institutions closer to them and that is why officers of my Ministry always take that into consideration while earmarking a centre for these SEN students. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Third Member for Vieux Grand Port and Rose Belle!

DISTRICT COUNCIL OF GRAND PORT – NIGHT MARKETS – ORGANISATION

(**No. B/1120) Mr A. Ramdass (Third Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Bell**e) asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to night markets, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the District Council of Grand Port, information as to whether consideration will be given for the holding thereof during the current year in the localities falling under the jurisdiction thereof.

Mr Woochit: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the District Council of Grand Port that the holding of night markets in localities falling under its jurisdiction during the current year is under consideration. Before any night market is approved, the District Council will determine the appropriate location, the period and operating modalities, the estimated financial implications, traffic and public safety arrangement, waste collection and sanitation measures, the provision of facilities such as lighting, tents, public toilets and the level of interest from prospective traders so as to ensure that the event is operationally feasible and can be conducted in a safe and orderly manner.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, for the benefit of the House, I wish to point out that during the last festive season, a day market was successfully organised at the Mahebourg waterfront. However, no night market was held as no application was received from prospective traders to operate during the night hours.

Accordingly, any proposal for the holding of night markets during the current year will be considered by the District Council in the light of operational feasibility, public safety, financial sustainability and the level of participation from traders before a final decision is taken.

Thank you.

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

CONSTITUENCY NO. 18 – SOCIAL HOUSING PROJECTS – FY 2026-2027

(No. B/1121) Ms S. Anquetil (Second Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to social housing projects, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the number thereof earmarked for financial year 2026-2027, indicating the –

(a) locations of the proposed sites;

(b) number of units earmarked, further indicating the number thereof earmarked for residents of Constituency No. 18, Belle Rose and Quatre Bornes, and

(c) expected start and completion dates thereof.

Mr Mohamed: Thank you. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I presume that the hon. Member is referring to the new social housing projects and not to ongoing ones being undertaken by both the NHDC and the NSLD.

On this understanding, I wish to inform the House that the Budget Estimates 2026-2027 provide for the implementation of three new social housing projects by the NHDC, comprising a total of 227 housing units.

As regards parts (a) and (b), I am informed that the NHDC proposes to construct 38 housing units at Baie du Tombeau, obviously in Constituency No. 3.

Ms Anquetil: Okay.

Mr Mohamed: 89 units at La Source, Quatre Bornes and I can assure the hon. Member that it is not a coincidence that she is the one putting the question or that my good friend, hon. Minister or yourself, looking at me. Your eyes have had no effect on my answer. I can assure. 100 units at Plein Bois in Constituency No. 12. He is not here, so he should be happy.

In regard to part (c), the project is expected to start in September 2026 at Baie du Tombeau, in March 2027 at La Source, and April 2027 at Plein Bois. With completion scheduled in June 2028 for Baie du Tombeau, March 2029 for La Source, and July 2029 for Plein Bois.

I must here add that my Ministry has been given slightly more than Rs2 billion in order to complete the NSLD projects, that are already underway. Last year, we also spent, in the last Financial Year, almost Rs3 billion, precisely to complete those projects. So, this is what we have at the moment as far as we have in pocket at the moment. So, in actual fact, for more houses, I am out of pocket.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Just one last question. Time is over already.

Ms Anquetil: Just one. *Je vous remercie, M. le président*. Would the hon. Minister explain the reason for any delays in the delivery of previous announced social housing project, for example, at La Palma, and what measures are being taken to avoid similar delays in the future? Thank you.

Mr Mohamed: The delays, unfortunately, are, for example, if I am to talk about La Source for Constituency No. 18, there were 100 units there and the delivering of the housing units depends on CWA water tank and booster pumps. The hon. Minister responsible for those institutions is well aware.

Then, La Source, lot 1 to lot 6 and lot 9, 300 units. That also depends on lifting station and CWA water tank and booster pumps. So somewhere, some place, I am in good hands, since I know that it is my good friend, the hon. Minister for Public Utilities who is responsible there. I know that those matters will be attended to and I am sure that we will be able to give satisfaction to hon. Members of No. 18 but it is not, and I am happy to say that, dependent on the NSLD right now. We have to move forward. However, there has been some issues pertaining to contractors as well, that is independent of our doing, but we are following very closely.

Ms Anquetil: Okay. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Time is over.

The Table has been advised that the following PQs have been withdrawn: B/1122, B/1123, B/1124, B/1125, B/1126, B/1127, B/1128, B/1130, B/1131, B/1133, B/1134, B/1136, B/1137, B/1138, B/1139, B/1142 and B/1143.

Yes. hon. Minister!

MOTION

SUSPENSION OF S.O. 10(2)

Mr Mohamed: 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.

Mr Bhagwan rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

PUBLIC BILLS

Second Reading

THE MAURITIUS HYDROGRAPHIC SERVICES BILL

(NO. XI OF 2026)

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on the Mauritius Hydrographic Services Bill (No. XI of 2026).

Question again proposed.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. First Member for Rodrigues!

(4.16 p.m.)

Ms M. R. Collet (First Member for Rodrigues): M. le président, honorables collègues, ce projet de loi à l'ordre du jour, le *Mauritius Hydrographic Services Bill* 2026,

présenté par l'honorable ministre des Terres, est un texte qui engage notre République dans une étape décisive.

Pour beaucoup de nos concitoyens, le mot hydrographie peut sembler technique. En réalité, il s'agit de dresser des cartes précises de ce qui se trouve sous nos vagues. Les profondeurs, les reliefs, les récifs et les bancs de sable de la géographie maritime. Ces cartes sont indispensables pour naviguer en sécurité, protéger nos ressources marines et bâtir des infrastructures solides.

Voyez-vous, M. le président, pendant des années, notre République a dû compter sur des services d'hydrographie et de cartographie fournis par des partenaires étrangers. Nous leur sommes reconnaissants pour cette collaboration comme l'ont rappelé l'honorable ministre des Terres, ainsi que mon collègue député, l'honorable François lors de la dernière séance.

Mais aujourd'hui, M. le président, notre République franchit une nouvelle étape. Elle affirme désormais notre maîtrise nationale dans ce domaine. Avant toute autre chose, M. le président, une différence importante est à noter. Dans certains pays comme le Royaume-Uni, l'exploration de l'océan est considérée comme une activité commerciale. Des entreprises privées cartographient la mer pour installer des éoliennes par exemple et les données sont ensuite partagées librement mais, notre République, elle, a choisi une autre voie, adaptée à notre réalité d'État océanique stratégique. Concrètement, cela signifie trois principes simples. Les informations maritimes appartiennent désormais à notre République.

Avec un modèle étatique et centralisé, c'est l'État mauricien qui détiendra et contrôlera les données maritimes. Toute entreprise ou navire étranger devra obtenir une autorisation avant de collecter des informations sur nos eaux ou même pêcher dans nos eaux. Une autorisation est obligatoire et aucun navire ou entreprise étrangère ne peut collecter l'information sans l'accord de l'État mauricienne. Des sanctions claires sont prévues en cas de violation et toute violation de ces règles, entraînera des conséquences graves, ce que prévoit ce projet de loi.

Ainsi, contrairement au modèle commercial adopté ailleurs, notre République choisit de protéger nos ressources et notre souveraineté, en plaçant la sécurité et l'intérêt de nos citoyens au-dessus des logiques du marché. Chacun comprendra que notre République reprend le contrôle de notre espace maritime. Permettez-moi, M. le président, de poser une

question simple mais essentielle. Savez-vous, M. le président, vraiment où sont nos poissons, nos ourites et autres fruits de mer ? Et quelles sont les routes maritimes sûres pour que nos pêcheurs de Rodrigues aillent pêcher tout cela ? Non, moi non plus, du moins pas pour le moment. Répondre à cette question, c'est donner à nos pêcheurs et à nos entreprises les moyens de travailler en sécurité et à notre République les moyens de gérer durablement nos ressources.

Ce projet de loi a des effets concrets pour nos pêcheurs artisans comme pour l'industrie professionnelle de la pêche qui se développe. Cette question est vitale. Elle détermine la sécurité en mer, la capacité à rentrer malgré les tempêtes, esquiver le danger en naviguant et ainsi la survie économique de toute une filière.

Pour nos infrastructures, M. le président, l'hydrographie est indispensable pour construire et moderniser nos ports. Un port n'est pas seulement un quai. C'est une porte ouverte sur le commerce, le tourisme et la sécurité maritime. Pour bâtir un port sûr, il faut connaître le relief sous-marin, identifier les zones profondes pour accueillir les grands navires et repérer les récifs ou bancs de sable qui peuvent mettre en danger la navigation.

Grâce à des données fiables, centralisées et accessibles, nous pourrons développer des ports modernes dans nos îles de la République, comme défini dans notre loi suprême, qui est la Constitution, des ports capables de soutenir notre économie bleue, d'attirer des investissements, et bien sûr, de protéger nos îles contre la montée des eaux.

Ce texte, M. le président, est aussi essentiel pour l'avenir numérique de notre République. Vous vous demandez sûrement comment ? Les câbles optiques sous-marins qui relient nos îles au reste du monde passent par nos fonds marins. D'ailleurs, j'interpelle le gouvernement sur la nécessité cruciale de considérer un second câble sous-marin de fibre optique pour Rodrigues afin d'assurer une redondance numérique totale, d’avoir un réseau internet fiable et de garantir que notre île ne soit jamais isolée du reste du monde en cas de rupture ou de panne du câble principal existant. Bien sûr, éviter de répéter l'épisode de la rupture du câble SAFE à Maurice !

Une hydrographie précise garantit l'installation de ces câbles optiques sous-marins et bien sûr leur maintenance en toute sécurité contrôlée par notre République. Cela signifie une meilleure connectivité pour tous nos citoyens, une compétitivité accrue pour nos entreprises et une place renforcée pour nos îles dans l'économie mondiale, M. le président.

C'est pourquoi, dans un souci de consolider l'autonomie de Rodrigues au sein de la République et de soutenir à la fois la pêche artisanale et l'industrie professionnelle, il est indispensable d'installer une antenne de la *Mauritius Hydrographic Services* (MHS) sur l'île Rodrigues. Rodrigues est déjà responsable de plusieurs services marins, notamment à travers la SEMPA et la gestion des aires marines protégées. Il est donc naturel que l'Assemblée régionale participe pleinement aux décisions concernant les eaux qui entourent Rodrigues, car la gestion de ces zones maritimes ne peut se faire sans la collaboration directe des autorités régionales qui ont déjà une expérience et une responsabilité reconnues.

Je soutiens donc pleinement la demande de mon leader et collègue, l'honorable François. D'ailleurs, j'en profite pour saluer cet homme, lui-même *Surveyor Technician,* dont l'expérience inspire notre République. Son parcours montre que les Rodriguais peuvent être pionniers de cette souveraineté maritime. J'appelle nos jeunes à emboîter le pas. Nous devrons aussi, bien sûr, encourager la formation des hydrographes et cartographes. Si nous encadrons ces professions par la loi, nous devons garantir qu'elles soient accessibles aux jeunes de Rodrigues. Une antenne de la MHS ne doit pas seulement collecter des données. Elle doit être un centre de formation et d'opportunités pour les professionnels de mon île.

Pour conclure, M. le président, ce projet de loi est un texte de dignité. Il s'agit de revendiquer ce qui appartient à la République, des lagons de Mahebourg jusqu'aux eaux profondes des îles de notre République, incluant Agaléga, Rodrigues et les Chagos. En votant ce texte, nous, ici, nous assurons que notre République protège son environnement, sécurise ses frontières et prépare un avenir durable pour les générations futures.

Je me prononce donc en faveur de ce projet de loi, M. le président. Merci beaucoup.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Hon. Dr. Boolell!

(4.25 p.m.)

The Minister of Agro-Industry, Food Security, Blue Economy and Fisheries (Dr. A. Boolell): Thank you very much, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I have listened very intently to the speech delivered by the hon. lady and she has said what needed to be said. I will follow, as we say, suit and highlight the merits of the Bill.

If we want Mauritius to be a big Ocean State, we cannot simply say it in a vacuum. To be a big Ocean State, we have to make sure where we are, where we are going, and if we have to cruise, whether we are flying on the right direction.

So, let me right from the outset congratulate the hon. Minister of Housing and Lands for introducing this important piece of legislation. It is timely, strategic and essential because hydrography is above all about safety of maritime navigation. For an island like Mauritius, maritime transport is not merely another mode of transport. It is the backbone of our economy. More than 99% of our imports and exports move by sea. The safety, efficiency and reliability of our maritime transport system, therefore, depend on accurate hydrographic surveys and up-to-date nautical information.

Since independence, Mauritius has benefited immensely from the support of friendly nations: Japan through JICA, and then, of course, India, in developing our hydrographic capabilities. The Memorandum of Understanding on hydrography first signed in 2005 has been the cornerstone of this cooperation. Through this partnership, India has assisted Mauritius in conducting hydrographic surveys, producing navigational charts, training our officers, transferring technical expertise and establishing hydrographic infrastructure.

Now, like all our friends, I wish to place on record our profound gratitude to the Government and the people of India for this unwavering and unconditional support. This partnership has significantly strengthened our maritime capabilities. However, while we value long-standing cooperation, we must also use it as a springboard to build our own national expertise. International partnership should empower Mauritius to become increasingly self-reliant in hydrographic surveying, maritime cartography and nautical chart production. This is the hallmark of sustainable nation building.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Mauritius is a contracting state to the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea, whose provisions are incorporated into our Merchant Shipping Act of 2007. Under Chapter 5, Regulation 9 of SOLAS Convention, every coastal state has a legal obligation to provide hydrographic and nautical services. These obligations include conducting hydrographic surveys, producing and maintaining updated nautical charts and publication, issuing notices to mariners and ensuring that all such information complies with the standard of international hydrographic organisation. This is, therefore, not simply good governance. It is an international responsibility.

The Republic of Mauritius, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, administers one of the largest maritime zones in Africa. It ranks 20th among the world's largest coastal states in term of maritime jurisdiction. Such an extensive Exclusive Economic Zone carries immense opportunities, but also equally significant responsibilities. As the saying goes: we must know

our territorial waters. But beyond knowing our boundaries, we must fully understand the resources that lie within our Exclusive Economic Zone.

This requires comprehensive hydrographic survey, modern tracking infrastructure and continuous scientific monitoring. In this regard, the completion of hydrographic surveys throughout our entire EEZ, including Diego Garcia, remains of strategic importance.

Our ambition is clear. Mauritius must position itself as a leading maritime hub in the Indian Ocean, serving a preferred destination for transshipment, bunkering, refuelling and maritime services for vessels navigating major international shipping routes between Africa, Asia, Australia and South America – an opportunity to be the star and key, not only of the Indian Ocean, but of the world.

Now, achieving this vision requires more than modern port infrastructure. It requires precise hydrographic knowledge of our waters, reliable navigational information and continuously updated nautical charts. Safe sea routes are the foundation upon which maritime commerce is built. Hydrography enables the Government's broader vision of expanding our port infrastructure, developing a container port terminal, constructing dedicated fishing port, establishing a fish auction market, and strengthening the blue economy.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, hydrography is more, as I have stated, than navigation. It is a strategic national asset. It supports fisheries and aquaculture by identifying navigable passes, suitable aquaculture sites and the optimal placement of fish aggregating devices. It contributes to marine conservation through delineation and management of marine protected areas. It supports port development, offshore renewable energy, marine biotechnology, sea-based resource exploration, tourism and coastal infrastructure. It plays a critical role in disaster risk reduction and climate resilience. Accurate hydrographic data enable us to monitor sea level rise, coastal erosion and changing ocean conditions. These data sets allow policy makers to model flooding risk, protect coastal communities and preserve the fragile marine ecosystem. For Mauritius, where tourism and fisheries remain pillars of economy, the ability to anticipate and respond to coastal change is no longer optional. It is indispensable. Hydrographic information also underpins marine spatial planning by providing geographic information system necessary for evidence-based decisions based on marine zoning, conservation and sustainable ocean use.

Updated nautical charts, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, remain one of the most essential tools for maritime safety. They are equally the foundation for scientific research, offshore development, renewable energy project, deep ocean water application, fisheries, aquaculture and the responsible exploration of marine resources. For these reasons, the establishment of a full-fledged Mauritius Hydrographic Services, vested with clear statutory authority, is both timely and necessary. It will strengthen national coordination of hydrographic surveys, ensure the continuous updating of nautical charts and reinforce the Government's vision for a sustainable blue economy.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, two proposals have been made by those who are keen to further strengthen it – which I am told to convey loud and clear to all of us. First, the qualification and professional competencies of Hydrographic Surveyors and Marine Cartographers are fundamentally different from those of Land Surveyors and conventional Cartographers. The new Mauritius Hydrographic Services should, therefore, have its own dedicated professional structure comprising specialised grades to support the Chief Hydrographer. In addition, regulation should be made under the Act to regulate these professions and ensure that hydrographic surveys and nautical charts productions continue to comply with International Hydrographic Organisation standards.

The second message that was conveyed to me, and I have been asked to be the hunter, who, hopefully, will not be hunted, is on the continuity of leadership. Continuity of leadership is essential. The officer currently heading the Hydrographic Unit is serving on deputation from the Indian Navy under existing bilateral arrangement. While we deeply value and appreciate this invaluable contribution, the long-term administration of the Mauritius Hydrographic Services should eventually rest with a permanent public officer.

I thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. Bhagwan!

(4.36 p.m.)

The Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change (Mr R. Bhagwan): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mr Deputy, Speaker, Sir, by now everybody knows, and as rightly pointed out by my friends, Mauritius has one of the world's largest Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ), covering about 2.2 million square kilometres of the Indian Ocean, with an additional 396,000 square kilometres Continental Shelf co-managed with Seychelles. These waters hold immense ecological, economic, and strategic value. They host coral reef ecosystems, deep-sea habitats, and unique species with potential for pharmaceuticals, nutraceuticals, and biofuels.

Mr Deputy, Speaker, Sir, this is what we have learned as new technologies and equipment have transformed our understanding of the ocean. It is only over the course of the last century that such detailed information has become available to us.

Before the age of sonar and GPS, sailors looked to the stars above and to the natural world around them, and the silent guidance of birds, whales, and the natural world around them. It was through these observations that so many explorers were able to chart and discover the world as we know it today.

Mr Deputy, Speaker, Sir, the ocean today is one of the most heavily used spaces on the planet. At any given moment, thousands of vessels are crossing our oceans, carrying goods and merchandise to every corner of the globe. Indeed, the ocean today is as busy as any airport, at any given time, we can know precisely how many tankers and vessels are at sea, and where they are. And as resources on land become scarcer, and international competition for these dwindling resources intensifies, human activity is extending into every space we can reach – whether in the atmosphere above us or in the deep sea beneath us.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is the purpose of this very important Mauritius Hydrographic Services Bill, presented by my colleague, hon. Shakeel Mohamed, Minister of Housing and Lands, whom I thank, as well as his team, for bringing this very important legislation to the House today.

This Bill provides for the production of standardised nautical charts, regulates hydrographic surveys, and safeguards the integrity of our national hydrographic data. It is a decisive step in strengthening our nation's maritime governance, safeguarding our marine environment, and ensuring the sustainable use of our lagoon and ocean resources.

As defined in the Bill, 'hydrographic survey' means the measurement and description of physical features of oceans, seas, lagoons, coastal areas, rivers and inland water bodies and includes any product derived from hydrographic data other than from a nautical chart.

It involves mapping water depths, seafloor shapes, tides, currents, and hazards. Trade activities are seaborne and navigational charts are vital tools for safe and efficient maritime operations. They combine hydrographic data, geographic information, and navigational aids to guide vessels across oceans, coastal waters, and harbours.

Mr Deputy, Speaker, Sir, as a small island nation, Mauritius faces growing risks from sea-level rise, coastal erosion, cyclones, storm surges, flooding and ecosystem degradation – risks made more pressing by our limited land area, our long coastline, and the concentration of population and infrastructure along our coasts.

The facts are clear. More than 37 kilometres, 17.6% of our coastline have already been affected by erosion. Some beaches have shrunk up to 20 metres in recent decades. Government has identified 33 priority sites, eroded sites, covering 31 kilometres for rehabilitation by 2035. Our NDC 3.0 prepared with full stakeholder collaboration, sets out both mitigation targets and adaptation commitments and will soon be supported by an investment plan to decarbonise the economy and build resilience in vulnerable sectors.

My Ministry is also leading the preparation of a national adaptation plan to identify and prioritise adaptation actions across climate sensitive sectors. This is where the Hydrographic Services Bill becomes essential by establishing a regulated framework to map our waters and manage critical baseline data, sea levels, coastal topography, seabed bathymetry.

This legislation provides the foundational data required for coastal management for tracking sea level rise and for responding to slow onset disasters and the loss and damage frameworks. This piece of legislation, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir therefore constitutes a cornerstone for integrated lagoon and maritime zone management. It will complement the upcoming national shoreline management strategy, reinforce marine conservation objectives and enhance institutional capacity to anticipate and respond effectively to environmental hazards.

The provision and use of verified hydrographic data are central to advancing the blue economy. As such, data ensures safe navigation, underpins the citing of offshore wind farms

and secures submarine cable routes. Beyond economic applications, hydrographic and bathymetric information is indispensable for coastal flood risk modelling and the design of coastal adaptation measures. For my Ministry, accurate bathymetric data are critical elements for assessing erosion and accretion processes.

It enables the design of effective and evidence-based interventions, reduces the risk of costly engineering errors and strengthens resilience against shoreline erosion. By embedding hydrographic data into planning and operational frameworks, this legislation ensures that coastal protection measures are significant, scientifically robust, economically efficient and aligned with long-term sustainability goals. In this way, the Act not only safeguards national infrastructure and communities, but also consolidates Mauritius's leadership in integrated marine governance and climate resistance.

As the House is aware, my Ministry undertakes annual beach rehabilitation works across the island, targeting critical sites that are most vulnerable to coastal erosion. These interventions form an essential component of our national coastal protection program, ensuring the long-term resilience of our shorelines and safeguarding communities, infrastructure and ecosystems. In this regard, the availability of accurate and verified bathymetric data is indispensable. I wish to inform the House that on several occasions, the Mauritius Hydrographic Services has provided my Ministry with hydrographic data sets, particularly in the form of detailed bathymetric surveys. These data sets have been instrumental in guiding the design of coastal protection works at multiple sites around the island.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this Bill will also, as rightly pointed out by my good friend, hon. François, support our blue carbon inventory work, mapping seagrass and mangroves across our EEZ by 2035 and strengthening provisions for maritime security and the sustainable management of our marine ecosystem.

Finally, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this matter is for financing too. Climate funds, including the fund loss and damage, require strong scientific rationale to approve funding requests.

The data this Bill will generate, is precisely the evidence base Mauritius needs to assess that finance. Hydrographic data is also critical for oil spill response. Data on currents, tides, seabed topography and coastal features determine how spill oil spreads and essential for predicting spill trajectories, guiding emergency response and minimizing ecological damage.

The House will also recall that Saint Brandon had witnessed the grounding of three fishing vessels on its reef during the last 10 years, namely fishing vessel Kha Yang in 2015, Sea Master in 2021 and Yu Feng No. 57 in 2023. Fortunately, no spill had been reported in these three cases, as it would have been a serious environmental disaster to Saint Brandon's pristine marine ecosystem, including its coral reef and the green turtle nesting beaches.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my Ministry has also undertaken a technical assistance programme of the Japan International Cooperation Agency, enhancement of institutional capacity for oil spill response, for the Republic of Mauritius 2022-2025, developed a tactical sheet for use for three high-risk sites on the eastern coast of Mauritius and the port area, which are prone to oil spills.

These tactical sheets folios provide data on bathymetry, wave regime, tidal regime, current strength and direction, and sensitive coastal features, all essential for oil spill response should an accident occur in these areas. However, same needs to be developed for other areas around Mauritius, Agalega, Rodrigues, Saint Brandon Island and the Chagos Archipelago. The Chagos Archipelago consists of seven coral reef atolls and rest over 60 small islands, including Diego Garcia, Peros Banhos and Salomon. The archipelago features low-lying coral atolls, lagoons, and submerged reefs, including Great Chagos Bank, the world's largest coral atoll.

The Chagos Archipelago contains some of the world's most pristine tropical marine ecosystems, harbouring nearly 300 coral species, 800 fish varieties, massive seabird colonies. The shallow water coral reefs account for 1.5% of the global total and covers an area of 6,000 square kilometres. The marine ecosystem of Chagos is threatened by climate change with rising sea levels and water warming. Therefore, hydrographic data is critical for Chagos Archipelago for safe nautical navigation, marine spatial planning, climate change and coastal resilience.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, hydrography also underpins flood risk management. In April 2019, my Ministry commissioned a study on the audit of rivers and water courses causing recurrent flooding. Hydrological and hydraulic modelling using GIS applications and meteorological data allowed flood mapping for various return periods. This modelling guides remedial measures to mitigate flooding of identified rivers and water courses.

By embedding these safeguards, Mauritius will not only comply with international conventions such as the United Nations on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), an international

convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) but also assert its leadership in regional maritime governance.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Government of Mauritius has a long-standing agreement with the Government of India in the field of hydrography. A Memorandum of Understanding between Mauritius and India in hydrography was originally signed on 24 October 2005. It was subsequently renewed during the hon. Prime Minister's state visit to India in September 2025. The agreement facilitates deep sea surveys, the production of navigational charts, staff training and the development of local hydrographic infrastructure by the Indian Naval Hydrographic Department.

During the last 20 years, more than a dozen joint missions have been conducted, resulting in the successful completion of nearly 30 hydrographic surveys and the production of multiple navigational charts and electronic navigational charts cells. I understand that these missions were carried out by different Indian Navy ships, namely INS Sarvekshak, INS Darshak, INS Sutlej and inshore survey vessel Pathfinder.

The last mission was carried out in September and October 2025 by the Indian Navy ship INS Sutlej, which completed a major joint survey mission with the Mauritius Hydrographic Service covering 35,000 square nautical miles.

I wish to place on record our deep appreciation to the Government of India for this enduring cooperation which has strengthened Mauritius' capacity to safeguard its vast exclusive economic zone and enhance maritime survey.

I also extend my gratitude to the Mauritius Hydrographic Services for their steadfast support in furnishing my Ministry with verified hydrographic and bathymetric data. Their contribution has been invaluable in enabling the effective design and implementation of coastal protection works across the island, guiding flood risk modelling and supporting oil spill preparedness.

Together, these efforts have fortified our collective capacity to safeguard vulnerable shorelines, protect marine ecosystems and promote sustainable resilience in the face of climate change and environmental hazards.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in conclusion, the Mauritius Hydrographic Services Bill, long overdue for an Ocean State such as Mauritius, whose maritime zone extends far beyond its

landmass, is more than a technical instrument. It is a declaration of our commitment to good governance, sustainability and national resilience. By embedding these safeguards, Mauritius will comply with all international conventions while asserting its leadership in regional maritime governance.

I would again thank my hon. colleague for bringing this legislation to this Assembly. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mohamed!

(4.52 p.m.)

The Minister of Housing and Lands (Mr S. Mohamed): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I now rise to reply to all the observations and comments that were made during this debate.

But before I go there, I would like to state that it has been brought to my knowledge that by inadvertence, some clauses of the Bill to which I referred at the Second Reading do not tally with the clauses as provided in the Bill and that have been submitted to the Assembly. I will briefly go through them in order to clarify the situation.

So, the data sovereignty law is provided under clause 8(2) of the Bill instead of clause 12. The compliance with SOLAS, UNCLOS and the standard of IHO, IALA and IMO are mentioned at clause 15(2)(c) of the Bill instead of clause 5. The creation of the Office of the Chief Hydrographer is provided under clause 5 instead of clause 6.

Under clause 3(a) of the Bill instead of clause 9, the MHS shall be the national custodian for all bathymetry collected for route surveys. Any hydrographic surveys undertaken by a private person would require necessary authorisation under clause 7(2) of the Bill instead of clause 8.

The functions, the collection of hydrographic data, the production, publication and updating of nautical charts, the maintenance of uniformity with IHO standards, the assurance that surveys meet established benchmarks and the representation of Mauritius' international hydrographic fora are all provided under clause 4 of the Bill instead of clause 9.

Administration of the service MHS is specified under clauses 5 and 6 of the Bill instead of clauses 6 and 7. The Office of the Chief Hydrographer is established under clause 5 of the Bill instead of clause 6. Staff to service and assist the Mauritius Hydrographic Service is provided under clause 6 of the Bill instead of clause 7. Lastly, the operative heart of the Bill is provided under clause 7 instead of clause 8 to clause 13. Authorisation for any person other than the officer of the MHS is required under clause 7 of the Bill instead of clause 8. The condition specifically IHO special publications S44 to conduct such surveys may be defined under clause 7(4) of the Bill instead of clause 9.

Clause 9 of the Bill instead of clause 10 reserves the issuance of official charts to the MHS. Clause 10 of the Bill instead of clause 11 confers power of entry onto adjacent land. Clause 8 of the Bill instead of clause 12 vests all hydrographic data in the State.

I would like to thank every hon. Member who has spoken. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the debate has been of a quality that matches the seriousness of the subject. I would like to start – I am sure you will understand why – with the hon. First Member for Montagne Blanche and Grande River South East, hon. Baboolall. I would like also to comment today, immediately, on certain of the remarks that were made by the hon. Second Member for Rodrigues, hon. François. I thank him for the substance and the specificity of the contributions.

Now, the hon. First Member for Montagne Blanche and Grande River South East opened with an image. He talked of a fishing boat, a cargo vessel or a cruise ship somewhere in our 2.3 million square kilometres of ocean, tonight, trusting a chart to tell its captain where the reef ends and safe water begins. He reminded us that the chart did not draw itself.

He then said something that I want to place at the very centre of my reply: ‘Data is the new coastline. Whoever holds it, in some real sense, holds the maps of our sovereignty.’ That well-turned phrase expresses precisely what clause 8 of this Bill provides for. Clause 8 states that all hydrographic data collected within the maritime zones of Mauritius shall be deemed the property of the State. It is in the hon. Member's own image – the clause that draws the new coastline.

He also invoked in a passage – I found genuinely moving – his own faith tradition: The veneration of water as sacred of *Ganga Ma* of Grand Bassin. He reminded us that if our faith teaches us to hold water sacred, this House owes no less a duty to protect the waters that

sustain every citizen of this Republic. That sentiment belongs not to a single party, but it belongs to Mauritius as a whole.

The hon. Member's first point asked plainly whether our long-standing cooperation with the Government of India, which has produced 12 nautical charts and 14 electronic navigational charts since 2006, will now require written authorisation. The answer is plain: it requires no amendment. The Bill does not disrupt our partnership with India. It formalises it and reinforces it. The Indian Naval Hydrographic Department of Dehradun has, for decades, conducted its surveys in our waters at the invitation of the Government of Mauritius, coordinated by the Hydrographic Unit of my Ministry.

That invitation is itself in substance an authorisation of exactly the kind clause 7 envisages. The Bill gives that arrangement its proper statutory form. The 15 visits since 2006, the 12 paper charts, the 14 ENCs, of which, hon. François correctly noted, three cover Rodrigues and two cover Agalega, all of that work continues on a stronger footing. No Indian officer, no Mauritian officer and no seafarer relying on an Indian produced chart will read this Bill as a step backwards. On the contrary, it is many steps forward.

The hon. Member's second point concerned clause 10. He observed that the clause contains no express requirement of prior notice, no express reference to compensation for damage, and no defined limit of frequency or duration. He spoke of the citizen of Montagne Blanche and the family with a modest beachfront plot. But not that very modest, really! He has a beachfront plot. Anyway! His concern rests with respect on a misreading of clause 10 as though it stood alone. It does not. It stands within the general law of the Republic. That is where the protections he seeks already reside.

Under the general law, no officer may enter private land unreasonably, may enter at unreasonable hours, may cause damage without consequence, or may remain longer than necessary. Those constraints are embedded in our law of tort, in the constitutional protection of property, and in the ordinary judicial supervision of statutory powers.

A landowner who suffers damage under clause 10 retains every right of recourse he would have against any other public officer. Clause 10 does not diminish those rights. I can reassure him.

The good faith immunity clause at clause 12 has been raised in this connection. Clause 12 protects officers acting in good faith. It does not, it cannot immunise the State against liability for damage negligently or unreasonably caused. That is the settled effect of good faith immunity clauses in our law.

The citizen of Montagne Blanche that you referred to in the modest beachfront property and the family on the beachfront are already protected by the general law. Fear not, they do not require an amendment to this Bill to be protected. We are here, you are there, and the Attorney General's Office has drafted the Bill on that understanding.

The hon. Member's third point concerned the power of the Minister at clause 11. He asked, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, whether I would accept an amendment requiring the Chief Hydrographer's annual report to be laid on the Table of this House. He offered a well-turned phrase –

"Sovereignty without accountability to this Chamber is only half sovereignty."

My answer is a principled one. The Chief Hydrographer, established under clause 5, is a public officer answerable to the supervising officer of my Ministry and through him to me, and through me, in the ordinary way of ministerial responsibility, to this House. That is the constitutional architecture on which every department of Government operates. Every Member has at his disposal a full range of parliamentary instruments; questions, PNQs, adjournment matters, through which the activities of the MHS may indeed be scrutinised. Statutory tabling requirements attach properly to independent parastatal bodies. The MHS is not such a body, it is a department of my Ministry; lean, integrated and answerable to me directly. The Bill has been drawn on that basis, and I do not propose, therefore, humbly I state, to alter its structure.

The hon. Member's fourth observation is clause 14. He suggested that the maximum penalty might apply as heavily to a minor technical non-compliance as to deliberate falsification and asked for proportionate tiers. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I do not accept the reading of clause 14 on which that concern rests. Clause 14 does not impose the maximum penalty, it establishes it. Every criminal statute in this Republic operates on that same principle, the maximum is the ceiling. The sentence imposes a matter for the court applying proportionate sentencing to the gravity of the offence proved – you know that. A magistrate presented with a minor procedural non-compliance will impose a proportionate penalty. A

court presented with a deliberate falsification of a chart, a document that can sink a ship, will impose a penalty matching that far graver harm. That is how our criminal law works. Comparable jurisdictions, Australia, New Zealand, and United Kingdom impose maximum penalties of similar or greater magnitude in single tier structures indistinguishable from clause 14. The drafting is orthodox.

The hon. Member's fifth point concerned the definition of plot of land at clause 2, which reaches both land and water. That breadth is intentional. Hydrographic survey work does not stop neatly at the high-level watermark. A tide gauge on a beachfront concession, a control station on a *Pas Géométriques*, a survey traverse across a lagoon, each requires the definition to reach both land and adjacent water. Narrowing it would create gaps in the operational reach of the service, gaps falling inevitably in exactly the coastal zones where hydrographic knowledge is most urgent. The protections he sought for holders of *Pas Géométriques* and beachfront concessions reside, as I have explained, in the general law, not in any narrower definition at clause 2.

The hon. Member made one further intervention that I feel bound to address as he made a passage of it in French. Permit me to answer, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in the same language.

L'honorable membre a rappelé à cette Chambre, avec une gravité qui l'honore, deux naufrages sur les récifs d'une même île, le Saint-Géran, il y a plus de deux siècles au large de Poudre d'Or et le Wakashio en juillet 2020 à Pointe d'Esny avec ses 1 000 tonnes de fuel déversées dans le lagon de Blue Bay. Il a demandé –

« Les choses ont-elles vraiment changées entre les deux ? »

Ma réponse, M. le président, est-ce que ce projet de loi correctement appliqué fait partie de la manière dont notre gouvernement répond à cette question ? Non pas à lui seul, mais comme l'une des pièces essentielles d'un dispositif plus large, au côté de l'autorité portuaire, du *National Coast Guard*, du ministère de l'Environnement et de nos partenaires internationaux.

The fact that the hon. Member asked ‘what has changed between those two?’, for a fact, a lot has changed. You will never ever see a government stoop so low as the ones you are sitting behind, did for the Wakashio disaster. You know and you, I know, agree how disastrous they led this country and how they created disasters, and thank God we got rid of those monsters. You know very well, and I would not sit behind them very long. Come front.

The hon. Member asked as to whether clause 4 should be amended to require explicit coordination with the Ministry of Environment. No such amendment is necessary. Clause 4 confers on the MHS the functions and powers necessary to further its objects most effectively, and those functions include by their necessary operation, coordination with every arm of Government whose portfolio bears on the safety of our waters. To insert a specific reference to one Ministry would by implication exclude the many others whose cooperation is equally necessary; the Coast Guard, the Port Authority, the Ministry of Blue Economy, the Meteorological Services, the Mauritius Oceanography Institute. That is the danger of legislative specificity in a clause designed for legislative reach. Clause 4 is drafted broadly and purposively so that it captures all such cooperation, not merely a specified subset of it.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I turn to the intervention of hon. François, a speech which demonstrated precisely why this House benefits from having a graduate Surveyor Technician amongst its Members. His contribution was technical, specific to Rodrigues and constructive. The concerns he has raised are concerns this Government shares, and I would like also to thank the hon. Ms Collet for her contribution that has been very constructive and I listened very carefully. They remind us that the hydrographic history of Rodrigues stretching back to Bonne in 1780, Lieutenant Russel in 1822, Surveyor Shearwater in 1874, and the map published by the British Navy Hydrographer Evans in February 1876, that history is not antiquarian detail, it is the reason why of the 14 ENCs produced for Mauritius to date, three cover Rodrigues and two cover Agaléga.

The hon. Member, François raised specific operational matters which I address not by amending the Bill, which is not necessary, but by placing on the record my understanding of how they fit within the framework the Bill establishes. On Port Mathurin, the hon. Member observed that the last maintenance dredging of the main channel was in 1990, and the annex channel in 2009. That is a legitimate operational concern and precisely, the kind of concern that the MHS, once established under clause 3, and mandated under clause 4, will be well placed to address. Port Mathurin will be among the operational priorities that the service in consultation with the Mauritius Ports Authority and the Rodrigues Regional Assembly considers. I do not propose to constrain the Chief Hydrographer in advance of his appointment by tabling a fixed timeline from here. What I can say is that the concern will not be lost, it will be considered and considered seriously.

On SEMPA and the survey requirements of Rodrigues, the hon. Member identified bathymetric characterisation of the lagoon, sedimentation of the navigable channels, current

parameter monitoring and hydrographic coverage of *Banc de l'Est* and Hawkins Bank, each falls squarely within the functions of the service under clause 4. They are legitimate matters for the service to address as part of its operational work programme and the Chief Hydrographer is setting priorities, will do so in the light of the needs of the entire Republic, Rodrigues prominently among them.

On Rodriguan officers within the service, I want to be candid. I am not prepared to write into this Bill a particular operational substructure because to do so would tie the hands of the Chief Hydrographer not yet appointed. But I share the sentiment. The service this Bill establishes will be a service for the whole Republic. It will draw its officers from the whole Republic. The staffing, under clause 6, permits the supervising officer to designate such officers as may be necessary. There is nothing in the Bill and nothing in this Government's intention that would exclude the participation of Rodriguan officers in that designation. The service will be a national service and Rodrigues is indeed part of this nation.

On the Digital Ocean Information Ecosystem, the hon. member described, clause 4 includes the exchange access control and sharing of hydrographic data. That is the statutory foundation on which an ecosystem can be built in cooperation with the Meteorological Services, the Mauritius Oceanography Institute, the Ports Authority and the technical services of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly. The Bill does not prescribe the technical form of that cooperation, nor should it, but it opens the way.

On climate resilience, the hon. Member, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, reminded us that more than 37 kilometres of our coastline –17.6% of the total is affected by erosion. The hon. Minister of Environment also made reference to those figures, and that we are committed to a blue carbon inventory of our EEZ by 2035. The connection with this Bill is direct. A service established under clause 3, mandated under clause 4, holding data vested in the Republic under clause 8, is precisely the vehicle through which the evidence base for coastal defence and the blue carbon inventory will be assembled.

M. le président, je ne saurais conclure sans reprendre à mon compte l'observation de l'honorable membre pour Rodrigues. Nous débattons, aujourd'hui – c'était le 14 juillet –, un programme de loi maritime. *I must say that I was quite impressed by the remarks made from the Member for Rodrigues, on 14 July, and that of the Member for Rodrigues today as well.*

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member for Montagne Blanche and Grande Rivière Sud-Est closed this intervention with an old maritime saying attributed to John A. Shedd, and I quote –

"A ship in harbour is safe, but that is not what ships are built for."

He said, rightly, that this Bill was not built to sit safely in harbour and be examined. It was built to sail.

This Bill is ready to sail, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in the form in which the Government has laid it before this House. It has been carefully prepared, carefully consulted, and carefully drafted to sit correctly within the general law of the Republic. It answers within its four corners every concern that has been raised in this debate, some by express provision, others by necessary operation of its clauses within our broader legal order. It does not, in the Government's respectful view, require amendment.

I thank the hon. First Member for Montagne Blanche and Grande Rivière Sud-Est for the contribution and his seriousness. I thank every other Member who has spoken, my two Minister colleagues as well. I would like to state the following: Neither Member's concern will be lost. They will all remain part of the record against which the service is held to account, through the ordinary instruments of this House and through the ordinary channels of ministerial responsibility.

Thank you very much, Mr Deputy Speaker Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: You have to commend the Bill to the House.

Mr Mohamed: I commend the Bill to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a second time and committed.

COMMITTEE STAGE

(The Deputy Speaker in the Chair)

The Mauritius Hydrographic Services Bill (No. XI of 2026) was considered and agreed to.

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

Third Reading

On motion made and seconded, the Mauritius Hydrographic Services Bill (No. XI of 2026) was read a third time and passed.

The Deputy Speaker: We will break for half an hour.

At 5.17 p.m., the Sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 5.55 p.m., with Madam Speaker in the Chair.

Madam Speaker: Please be seated!

PUBLIC BILL

Second Reading

THE CRIMINAL CODE (AMENDMENT) BILL

(No. X of 2026)

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Attorney General!

Order for Second Reading read.

(5.56 p.m.)

The Attorney General (Mr G. P. C. Glover, SC): Madam Speaker, I move that the Criminal Code (Amendment) Bill (No. X of 2026) be read a second time.

This Bill, Madam Speaker, reveals once more the extent to which this Government is prepared to go to afford protection to its citizens and in the same breath, send a clear unambiguous message that it will not shy away from its chartered course of making justice accessible to all.

This has been this Government's mantra and we are forging ahead with a view to provide cover to the more vulnerable, yet ensuring that liberties and freedoms are not curtailed. This balance, Madam Speaker, has been, since December 2024, the hallmark of the various pieces of legislation which have been brought to this House.

Now, this conveniently brings me to the famous words of Nelson Mandela, who, in his first address to a democratic Parliament in South Africa in 1994, said, and I quote –

"Freedom cannot be achieved unless women have been emancipated from all forms of oppression."

Madam Speaker, this Bill is about the most brutal form of oppression there is: violence, rape, killing, and importantly, about the place where it hides best –the family unit.

But we are not reinventing the wheel here. We are refining the law. We are dotting the 'i's and crossing the 't's, thereby ensuring that the most horrific and despicable crimes are punished for what they are.

Madam Speaker, homicides and rapes have been on our statute book for a long time now. When one goes through the proposed amendments today, one will not find the words femicide or feminicide, nor will one read the words 'marital rape.' Yet, we are catering for these very crimes here. But not just those.

This Bill is the companion of the Domestic Abuse Act, which this House has already considered and passed. Together, they form a single legislative undertaking: to ensure that our criminal law names, confronts and punishes, with the full weight it deserves, violence committed against a person by those closest to her; in the home, in the family, in a relationship.

The Bill, Madam Speaker, addresses, *inter alia*, two distinct evils, and I shall address them in turn. Firstly, femicide or feminicide: the killing of a woman in the particular context of intimacy and family. Secondly, marital rape.

They are separate wrongs, separately provided for in this Bill. But as I shall show to the House, they are branches of the same crawler, intertwined and overlapping.

The Bill, Madam Speaker, does three things –

(i) it inserts a new section 222A in the Criminal Code, providing that a person convicted of murder or attempt at murder shall, where the court is satisfied that aggravating circumstances exist and has entered them on the record of the proceedings as findings, the convicted person must be sentenced to penal servitude, which shall not be less than 15 years;

(ii) it inserts a new Section 223A providing for penal servitude, which shall not be less than 10 years for manslaughter or attempt at manslaughter committed in the same aggravating circumstances, and

(iii) Madam Speaker, it amends Section 249 to provide, notwithstanding any other enactment, that it shall not be a defence for a person charged with rape if he was, at the time of the offence, civilly or religiously married to the complainant and it provides for enhanced penalties of 10 to 45 years of penal servitude where rape is committed in such aggravating circumstances.

Put in plain language, Madam Speaker, it means this: If a man kills his wife, his partner, the mother of his children or a woman living under his roof, the sentence goes up, and goes up heavily. Mind you: killing anyone, male or female, has always been a crime. But what is being done now is spelling out a number of aggravating circumstances that the court can find exists in the evidence elicited before it. The court shall then sentence the accused found guilty of the crime, in such aggravating circumstances, to a more severe penalty. And then, if anyone has non-consensual sex with his lawful wedded wife, companion, partner, girlfriend, he can no longer tell the police, the prosecutor or the judge: "we are together, we live together, it is normal" – no, it is not normal. It is in fact worse.

The law now spells out the very circumstances that ensure that no man can claim that a wedding ring brings about "*les obligations du marriage"* entailing an implied condition that a man can have his way with his wife, companion, partner, as and when he feels like it, irrespective of the wish of the woman.

Now, Madam Speaker, of course, some may ask, well: murder is already murder. Why does the law need to recognise that particular crime, femicide? Because, Madam Speaker, for centuries, the law has said less.

The killing of a woman by her husband was often treated as a *crime passionnel*, a private tragedy, a matter of honour. The aggravating circumstances set out in the new sections 222A and 223A speak for themselves. The offender was married to the victim, lived with her, was engaged to her, had a child with her, shared a household, the victim had suffered acts of domestic abuse within the meaning of the new Domestic Abuse Act 2026. She was pregnant, elderly, disabled, or a child. The offender was her parent or a person in a position of trust, power or authority over her.

In simple terms, Madam Speaker, the closer the offender stood to the victim, and the more defenceless she was, the harsher the punishment will be. What this House is being here asked to recognise in the language of our own criminal code, the reality the world has come

to call femicide: the killing of a woman because she is a woman, more often than not, by the very men who claimed to love her.

Some countries have written a brand-new crime into their statute book. Others, like us, as the 2024 United Nations Femicide Report recognises, have taken the crimes that already exist and made the punishment fit the betrayal. Both roads lead to the same destination.

Madam Speaker, the House should not be asked to legislate on sentiment alone. I think, I ought to place the figures on record. According to the World Health Organisation, about one in three women worldwide has experienced physical or sexual violence in her lifetime, most often at the hands of an intimate partner. The most recent joint report of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and UN Women estimates that in 2024, around 50,000 women and girls were killed by intimate partners or family members. Roughly 60% of all intentional killings of women, an average of 137 every single day, one every 10 minutes.

By the time I finish this speech, Madam Speaker, somewhere in the world, three or four more women will have been killed by a member of their own household. The facts are chilling. And the burden falls heaviest in our own region, Africa, which records the highest rate of intimate partner and family related femicide in the world, at three victims per 100,000 women; double the rate of the Americas, and six times that of Europe.

What about Mauritius, Madam Speaker? The figures compiled from police records and reported in our national press are indeed very alarming. At least 24 women killed by a partner, an ex-partner or a family member since 2020, nine in 2025 alone. The increase is, of course, a reflection of our society. But more importantly, four already this year.

Behind these numbers, Madam Speaker, stand names this House knows because we all, the whole country, wept over them. Sheena, Sujaya, Marie Joëlle, Nawsheen, Shivani, Electra, Yogeshwaree, and most recently, Sneha.

Madam Speaker, I read those names into Hansard deliberately. A law against femicide begins with the women we did not save.

Madam Speaker, the wider picture is no less sobering. One in four Mauritian women has experienced some sort of gender-based violence, a figure confirmed by the High-Level Committee on the Elimination of Gender-Based Violence and by the UN in Mauritius. Between 2013 and 2016, 7,758 domestic violence cases were brought before the courts.

In 2022, the Ministry responsible for Gender Equality recorded 5,381 reported cases of domestic violence, of which 4,374 were reported by women. The UNDP has estimated that gender-based violence costs this country some Rs2 billion every year. That is the equivalent of 0.6% of our GDP in healthcare, social services and lost productivity.

Madam Speaker, an Afrobarometer survey published in 2024 found that nearly seven in 10 Mauritians say domestic violence must be treated as a criminal matter and not a private one. That is what precisely this Bill does.

The Government, Madam Speaker, has listened, has heard, and now acts. It is delivering the legal framework necessary to recognise the ill, point to the defaulters and give the tools to the court to act discriminately when the aggravating circumstance is present.

Madam Speaker, it is not only the legislature that has seen this reality. Our own judiciary has named it. On 10 December of last year, on International Human Rights Day, no less, the Supreme Court delivered a judgment in the case of the killing of a lady known to her family and now to the whole nation as Sheena. She was 24. She had separated from a violent husband, rebuilt her life, taken up employment, and he followed her there, at her place of employment. He harassed her. She sought the assistance of the police on several occasions. The last time on 05 November 2019, three days before he abducted her, brutalised her, subjected her to sexual violence and killed her in a sugarcane field.

In sentencing him upon his guilty plea to murder to penal servitude for life, the maximum sentence known to our law, the learned judge described the case in terms that will echo for years as, and I quote –

"A horrifying case of femicide"

and observed that Mauritius has in recent years witnessed a deeply troubling rise in violent attacks on women, particularly by partners or former partners.

The court, Madam Speaker, laid down a principle that this Bill now carries into statute. I quote what the court said –

> "Women in Mauritius are not the property of those who once live with them; their autonomy is not conditional and their refusal to submit to control cannot be a death sentence."

Madam Speaker, when the highest court of the land uses the word femicide and pronounces the maximum sentence the law provided for, the message to this Assembly is

unmistakable. The judiciary has done its part with the tools it has. It is for Parliament to sharpen those tools. That is what the new sections 222A and 223A do. They take what the Supreme Court recognised in a courtroom and make it the settled, written law of the Republic for every courtroom.

Madam Speaker, if the last decade has taught us anything, it is that violence in the home surges precisely when society is under strain. The COVID-19 pandemic provided the grimmest of national experiments. UN Women called it the "shadow pandemic".

In France, for example, reported domestic violence cases rose by 30% after the March 2020 lockdown. In Argentina, emergency calls rose by 25%. In the UK, domestic abuse killings more than doubled in the first two months of confinement. UN Women predicted that every three months of continued lockdown would expose an additional – listen to this very carefully – 15 million women to violence worldwide. Across the ocean in South Africa, President Ramaphosa read to the read to his nation the names of 21 women and children murdered in a single fortnight of lockdown, and declared gender-based violence his country's "second pandemic".

Mauritius was not spared, Madam Speaker. Statistics Mauritius recorded that reported cases of gender-based violence during the period March to May 2020 lockdown spiked five-fold compared to the same period in 2018 and 2019.

In April 2021, the then Minister of Gender Equality announced 293 reported cases of domestic violence in a span of just 18 days. Think of what those numbers mean in ordinary life. The order 'stay home, stay safe' was, for thousands of Mauritian women, an order to stay locked in with the most dangerous person they knew. The pandemic did not create this violence; it revealed it, it concentrated it and stripped away the escape routes.

Madam Speaker, I ask the House to look forward as well as back because the conditions that fuel this violence are set to intensify. A systematic review published in The Lancet Planetary Health in 2022, covering 41 studies, found that extreme weather events: storms, floods, droughts, heatwaves are associated with increased gender-based violence, through economic shock, displacement and stress. A 2025 United Nations report highlighted a study finding a 28% increase in femicide during heatwaves. A large study covering India, Pakistan and Nepal, tracking nearly 195 women, found that each one-degree rise in average temperature was associated with an increase of more than 6% in physical and sexual intimate partner violence. And lastly, modelling published by the Spotlight Initiative projects that, in

two-degree warming scenario, an additional 40 million women and girls will experience intimate partner violence each year by 2090.

Madam Speaker, what do these figures mean for us, in words every Mauritian will understand? We are a Small Island Developing State, a small island on the front line of climate change. We know cyclones, torrential rains, days of confinement when the whole family is shut indoors, with tempers fraying. Science now tells us plainly; each of these will put more women in danger inside their own homes. We have lived through one pandemic and the epidemiologists tell us to prepare for others. A responsible legislature, Madam Speaker, does not wait for the next lockdown, the next cyclone season, the next crisis, to discover once again that its criminal law was not equal to the moment. We legislate now, so that when the pressure comes, the law is already standing guard.

In enacting those provisions, Madam Speaker, Mauritius joins a broad and accelerating international movement. Eighteen countries of Latin America have written the crime of femicide or feminicide into their laws. Europe, Italy, Malta, Cyprus, Belgium and Croatia have followed suit in recent years. Madam Speaker, the direction of travel is thus unmistakable. Modern legal systems no longer treat the intimate killing of women as ordinary homicide because they have understood that it is not ordinary; it is patterned, foreseeable and preventable. Sheena reported her killer to the Police three days before she died. That is what "patterned and foreseeable" means.

Madam Speaker, I now turn now to the second limb of the Bill and I begin with a question many are probably asking: why should the law need to address rape within marriage specifically? The honest answer is rather uncomfortable, because for centuries, the law refused to see any rape within marriage at all. The old common law doctrine, articulated by Sir Matthew Hale in the eighteenth century, held that by the contract of marriage a wife gave her irrevocable consent to intercourse with her husband. Consent, once pronounced at the altar, could never be withdrawn. A husband, on that reasoning, was legally incapable of raping his wife. In ordinary words, Madam Speaker, the law pretended that by saying "yes" once, on her wedding day, a woman had said "yes" forever, to everything, in every circumstance. That doctrine has cast a long shadow over legal systems across the Commonwealth, including our own.

Our Criminal Code of 1838 is the direct descendant of the French Penal Code of 1810 and it is therefore instructive that French law itself has travelled the very road this Bill now

takes. Under the *Code Civil* in France, the duties of marriage, fidelity and *communauté de vie* under Articles 212 and 215, gave rise to the jurisprudential notion of the *devoir conjugal*, from which the courts long inferred a standing presumption of consent between spouses. French criminal law dismantled that edifice step by step. The *Cour de cassation* first recognised in 1990 and then confirmed in 1992, that a husband could be convicted of the rape of his wife. The law of 4 April 2006 wrote into the *Code pénal* that the presumption of consent between spouses holds only until proof of the contrary and made the spousal or partner relationship an aggravating circumstance of rape. Four years later, in July 2010, it abolished the presumption altogether, so that today, under Article 222-24 of the French *Code pénal*, rape committed by a spouse, partner or *pacsé* attracts a heavier penalty: twenty years of *réclusion criminelle* instead of fifteen for rape by a stranger.

And, Madam Speaker in 2025, the transformation was completed at both ends. First, the European Court of Human Rights, in H.W. v France, condemned the surviving civil-law notion of the *devoir conjugal* as incompatible with sexual autonomy and human dignity. And second, the French Parliament, in the wake of the recent Pelicot trial, rewrote the definition of rape itself around the absence of free consent. In short, Madam Speaker, the very legal tradition which our Criminal Code is drawn has moved from treating marriage as a shield to treating it as an aggravation which is precisely the inversion that clause 5 of this Bill now accomplishes in Mauritius.

Madam Speaker, Section 249 of our Criminal Code criminalises rape, but it has never defined it. The definition has been left to jurisprudence and the constituent element at the heart of that jurisprudence is the absence of consent. Herein lies the limitation because the statute is silent, the marital relationship has remained available as an argument; the suggestion that marriage itself supplies consent, or at least raises a presumption of it. The complainant who is a wife, has, therefore, not stood before the law on the same footing as any other complainant. Her marriage certificate could be turned into her husband's shield.

Other jurisdictions confronted this fiction long ago, Madam Speaker, Sweden in 1965; Canada in 1983; Australia in the early 1990s. In 1991, in the celebrated case of R v R, the House of Lords, the highest court of England at the time, swept away the marital exemption, holding that the status of husband confers no immunity from the law of rape. And may I quote Lord Keith who declared, and I quote –

"Marriage is in modern times regarded as a partnership of equals and no longer one in which the wife must be the subservient chattel of the husband."

A chattel, Madam Speaker, is a piece of property; it is not a thing that is owned. The highest judges of England therefore said, thirty-five years ago, that a wife is not a thing. Within our region, Madam Speaker, South Africa legislated in 1993, followed by Namibia, Lesotho, Zimbabwe, Rwanda, Kenya and Malawi. By 2019, approximately 150 countries had criminalised marital rape, but yet in roughly four out of ten countries, the home remains, in law, a place where a wife may be violated with impunity. Mauritius, until today, has never placed the principle beyond doubt in its statute book. This Bill does so and places us unambiguously on the right side of that line.

Let me at this stage, Madam Speaker, turn to the current state of the penalties. Under section 249(1) of the Criminal Code, as amended in 2008, a person convicted of rape, is liable to penal servitude for a term of not less than 10 years, and the Intermediate Court has jurisdiction to inflict penal servitude for a term of up to 40 years, with power to order consecutive sentences not exceeding 40 years. These are serious penalties but the law makes no distinction where the offender is the very person who shared the victim's bed, her home and more importantly, her trust.

What does this Bill change, Madam Speaker? Two things and both are absolutely fundamental. Firstly, the new section 249(1A) provides that, notwithstanding any other enactment, that it shall not be a defence for a person charged with rape that he was, at the time of the offence, civilly or religiously married to the complainant.

The words are deliberately unambiguous, Madam Speaker. Marriage whether civil or religious is no longer a shield. We are not creating a separate, lesser offence of "marital rape." Rape is rape! And consent means the same thing inside a marriage as outside it.

Secondly, what this Bill does is that it goes further and inverts the old logic entirely. Under the new section 249(1C), where the court is satisfied that aggravating circumstances exist and enters them on the record as a finding, it shall have jurisdiction to inflict penal servitude for a term of not less than 10 years and not exceeding 45 years with consecutive sentences permitted up to 45 years.

What are those aggravating circumstances, Madam Speaker? The new section 249(1F) lists them: that the offender was married to the complainant, civilly or religiously; that they

lived together as a couple; that they were in an intimate personal relationship; that the complainant was subject to acts of domestic abuse within the meaning of the Domestic Abuse Act 2026; that the complainant was pregnant, vulnerable, disabled or a child.

Consider what that means, Madam Speaker. The very relationship that the old law treated as a defence becomes, under this Bill, a reason for a heavier sentence. Intimacy is no longer mitigation. It is an aggravation.

Because the betrayal of trust by a husband or partner is not a lesser wrong than rape by a stranger; it is, in many respects, a graver one. The victim is attacked in the one place she is entitled to feel safest, by the one person sworn to protect her.

Now, the hon. Members in this House may ask: how many cases of marital rape occur in Mauritius? Madam Speaker, I must give the House a candid answer: no official statistics exist, and it cannot exist for the simple reason that our law has never named the act. A police officer cannot record an offence the statute does not recognise. A wife cannot report a crime the law tells her is not a crime. What is not named is not counted and what is not counted is not seen. But the House should not mistake the absence of a statistic for the absence of a reality.

The proxy indicators we do have point in one direction. In 2022, Madam Speaker, 612 cases of sexual violence and exploitation were reported to the authorities in Mauritius, 93 per cent of them involving female victims. The research consistently tells us that most sexual violence against women is committed not by strangers, but by partners and family members.

Globally, the United Nations estimates that one in four women aged 15 to 49 has experienced physical or sexual violence at the hands of a current or former husband or intimate partner.

Madam Speaker, there is no reason, none at all, to believe that Mauritian marriages are miraculously exempt from a pattern found in every country ever surveyed. Our own civil society workers say it plainly: marital rape remains taboo in Mauritius. It is lived by women in silence.

Indeed, one of the quiet benefits of clause 5 is precisely statistical: once the law names the act, the Police can record it, the Gender-Based Violence Observatory can count it, and this House can, in future years, legislate on evidence rather than on silence.

Madam Speaker, I anticipate a fair question from hon. Members and the public: how does this work in practice? What happens in the courtroom in countries where marital rape has been an offence for decades? The answer should reassure the House because the experience abroad shows a law that is serious, but not reckless.

In England and Wales, since R v R – referred to earlier on in my intervention – and the Sexual Offences Act 2003, rape within marriage is prosecuted exactly like any other rape. The prosecution must prove, beyond reasonable doubt, that the complainant did not consent – consent meaning an agreement by choice – with the freedom and capacity to choose, and that the accused did not reasonably believe she consented.

In plain terms: the wedding ring changes nothing in the accused's favour, but nothing against him either. He enjoys the same presumption of innocence and the same right to test the evidence as any other accused.

Canada takes the same approach: the Crown bearing the full burden of proof. South Africa's Sexual Offences Act of 2007 states simply that a marital relationship is no defence and the ordinary law of evidence then applies. When the men who were convicted after the decision in R v R in the UK complained to the European Court of Human Rights, the court unanimously rejected their complaint, holding that ending the husband's immunity conformed, and I quote –

> "not only with a civilised concept of marriage, but also, and above all, with the fundamental objectives of the Convention, the very essence of which is respect for human dignity and human freedom."

Madam Speaker, the experience of these jurisdictions also teaches candour: prosecutions for rape within marriage are not easy precisely because they typically occur behind closed doors without witnesses.

Conviction rates are modest everywhere. But no serious legal system has concluded from that difficulty that the offence should not exist. We do not decriminalise theft because

some thefts are hard to prove. The difficulty of proof protects the innocent. It is no argument for granting immunity to the guilty.

Madam Speaker, that brings me directly to a concern I have heard voiced out and which deserves a straight answer rather than a dismissive one: could this law be misused? Could a wife, in the bitterness of a failing marriage or a contested divorce, fabricate an accusation to punish or to pressure her husband?

Let me be as clear as possible. First, the presumption of innocence, guaranteed by section 10 of our Constitution, applies in full: an accusation is not a conviction.

Second, the burden of proof lies on the prosecution to the standard of proof beyond reasonable doubt – the highest known to our law.

Third, no case reaches a courtroom automatically: every prosecution passes through a police enquiry and the constitutional filter of the Director of Public Prosecutions.

Fourth, the accused keeps every right available to the defence; right to counsel, right to silence, right to cross-examination, right to appeal if he is convicted.

Fifth, and this must be said clearly: our criminal law already punishes false and malicious denunciations and accusations, giving false evidence and taking false oaths. A person who fabricates a rape allegation commits serious offences and is liable to prosecution and imprisonment. Nothing in this Bill touches that.

Sixth, Madam Speaker, even upon conviction, the enhanced sentences are not automatic: the court must itself be satisfied that aggravating circumstances exist and must enter them formally on the record as a finding, a written, reviewable, appealable act of judicial reasoning.

So, Madam Speaker, the honest summary is this: this Bill removes one thing and one thing only: the automatic immunity of the husband. It does not lower the standard of proof by a single degree. It does not shift the burden. It does not create any presumption against the accused.

The comparative experiences of England, Canada, South Africa and dozens of other countries over the last half the century show no epidemic of false marital rape convictions.

What it shows overwhelmingly is the opposite problem: victims who never come forward at all.

Our safeguards must protect the innocent man and they do. They must not be used as an excuse to abandon the violated woman. And after today, Madam Speaker, they will not be.

Madam Speaker, I would like to say a word on principle because the point deserves to be made in this House without equivocation. Marriage, civil or religious is a union of two free persons. It is not a transfer of ownership over a woman's body.

Consent, given at the altar or before the civil status officer or under the rites of any faith practised in our rainbow nation, is not consent given for all time and in all circumstances. A wife who says no has the same right to the protection of the criminal law as any other woman or man for that matter.

To those who worry that this provision intrudes upon the sanctity of marriage or up on religion, I offer two answers. The first comes from late Pope Francis himself, who declared in his homily of the 01 January 2022, and I quote –

"Violence against women is an insult to God."

No faith practised in Mauritius – none – teaches that a husband may brutalise his wife. It is not the criminal law that violates the sanctity of marriage, it is rape that violates it.

The second answer, Madam Speaker, concerns shame, because shame in this country has too often been placed on the wrong shoulders. For generations, when a wife was violated by her husband, it was she who lowered her eyes. It is she who kept silent for fear of what the family would say, what the neighbours would whisper – *ki dimoun pou dir?* She who was asked, even at the police station, why did she wish to make trouble in her own marriage. Whereas the man went to work the next day, head held high, on the other hand, the woman carried his crime as if it was her disgrace. That is the quiet perversion this clause brings to an end. From today, we shift the shame from the victim, where it never belonged, and settle where it should always have always belonged; on the man who violated. After today, no law of Mauritius will protect him.

Madam Speaker, I have kept femicide and marital rape in separate parts of this speech, because they are distinct wrongs with distinct provisions in the Bill. But the House must understand where they meet because they do meet, with terrible regularity.

The United Nations tells us that femicide is rarely a bolt from the blue. It typically sits at the end of a continuum that begins with control, humiliation, beating and sexual violence within a relationship. The wife who is raped by her husband today is too often the woman who is killed by him tomorrow.

We saw it in our own Supreme Court, Madam Speaker; before Sheena was killed, she was subjected by her former husband to the very sexual violence this Bill addresses and the Bill's architecture reflects that continuum deliberately.

Prior acts of domestic abuse aggravate the sentence for rape under section 249(1F). The same acts aggravate the sentence for murder and manslaughter under sections 222A and 223A and rape within the relationship is itself an act of domestic abuse under the Domestic Abuse Act 2026.

Plainly, Madam Speaker, the law will now see the whole chain, not just its last, fatal link and it will punish every link more heavily than before. That is how femicide is prevented: not at the graveside, but at the first blow, the first violation, the first police report.

Madam Speaker, this Bill – it is important to note – also discharges obligations that Mauritius has freely undertaken before the international community. We acceded to CEDAW in 1984; its Committee has made clear, in General Recommendations No. 19 and No. 35, that gender-based violence, including marital rape, must be criminalised and punished by sanctions commensurate with its gravity, and in 2018 it pressed Mauritius on precisely those gaps.

We have ratified the Maputo Protocol, whose Article 4 requires States to enact and enforce laws prohibiting all forms of violence against women, in the words of the Protocol, and I quote –

"whether the violence takes place in private or in public".

Madam Speaker, there is no clearer mandate for the criminalisation of violence within marriage and the home. We subscribed to the SADC regional commitment to strengthen national legislation against gender-based violence and to the Beijing Platform for Action and Sustainable Development Goal 5.2. We signed our name to these promises before the world. Today, we keep our word.

Madam Speaker, may I close by returning to Nelson Mandela. When speaking to a march of men, predominantly men, Madam Speaker, in Pretoria in 1997, he said, I quote –

"As long as we take the view that these are problems for women alone to solve, we cannot expect to reverse the high incidence of rape and child abuse… We will not defeat this scourge that affects each and every one of us, until we succeed in mobilising the whole of our society to fight it."

This Bill is not a Bill for women only, Madam Speaker. It is a Bill for Mauritius; for our daughters and our sons, for the kind of country we intend to be. Behind every figure I have cited today there is a name, a face, a family in mourning, children left without a mother. The women of this country do not ask us for pity; they ask us for protection and for a law that sees them.

For too long, Madam Speaker, the walls of the home have marked the boundary of the criminal law's courage. This Bill, together with the Domestic Abuse Act, tears that boundary down. It says to every woman in Mauritius: your consent belongs to you, on your wedding day and on every day thereafter; your home is not a lawless place; your life is not worth less because the hand raised against you wears a wedding ring and it says to every perpetrator, in terms no one can misunderstand: there is no sanctuary in a marriage certificate and the intimacy you betrayed will not mitigate your crime. It will aggravate it.

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

Mr Bhagwan rose and seconded.

Madam Speaker: Thank you. Yes, hon. First Member of Vacoas and Floreal!

(6.37 p.m.)

Ms J. Bérenger (First Member of Vacoas & Floreal) : Madame la présidente, nous soutenons ce projet de loi. Il marque une avancée importante en supprimant enfin toute possibilité d'invoquer le mariage comme défense à une accusation de viol. Cette évolution était attendue depuis longtemps et mérite d'être saluée. Le texte alourdit les peines et ajoute des circonstances aggravantes. Ce sont des pas réels et nous les saluons. Mais je voudrais attirer l'attention de cette Chambre sur une absence qui me semble fondamentale.

Ce projet de loi augmente les peines, il ajoute des circonstances aggravantes, il renforce la répression, mais il ne répond pas à une question essentielle : Qu'est-ce qui constitue un viol ? Notre *Criminal Code* punit, je cite, « le crime de viol » sans jamais le définir. Il ne dit nulle part ce qu'est un viol ni ce qu'est le consentement. *Rape is rape*, disait un peu plutôt l'Attorney General. Mais qu'est-ce que le *rape*? La loi ne le définit pas.

Alors, faute de définition, nos tribunaux vont chercher la définition ailleurs. Il l'a mentionné lui-même, il se tourne vers une doctrine française héritée du 19ème siècle. Et selon cette doctrine, le viol est une chose très étroitement définie. Selon cette doctrine, le viol se définit par la pénétration vaginale d'une femme par un homme imposé par la violence. C'est aujourd'hui encore le droit applicable à Maurice et les conséquences, Madame la présidente, sont considérables. Cela signifie qu'un homme ne peut pas être reconnu victime de viol. Ça signifie également qu'une femme ne peut jamais en être reconnu l'auteur. Tout au plus, complice. Une pénétration orale, anale ou commise avec un objet n'est pas un viol selon cette définition. L'acte anale lui est renvoyé à la section 250, celle de la sodomie, où est mélangée la relation consentie et l'acte forcé. Et surtout, cette conception du viol place le regard sur la victime. Cette conception demande, s'est-elle suffisamment débattue ? Sa résistance avait-elle, je cite, « un caractère sérieux » comme le dit le jugement Gaustou. Son refus n'était-il pas au fond, je cite, « de pure forme ». Ce sont là les termes mêmes que notre jurisprudence emploie. Voilà le droit que nous appliquons en 2026. Une définition écrite par des juristes français, il y a plus d'un siècle pour un monde qui n'est plus le nôtre. Et pourtant, la possibilité d'une réforme n'a rien d'une importation. Elle a déjà été proposée ici même dans ce pays, deux fois au moins.

En 2007, l'Attorney General d'alors, Rama Valayden, a déposé devant cette Chambre un *Sexual Offences Bill* ; non pas quelques amendements, mais une loi entière. Elle définissait le viol par l'absence de consentement. Elle définissait le consentement lui-même. Elle créait tout un éventail d'infractions dont l'agression sexuelle, la pénétration sexuelle sans consentement, la protection des enfants et des personnes vulnérables. C'était sous le même honorable Premier ministre qu'aujourd'hui, dont je regrette l'absence. Également, je regrette l'absence de l'honorable ministre responsable de L'égalité des genres.

Ce projet n'a jamais été adopté malheureusement. En 2019, la *Law Reform Commission*, saisie par le bureau de l'Attorney General, est allée plus loin encore. Elle a proposé de réécrire les sections 249 et 250 de notre Code pénal. La *Law Reform Commission* a proposé de définir le viol comme tout acte de pénétration sexuelle, de quelque nature qu'il soit, commis sur la personne d'autrui ou sur la personne de l'auteur sans le consentement d'autrui.

Une définition enfin neutre, neutre quant au sexe des personnes, neutre quant à la forme de l'acte. Ce travail, lui aussi, est resté lettre morte et depuis, ces deux textes à eux seuls auraient effacé les étroitesses que je viens de décrire. Ils auraient comblé les lacunes. Ils

dorment aujourd'hui encore dans les tiroirs. Depuis qu'ils ont été écrits, l'idée a mûri encore à travers le monde car dire que le viol est un acte sans consentement, ne suffit pas. Tout dépend de la manière dont la loi comprend le consentement.

Ce n'est pas assez de dire absence de consentement. Ce qui est important, c'est comment on prouve cette absence. Les nouvelles lois exigent des éléments clairs et positifs, non seulement une absence de résistance, comme la jurisprudence le dit actuellement. Oui, il l'a mentionné lui-même l'honorable Attorney General. Les lois changent à travers le monde, mais celle-ci ne va pas assez loin.

Grâce aux avancées des mouvements féministes, on sait aujourd'hui que le consentement ne se présume pas. Il ne découle ni du mariage, ni d'une relation amoureuse, ni d'une tenue vestimentaire, ni du silence, ni de l'absence de résistance physique. Il est libre, éclairé, spécifique, préalable et peut être retiré à tout moment. Il ne se déduit jamais de la passivité, ni de cet état de sidération dans lequel la peur fige tant de victimes.

Céder n'est pas consentir. Dire oui une fois, ce n'est pas dire oui pour toujours et le changement le plus profond au niveau international est celui-ci. Ce n'est plus à la victime de démontrer qu'elle s'est suffisamment débattue. C'est à l'accusé de montrer ce qu'il a fait pour s'assurer du consentement de l'autre. Le regard quitte enfin le corps de la victime pour se poser sur l'acte de l'agresseur. Ce n'est pas une utopie, il l'a mentionné plus tôt, - l'Espagne l'a fait, la Suède l'a fait, la France l'a inscrit dans son Code pénal à la fin de l'année 2025, un an après le procès Mazan ; ce procès où Gisèle Pelicot, en refusant le huis clos, a voulu que la honte change de camp. Le Parlement européen a demandé en avril 2026 que tous les États de l'Union adoptent une définition du viol fondée sur l'absence de consentement et que la loi reconnaisse enfin les réactions de sidération. La Convention d'Istanbul, adoptée en 2011 sous l'égide du Conseil de l'Europe, l'exige déjà dans son article 36.

Il demande aux États de définir le viol sur la base de l'absence de consentement librement donné. Pendant ce temps, une définition du 19ème siècle que nous appliquons encore ici. Une réforme proposée ici même, deux fois, jamais votée. Tandis qu'ailleurs, les idées n'ont cessé de progresser et face à cela, ce projet de loi qui est devant nous, ne tranche pas. Il augmente les peines, mais il laisse la définition intacte.

Il est d'ailleurs une autre chose que ce projet de loi laisse intacte, Madame la présidente. En 2023, l'affaire Ah Seek, la Cour suprême a jugé la section 250 de notre Code pénal inconstitutionnel en ce qu'elle criminalise les actes sexuels consentis entre adultes de même

sexe dans la sphère privée. Notre plus haute juridiction a estimé qu'un tel texte hérité de la colonisation portait atteinte à l'égalité, à la dignité sans aller jusqu'à l'invalider pour les relations entre sexe opposé.

Deux ans plus tard, ce projet de loi devant nous, rouvre le Code pénal. Il y insère de nouvelles sections, mais il laisse la section 250 intacte, mot pour mot. La sodomie et la bestialité toujours réunies dans le même article. C'était l'occasion de revoir cet article et nul dans cette Chambre ne connaît mieux cette question que l'honorable Attorney General lui-même, qui a plaidé le cas Ah Seek avec succès devant la Cour suprême. Je l'invite donc à aller plus loin et achever ce qu'il a contribué à faire reconnaître.

Voilà au fond ce que révèle ce projet de loi, un pas en avant, mais aussi une occasion ratée. Notre droit frappe plus fort, mais sans aller jusqu'au bout de la question. Il continue de faire peser une ombre pénale sur l'amour librement consenti entre adultes, tout en refusant de définir l'imposition sans consentement. Les violences sexuelles ne concernent pas uniquement la répression pénale et les sanctions. Elles concernent qui nous sommes comme société. Elles concernent l'autonomie corporelle, l'égalité entre les femmes et les hommes. Elles concernent le respect et la dignité humaine.

Reconnaître que chaque personne est seule maîtresse de son corps signifie qu'aucune relation, qu'aucun statut matrimonial et aucune histoire commune ne remplace le consentement. Cela signifie aussi que l'État n'a pas à s'inviter dans les chambres où deux adultes s'aiment librement.

Ce dont Maurice a besoin, Madame la présidente, ce n'est pas d'une poignée d'amendements. C'est d'un véritable *Sexual Offences Bill*. Une loi de l'ampleur de celle qui fut proposée en 2007, affûtée à la lumière des travaux de 2019 et des évolutions plus récentes à travers le monde. Une loi qui définisse enfin le viol par l'absence de consentement, de manière neutre quant au sexe et quant à l'acte. Ce projet de loi constitue donc un pas en avant, mais il faudra faire en sorte qu'il ne soit pas le dernier.

Je vous remercie.

Madam Speaker: Merci. Yes, hon. Minister.

(6.49 p.m.)

The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade (Mr D. Ramful): Merci, Madame la présidente. Je dois commencer peut-être par informer

l'honorable membre qui a d'ailleurs déploré l'absence de la ministre de l'Egalité des genres et du bien-être de la famille, de l'informer que malheureusement, l'honorable ministre est souffrante. Cela explique son absence aujourd'hui parmi nous.

Madame la présidente, il y a quelques semaines seulement, cette Assemblée a adopté le *Domestic Abuse Bill*. Le projet de loi que nous examinons aujourd'hui n'est pas un texte isolé. Il en est le prolongement direct, la conséquence logique est attendue. On ne peut pas légiférer sur les violences domestiques sans affronter une fois pour toutes la question du viol conjugal.

Le viol est un crime et dès l'entrée en vigueur de cette loi, le viol conjugal sera reconnu comme tel. Sans équivoque, sans échappatoire, sans défense fondée sur le seul fait du mariage. Désormais, l'obligation de communauté de vie ou de devoir conjugal qui découle directement du mariage, comme prévu d'ailleurs dans notre code civil mauricien, cessera de primer sur le droit à l'intégrité physique et sexuelle du conjoint.

Pourquoi une telle disposition n'existait-elle pas déjà dans notre droit ? La réponse tient à l'histoire même de notre Code pénal, largement hérité du Code pénal français du 19^{e} siècle. À cette époque, le mariage était perçu comme conférant à l'époux un droit quasi automatique aux relations sexuelles. Le consentement de l'épouse était considéré comme acquis, une fois pour toutes, dès la célébration du mariage. Il était donc juridiquement inconcevable qu'un rapport sexuel entre époux puisse être qualifié de viol. Cette conception archaïque a eu des conséquences bien réelles. Pendant des décennies, les victimes de violence sexuelle au sein du couple n'avaient chez nous, comme ailleurs, aucune protection légale véritable. Le consentement donné au moment du mariage était interprété comme couvrant indéfiniment tous les rapports à venir, sauf en cas de séparation ou d'abandon du domicile conjugal.

Ce projet de loi met fin à cette fiction juridique. Il modifie l'article 249 de notre Code pénal pour préciser noir sur blanc qu'il ne pourra plus constituer un moyen de défense pour une personne poursuivie pour viol, d'invoquer le mariage civil ou religieux avec la plaignante. Il introduit également aux nouveaux articles 222A et 223A, des circonstances aggravantes pour le meurtre, la tentative de meurtre, l'homicide involontaire et la tentative d'homicide involontaire lorsque la victime a été soumise à des actes de violence domestique. Le principe qui sous-tend cette réforme est simple. Si ce n'est pas oui, c'est non. Le consentement conjugal repose sur une règle qui ne souffre d'aucune exception. Aucun conjoint ne peut imposer sa volonté à l'autre, y compris et surtout dans la sphère la plus intime. Le mariage ne donne aucun droit absolu sur le corps de l'autre. Ce principe dérange,

parce qu'il touche à une image du mariage que certains persistent à considérer comme sacré et intouchable.

Dans beaucoup de sociétés encore marquées par une culture patriarcale forte, la nôtre y compris, historiquement, certains ont continué de considérer leurs épouses comme leur propriété. Nommer le viol conjugal dans la loi est un choix politique que beaucoup de législateurs, ici comme ailleurs, n'ont pas eu le courage de faire, parce que la résistance culturelle est réelle et parce que des pressions religieuses et traditionnelles continuent de s'exercer. Cette pression pousse encore trop de femmes à garder le silence face à des abus commis par celui qui devait précisément les protéger. L'ampleur du phénomène n'est pas propre à Maurice. Une enquête menée en France en juillet 2025 par l'Institut Ifop, rapportait que près d'un répondant sur cinq déclarait avoir déjà subi un rapport sexuel conjugal contre son gré ; une proportion qui montait à près d'une femme sur quatre et à près d'une jeune femme sur trois chez les moins de 35 ans.

Je n'ai malheureusement pas de chiffres comparables pour notre pays, et c'est précisément là que se niche le problème. Le silence organise l'absence de statistiques. On ne peut pas mesurer ce que la loi ne nomme pas. Chez nous, les poursuites judiciaires pour viol conjugal ont toujours été presque inexistantes, précisément parce que cette infraction n'était pas clairement définie dans notre droit. Ce vide n'était pas l'absence du problème ; il en était la couverture. Cette réforme n'est pas non plus une improvisation de dernière minute. Elle répond à une exigence formulée depuis longtemps par des instances internationales dont Maurice est signataire des engagements. Le Comité des Nations Unies contre la torture et le Comité pour l'élimination de la discrimination à l'égard des femmes ont à plusieurs reprises exhorté notre pays à aligner sa législation sur ses obligations internationales en la matière. Cette loi y répond enfin.

Et je le dis sans détour, madame la présidente, cette réforme a été réclamée, documentée, recommandée pendant des années, et elle est restée lettre morte sous nos prédécesseurs. Ce gouvernement choisit de ne plus attendre. Je sais que certains dans cette Assemblée, comme en dehors, expriment une inquiétude, celle d'une possible instrumentalisation de cette disposition, notamment dans des séparations conflictuelles ou des litiges familiaux, à des fins personnelles ou vindicatives. Je ne balaye pas cette inquiétude d'un revers de main. Il est vrai que toute réforme pénale, surtout lorsqu'elle touche aux rapports conjugaux, peut susciter des craintes d'abus. Mais ce risque, aussi légitime soit la question posée, ne peut en aucun cas justifier que nous renoncions à combler un vide

juridique dont les conséquences, elles, sont réelles et documentées. Notre système judiciaire dispose déjà de garde-fous solides contre ce type de dérive. La présomption d'innocence, l'obligation d'apporter une preuve au-delà de tout doute raisonnable, et la possibilité de poursuivre pour dénonciation calomnieuse ou fausse déclaration. Ces mécanismes existent et ils fonctionnent. Il serait injustifié de perpétuer un vide juridique par peur d'un danger théorique quand le tabou, lui, est quotidien et rarement dénoncé. Ce projet de loi n'est donc pas une fin en soi. Il est une étape dans une refonte plus large de notre arsenal pénal en matière de violence sexuelle et de genre.

Madame la présidente, cette réforme, des générations de féministes l'ont réclamée ; des femmes qui ont souffert en silence, sans mot pour nommer ce qu'elles vivaient, sans recours pour s'en protéger, l'attendaient. Aujourd'hui, elle devient une réalité dans notre pays. Maurice rejoint la liste des États qui reconnaissent sans réserve que le corps d'une femme mariée lui appartient à elle et à elle seule.

Merci.

Madam Speaker: Thank you. Yes, hon. Attorney General!

(6.58 p.m.)

Mr Glover: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am glad that the criticism levelled was that *j'ai raté une occasion*. At least, I was not being tagged of having had a *double occasion ratée*. But let me answer in a more serious tone the hon. Member for Floréal. And before that, perhaps we can take three snippets from the intervention of my colleague, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, where he clearly stated that this law, this amendment to the Criminal Code is but a *prolongement direct et une conséquence logique* of the Domestic Abuse Bill. And I may add, these amendments are being brought *dans un contexte particulier. Et*, again to highlight what my colleague just said, *ce n'est pas une fin en soi*.

Why do I say this? I say this so that the House is aware. I think a few months ago, I did say publicly that we were working on a new Sexual Offences Bill, and I wish to inform the House that this Bill has been worked on and is on the cards for the next session. We have other matters to attend to now, and these amendments to the Criminal Code were only brought in order to be a necessary consequential amendment following the Domestic Abuse Bill. Rest assured that I agree with the hon. First Member for Floréal that we need a definition of rape and that we cannot continue with what has been a rather difficult definition to come across when one looks at the various judgments of the various courts.

So, yes, I am, of course, very much aware of the issues, having myself appeared for the plaintiff in the case of Ah Seek. I am acutely aware of the fact that there are obviously a lot of bridges to cross in order for us to be able to bring all the amendments that we need to bring. Least of all, as you said, the Section 250 of the Criminal Code, which obviously needs a complete review, if not a complete abolition. But that is not for me to decide as a policy, it will have to be for Government to decide as a policy. My opinion is my opinion. It might not always be the Government's opinion. At least, you must accept that.

So, at the end of the day, I am glad that the hon. Member for Floréal has recognised that it was *des pas réels*, *un pas en avant*, but that we have missed the train. We have not missed the train. The train has not gone through the station yet, that was just one wagon going through. We are going to make sure that the Sexual Offences Bill is before this House as quickly as possible. We will address all the issues that you have raised in your intervention because I agree that they deserve a review – having not only seen what my predecessor had prepared in 2008, but more importantly, the 2019 paper of the Law Reform Commission.

As you know, as Attorney General, I have been the one who has been asking the Law Reform Commission to do a lot of work, and that is why we brought the Law Reform Commission Act recently before Parliament. So, rest assured, we will deal with what has to be dealt with at the relevant time.

I am done, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Thank you.

Mr Glover: Yes, I commend the Bill to the House.

Madam Speaker: And again, it is seconded by the Minister of Environment.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a second time and committed.

COMMITTEE STAGE

(Madam Speaker in the Chair)

The Criminal Code (Amendment) Bill (No. X of 2026) was considered and agreed to.

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

Third Reading

On motion made and seconded, the Criminal Code (Amendment) Bill (No. X of 2026) was read the third time and passed.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Prime Minister!

ADJOURNMENT

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Tuesday 28 July 2026 at 11.30 a.m.

Mr Mohamed rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Madam Speaker: The House stands adjourned!

Yes, yes, yes!

MATTERS RAISED

(7.06 p.m.)

RODRIGUES-MAURITIUS – PATIENTS' ADMISSIONS & TRANSFERS – PROCEDURES REVIEW

Mr J. F. François (Second Member for Rodrigues): Merci, Madame la présidente. Ma requête ce soir concerne l'admission et la gestion des patients transférés de Rodrigues vers Maurice, adressée à l'honorable ministre de la Santé.

Le processus actuel de transfert implique souvent un parcours épuisant jusqu'à 8 heures après que les patients arrivent en tant que nouveaux hospitalisés et subissent de longues procédures d'admission. C'est un calvaire ! Malgré les recommandations des spécialistes de Rodrigues, les patients attendent souvent des heures aux urgences avant qu'un lit ne leur soit attribué.

Une circulaire pour simplifier l'admission et accélérer le transfert des patients existe, mais ces dispositions ne sont pas respectées de manière cohérente. Les investigations et la prise en charge initiale pourraient être menées au sein des salles, garantissant ainsi un plus grand confort, dignité et continuité des soins pour ces patients.

Par conséquent, je demande respectueusement à l'honorable ministre d'initier une reconsidération urgente et de renforcer le cadre d'admission pour les transferts de patients de Rodrigues vers Maurice afin de s'assurer un transfert plus fluide, de respecter strictement les provisions du circulaire sur l'accélération des admissions et de distribuer des listes de contrôle de conformité à tous les hôpitaux concernés. Et aussi, si les transports médicaux par Air Mauritius pouvaient être priorisés pendant la journée.

Quant à la question de validation de *fitness to travel by the airline doctor as per the new guidelines*, une consultation entre le *airline doctor* et le médecin spécialisé référent est recommandée en cas de doute sur l'état du patient. La reconsidération devrait aussi traiter les retards administratifs, les écarts de communication et les inefficacités des procédures d'admission après le transfert des patients de Rodrigues vers Maurice pour des soins spécialisés. Je vous remercie.

The Minister of Agro-Industry, Food Security, Blue Economy and Fisheries (Dr. A. Boolell): The Second Member for Rodrigues can rest assured that the matter raised will be fully taken on board and conveyed to the Minister of Health.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Beejan!

(7.08 p.m.)

GOODLANDS REGIONS – LOW WATER PRESSURE

Mr N. Beejan (Second Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or): Thank you, Madam Speaker. My request is addressed to the hon. Minister of Public Utilities regarding an urgent matter concerning the persistent issue of low water pressure affecting some regions in Goodlands, La Grotte, Melle Jeanne, Mosque Road, and Mapou Leclezio, and at Reservoir Road, Grand Baie.

I would, therefore, request the Minister to give this matter the necessary attention and ensure that residents receive an adequate pressure of water supply. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Yes!

The Minister of Energy and Public Utilities (Mr P. Assirvaden): Je rassure l'honorable membre que je reprendrai ces quatre régions avec le département de la CWA concernant le nord.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Member!

(7.09 p.m.)

VACOAS MARKET – WATER OVERFLOW – DRAINS CLEANING

Ms J. Bérenger (First Member for Vacoas & Floréal): Je vous remercie. Ma requête s'adresse au ministre des Collectivités locales. Jusqu'à pas plus tard que vendredi dernier, les marchands du bazar de Vacoas et les habitants se sont retrouvés à faire leurs courses avec les pieds dans l'eau, l'eau leur arrivant jusqu'aux chevilles. C'est la même situation qui se répète à chaque grosse pluie.

Donc, je lui demanderais de bien vouloir s'assurer du nettoyage urgent des drains dans cet endroit et aux alentours, puisqu'il semblerait que les drains soient bouchés. Évidemment, ça pourrait améliorer leur confort et éviter la propagation de maladies. Merci.

The Minister of Local Government (Mr R. Woochit): Madam Speaker, I take note of this request.

Madam Speaker: Yes, thank you.

Yes, Mr Beechook first, then Dr. Prayag.

(7.10 p.m.)

PONT BON DIEU, SALAZIE & EAU BOUILLIE – TELECOMMUNICATION NETWORK – ANTENNAS INSTALLATION

Mr R. Beechook (Second Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil): Madame la présidente, ma requête s'adresse au ministre de l'Agro-industrie.

Dans une question parlementaire datée du 4 février 2025, j'avais soulevé la question de l'absence de réseau de télécommunication dans les régions de Pont Bon Dieu, Salazie et Eau

Bouillie. Et le 20 février 2025, la Mauritius Telecom a adressé un courrier au ministère de l'Agro-industrie leur demandant – puisque ce sont des *State lands* – des portions de terrain pour y installer des antennes de télécommunication pour améliorer leur réseau. Depuis, cette requête est restée lettre morte.

Je demanderais à l'honorable ministre de bien vouloir accélérer cette procédure pour résoudre ce problème qui porte préjudice aux habitants de la région. Merci.

Madam Speaker: Monsieur le ministre!

The Minister of Agro-Industry, Food Security, Blue Economy and Fisheries (Dr. A. Boolell): Thank you very much, hon. Member. I take good note, but agricultural land has to be transferred to the Ministry of Housing and Lands. We will coordinate and, certainly, we will accede to your legitimate request.

Madam Speaker: Thank you. Dr. Prayag!

(7.11 p.m.)

AMITIÉ-GOKHOOLA ROAD – WORKS TIME FRAME

Dr. S. Prayag (First Member for Piton & Rivière du Rempart): My request is addressed to the Minister of Land Transport, concerning the site visit that we conducted at Amitié-Gokhoola Road, a year ago, and I am sure it is in the right procedures. We just want to know when the works will start and how is it going to be, and when will these be completed. Thank you.

The Minister of Land Transport (Mr Osman Mahomed): Madam Speaker, tender procedures have it that it takes a lot of time, but the work in these three locations will start on 08 October, in a few days' time. Tenders have already been awarded.

Dr. Prayag: 08 August?

Mr Osman Mahomed: 08 August, sorry. In a few days' time, on 08 August. Tenders have already been awarded and it will be...

Madam Speaker: Thank you everybody. Have a nice evening!

At 7.11 p.m. the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Tuesday 28 July 2026 at 11.30 a.m.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

MAURITIUS REVENUE AUTHORITY – VAT REGISTRATION THRESHOLD REDUCTION – REVENUE COLLECTED

(No. B/1086) Mr R. Beechook (Second Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the Value Added Tax (VAT), he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Revenue Authority information as to the total amount of VAT revenue collected from newly VAT registered entities following the implementation of the reduction of the registration threshold thereof from Rs 6 million to Rs 3 million, indicating the number of new VAT registrations and VAT de-registrations, respectively, recorded to date.

(Withdrawn)

VALUE ADDED TAX – REGISTRATION THRESHOLD REDUCTION – IMPACT

(No. B/1087) Mr C. Baboolall (First Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE) 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 impact of the implementation of the reduction of the registration threshold of the Value Added Tax from Rs 6 million to Rs 3 million, he will state the –

(a) measures being envisaged to mitigate the risk of business closure, having regard to the additional compliance burden and operational costs arising therefrom, and

(b) support, if any, to be provided to the said businesses to assist with the transition thereto, indicating the nature and extent thereof.

Reply: The House may recall that this measure was introduced primarily to –

(i) create a level playing field and fair competition among operators in the same business activity. It addresses the discrimination whereby a VAT registered business with a turnover threshold slightly above Rs6 million is charging VAT while a business with a turnover slightly lower than Rs6 million is not charging VAT on the same type of goods, and

(ii) encourage formal bookkeeping and improve tax compliance.

With regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Mauritius Revenue Authority that 84 entities deregistered out of 8,764 newly registered entities following the lowering of the VAT registration threshold.

The deregistration was not due to compliance burden or increase in operational costs leading to closure of their businesses.

The deregistration was due to the following reasons –

(i) deregistered taxpayers found out that they had mistakenly registered. In fact, they had miscalculated their taxable turnover. They wrongly included exempt turnover in their taxable turnover, and

(ii) taxpayers registered for VAT because they overestimated their taxable turnover.

As regards part (b) of the question, I wish to point out that the Mauritius Revenue Authority has adopted a flexible approach with regard to this policy measure, taking into consideration the type of businesses being impacted.

Those small businesses and entrepreneur whose taxable turnover were between Rs3 million and Rs6 million were required to file their first VAT return on or before 31 January 2026 in respect to the period 01 October 2025 to 31 December 2025.

Newly VAT registered persons were granted additional delay up to 28 February 2026 to submit their first VAT return, which was due in January 2026, without being liable to pay any penalty or interest for late submission of return or late payment of tax payable.

I am informed that the Mauritius Revenue Authority had also put in place the following support measures to assist small businesses and entrepreneurs to meet the requirements for registration, record bookkeeping and submission of VAT returns –

(i) a Communiqué was issued on 12 September 2025 requesting persons required to be registered and who need assistance to phone on the MRA hotline, or to use the MRA e-appointment facility;

(ii) a dedicated customer service desk for the SMEs requiring assistance was put in place at the MRA Head Office;

(iii) a simplified VAT Registration System was put in place;

(iv) a Guide on Simplified VAT Registration and on simplified record keeping was published on the MRA website;

(v) the MRA had conducted dedicated VAT education sessions for the newly VAT registered persons, and

(vi) an e-Appointment facility was offered for SMEs who wish to avail from such type of assistance online through a WhatsApp facility.

Furthermore, a simplified record keeping facility will shortly be available on the Mauritius Revenue Authority website to assist these small businesses.

OFFICIAL VEHICLES – PARLIAMENTARY MEMBERS – COSTS INCURRED

(No. B/1088) Mr A. Ramdass (Third Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the official vehicles acquired over the period December 2014 to November 2024 for use by the then Honourable Members of Parliament entitled thereto other than the Honourable Ministers, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the –

(a) number thereof;

(b) names of the beneficiaries thereof, and

(c) total costs incurred therefor.

(Withdrawn)

PLAINE-CORAIL AIRPORT DEVELOPMENT PROJECT – COORDINATED STRATEGY – SOCIO-ECONOMIC BENEFITS

(No. B/1089) 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 Plaine-Corail Airport Development Project, he will state whether Government, in collaboration with the Rodrigues Regional Assembly and the relevant stakeholders, has adopted a coordinated strategy with a view to maximising the socio-economic and inclusive development benefits arising therefrom for the inhabitants of Rodrigues Island and, if so, give details thereof.

Reply: As the House is aware, the Plaine Corail Airport Project is being financed through a loan from the World Bank and a grant from the European Union, for a total amount of Rs9.2 billion. The Project has been strategically designed as an integrated development initiative comprising four complementary components aimed at delivering broader economic and social benefits for the island.

The first component relates to infrastructural works for the modernisation of airport facilities, including the construction of a new runway.

The second component of the Project, comprises technical assistance framework to ensure the effective implementation of the whole project. The structure provides for a Project Implementation Unit and two Project Technical Units, staffed by a Project Manager, a Project Coordinator and Specialists in various fields.

The third component, with an allocation of USD10 million, focuses on sustainable integrated development and food security, with particular emphasis on strengthening the agriculture and fisheries sectors as well as enhancing water security. Under this component, USD6.5 million will be allocated over a period of four years for the implementation of schemes aimed at strengthening the local food system. These initiatives focus on increasing food crop production, improving post-harvest management, developing value chains, establishment of a Rodrigues Off-Lagoon Scheme and promoting value addition activities.

The remaining USD3.5 million under the third component will be dedicated to improving the water infrastructure and enhancing the sustainability of water supply systems across Rodrigues. These include improvements to water services, provision of water quality testing laboratory equipment, supply and installation of telemetry systems to strengthen the monitoring and management of water resources, construction of a slow sand filter and chlorination station for water treatment, and capacity building initiatives.

The fourth component, amounting to USD 10 million, focuses on the sustainable development of the tourism sector. It supports tourism promotion and an investment attraction strategy, improvement of tourism sites, strengthens skills development within the sector, and provides assistance to sustainable tourism-related enterprises through a Grant Scheme.

In this respect, a committee chaired by the Island Chief Executive of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly, and comprising representatives of relevant institutions, including the Ministry of Tourism and the Tourism Authority, will oversee the assessment, implementation and monitoring of the Grant Scheme.

The projects and schemes under these two components have been developed by the Rodrigues Regional Assembly in consultation with the World Bank. The Rodrigues Regional Assembly will be responsible for their implementation, under the supervision and guidance of relevant sector Specialists.

I wish to highlight that additional financial allocations have been made in the budget for the Financial Year 2026-2027 of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly for the implementation of another reverse osmosis unit at the Caverne Bouteille Desalination Plant, with a production capacity of 500 m^3 of water per day. Out of which, 400 m^3 of water will

support the requirements of the airport construction works, while the remaining 100 m^3 of water will directly contribute to improving water availability for the community.

Government is taking all necessary measures to ensure that this major infrastructure investment serves as a catalyst for the socio-economic transformation in Rodrigues. In this regard, an all-inclusive approach has been adopted, involving key stakeholders including Rodriguans to maximise the project's socio-economic benefits. The project scope and components have been shared with the wider community, including end-users and beneficiaries. Furthermore, a Project Steering Committee has been established under my Office to provide regular oversight and ensure the timely completion of the Project through a coordinated approach involving all relevant stakeholders.

PARLIAMENTARY MEMBERS – OVERSEAS MISSIONS – EXPENSES INCURRED

(No. B/1090) 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 overseas missions attended by Members of the Assembly other than Honourable Ministers since December 2024 to date, he will, for the benefit of the House, in each case, obtain information regarding the meeting/s attended, country visited, duration, costs incurred in terms of airfares, per diem allowances and any other related expenses, if any, and whether reports were submitted thereafter and, if so, whether copy thereof will be tabled.

Reply: I am informed that for the period December 2024 to date, the total cost of the overseas missions attended by hon. Members of the Assembly, other than hon. Ministers, and including Junior Ministers, the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker amounted to Rs18,108,399.91.

I am placing the list of the meetings attended by these Members of the Assembly, the countries in which these meetings were held, the duration thereof as well as the costs incurred in terms of airfares, *per diem* and other related expenses in the Library of the National Assembly.

With regard to the last part of the question, I am informed that Members who participate in international meetings are required, at the request of the Speaker of the National Assembly, to submit mission reports upon completion of their missions. These reports are intended primarily for internal administrative, follow-up and monitoring purposes. They also

include recommendations made by the parliamentary organisations and any action that may be required by the National Assembly.

As regards the mission reports placed in the Library of the National Assembly, there is no such provision under the Standing Orders of the National Assembly.

STATE AGE PENSION – MAURITIAN CITIZENS ABROAD – ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

(No. B/1091) Mr C. Baboolall (First Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE) 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 State Age Pension, he will state the estimated number of Mauritian citizens currently residing or working abroad who would be rendered ineligible therefor with the application of the criteria effective as from 01 January 2027, whereby eligibility will be conditional upon a person having resided in Mauritius for an aggregate period of at least 15 years since attaining the age of 40, including the three years immediately preceding the claim.

(Withdrawn)

RODRIGUES – BUDGETARY ESTIMATES 2025-2026 – PUBLIC EXPENDITURE DETAILS

(No. B/1092) 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 Budgetary Estimates 2025-2026 for Rodrigues Island, he will –

(a) for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the total –
  (i) expenditure incurred as at 30 June 2026, and
  (ii) outstanding expenditure, giving details thereof and the reasons therefor, and

(b) state the bearing, if any, of the implementation of the Programme-Based Budgeting Framework on the management of public expenditure thereat.

Reply: The total budget allocated to Rodrigues Island in FY 2025-26 amounted to Rs10.1 billion. This includes grants of Rs5.8 billion to the Rodrigues Regional Assembly and provisions of Rs4.3billion under the budget of Ministries, departments and parastatal bodies.

The provisions under the budget of Ministries, departments and parastatal bodies include Rs1.4 billion for capital projects, comprising amounts in respect of the new Runway

at Plaine Corail, investment in water sector by the Mauritius Investment Corporation and land drainage projects. The remaining Rs 2.9 billion is in respect of recurrent expenditure for education, law and order, subsidies, social benefits and so on.

The total grant allocated to the Rodrigues Regional Assembly in FY 2025-26 of Rs5.785 billion, comprised Rs5 billion for recurrent expenditure and Rs 785 million for capital expenditure. By May 2026, the recurrent budget of Rs5 billion was fully exhausted.

An additional amount of Rs300 million was provided by way of reallocation of Rs149 million from the Budget of the Prime Minister's Office (Rodrigues and Outer Islands Division) and Rs151 million from capital budget of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly to meet additional commitments for pensions, salaries and other entitlements up to 30 June 2026 resulting from salary and pension rate increases under PRB.

As regards part (a) (i) of the question, I am informed by the Rodrigues Regional Assembly that the total expenditure incurred as at the close of the Financial Year 2025-2026, amounted to Rs5.990 billion, comprising –

- Recurrent Expenditure: Rs5.356 billion, and
- Capital Expenditure: Rs634 million.

As regards part (a) (ii) of the question, I am informed by the Rodrigues Regional Assembly that there are outstanding commitments amounting to Rs299.5 million as at 30 June 2026, consisting of Rs200 million mainly for allowances payable to personnel in the health sector and Rs99.5 million for capital expenditure.

As regards part (b) of the question, Performance-Based Budgeting was introduced in Rodrigues as from Financial Year 2026-2027, one year after its re-introduction in Mauritius. The Ministry of Finance and the Rodrigues Regional Assembly have worked together for the introduction of this modern budgeting framework that will further enhance fiscal discipline.

With Performance Based Budgeting, Key Performance Indicators (KPI) and targets to be achieved in FY 2026-2027 have already been defined for each of the eight Commissions. This will enable the Rodrigues Regional Assembly to monitor and assess the performance of the eight Commissions with the financial and human resources that have been allocated to them.

A more comprehensive assessment of the effectiveness of the framework and its impact on the management of public expenditure will be carried out at the end of the financial year and over subsequent budget cycles as performance information becomes available.

CAMP FOUQUEREAUX FOOTBALL GROUND – RECONSTRUCTION & MAINTENANCE

(No. B/1116) Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to the Camp Fouquereaux Football Ground, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the urgent remedial measures being envisaged for the –

(a) reconstruction of the dilapidated synthetic pitch and provision for the future maintenance thereof, and

(b) installation of a new floodlighting system at the adjacent playground, indicating in each case, the expected start and completion dates thereof.

Reply: With regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Municipal Council of Vacoas-Phoenix that the synthetic mini soccer pitch at Camp Fouquereaux was constructed by the then National Development Unit in 2013 and was officially handed over to the Council on 17 October 2013.

The last major upgrading works were undertaken by the Municipal Council in June 2021 at a cost of Rs891,250. Comprising, *inter-alia*, the replacement of the synthetic turf, installation of new turf line markings, repairs to the roof netting and repainting of the enclosure.

Following continuous public use over several years and normal wear and tear, the facility gradually deteriorated to the extent that it no longer met the required safety standards for public use. Consequently, the Council took the precautionary decision to close the mini soccer pitch pending comprehensive rehabilitation works.

A detailed technical survey carried out by the Municipal Council in March 2026 confirmed extensive deterioration of the facility, including damaged synthetic turf, defective roof netting, rusted fencing and fencing posts, damaged goal posts and gates, defective lighting installations and cracks together with faded paint on the enclosure walls. The Council concluded that the facility requires major rehabilitation rather than routine maintenance.

Accordingly, the Municipal Council prepared a comprehensive rehabilitation project covering the replacement of the synthetic turf, rehabilitation of the enclosure, improvement of drainage, replacement of defective lighting infrastructure and associated civil works, at an estimated cost of Rs5 million.

I am further informed that the project has been included in the Council's priority capital projects submitted to my Ministry under the Small Community Projects Programme for

Financial Year 2026-2027 and is presently being examined in the context of Government's approved capital investment programme.

Subject to financial provision being made and completion of the prescribed procurement procedures, implementation is expected to commence during Financial Year 2026-2027. The Municipal Council has advised that the rehabilitation works are expected to be completed within approximately four months from the award of contract.

With regard to the future maintenance of the facility, once the rehabilitation works have been completed, the Municipal Council will continue to undertake routine maintenance, including painting, lighting repairs and general upkeep, whilst the maintenance of the synthetic turf will be carried out under an appropriate maintenance contract to ensure the long-term sustainability of the facility.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that the floodlighting system serving the adjoining football ground became non-operational following a case of larceny committed on 25 May 2022, during which underground electrical cables and other electrical installations were stolen.

I wish, however, to clarify that this incident affected only the floodlighting system. The football ground itself remained structurally sound, is regularly maintained by the Municipal Council and continues to be safely used by the public during daytime.

The Municipal Council has estimated the complete replacement of the floodlighting system, including all associated electrical and technical works, at approximately Rs1.8 million.

This project has likewise been submitted to my Ministry for funding consideration under the Council's capital investment programme and is presently being examined within the approved budgetary framework.

Subject to financial provision being made and completion of the required procurement procedures, implementation is expected to commence during Financial Year 2026-2027, with completion expected within approximately four months from the award of contract.

My Ministry remains fully committed to ensuring that public sports facilities are safe, accessible and properly maintained. The rehabilitation of the Camp Fouquereaux Mini Soccer Pitch and the replacement of the floodlighting system have been identified as priority projects by the Municipal Council. Once the necessary financial provision is secured, the Council will proceed without delay with the procurement process in accordance with the Public Procurement Act, while appropriate maintenance arrangements will thereafter be implemented to safeguard these public assets for the long-term benefit of the community.

RING ROAD TRACK, VALLÉE PITOT – STATE LAND – SQUATTERS

(No. B/1122) Dr. F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the squatters having built on State Land and on the Ring Road Track in Vallée Pitot and in the vicinity thereof, he will state where matters stand regarding the regularisation or otherwise thereof.

(Withdrawn)

SUPREME COURT OF MAURITIUS – LAND & BUILDINGS – EARMARKED PROJECTS

(No. B/1123) Mr L. Caserne (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Attorney-General whether, in regard to the land and buildings which formerly housed the Supreme Court of Mauritius, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the –

(a) current use made thereof, and
(b) project, if any, earmarked for implementation thereat.

(Withdrawn)

AGRO-SOLAR ENERGY– PROJECTS DEVELOPMENT

(No. B/1124) Mr R. Etwareea (Third Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of Agro-Industry, Food Security, Blue Economy and Fisheries whether, in regard to the development of agro-solar energy, he will –

(a) for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the number of ongoing projects, and
(b) state the conditions imposed and incentives granted by Government for the promotion thereof.

(Withdrawn)

VALLÉE DES PRÊTRES COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE – WAITING ROOM PROVISION

(No. B/1125) Mr L. Caserne (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the Vallée des Prêtres Community Health Centre, he will state whether consideration will be given for the

provision of a dedicated waiting room equipped with adequate seating and ventilation facilities to cater for the increased number of patients attending thereat for blood sampling.

(Withdrawn)

PRIVATE PRE-PRIMARY SCHOOLS – GRANT-IN-AID SCHEME IMPLEMENTATION – REASONS & IMPACT ASSESSMENT

(No. B/1126) Mr C. Baboolall (First Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resource whether, in regard to the implementation of the revised Grant-in-Aid Scheme for private pre-primary schools with effect from 1 January 2027, including the reduction of the operational cost reimbursement to 50 percent, the capping of the rent reimbursement at Rs 5,000 and the withdrawal of the Rs 400 per-student subsidy from the 106 fee-charging private pre-primary schools, he will state –

(a) the reasons therefor, and

(b) whether an assessment of the estimated impact thereof on low-income households was carried out prior thereto and, if so, indicate the findings thereof.

(Withdrawn)

SSS BAMBOUS GIRLS BUILDINGS – INFRASTRUCTURE UPGRADING

(No. B/1127) Mr S. Jugurnauth (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resource whether, in regard to the buildings of the SSS Bambous Girls, he will state the current infrastructural conditions thereof, indicating whether the renovation, upgrading and/or major rehabilitation thereof are envisaged and, if so, indicate the expected timeframe set for the implementation thereof.

(Withdrawn)

QUEEN ELIZABETH HOSPITAL, RODRIGUES – UPGRADING

(No. B/1128) Mr J. F. François (Second Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital at Crève-Coeur, in Rodrigues Island, he will state whether consideration will be given, in collaboration with the Rodrigues Regional Assembly, for the upgrading of the services and status thereof to that of a

Regional Hospital, having regard to the demographic changes in Rodrigues Island, the increasing demand for complex health care services and the Plaine-Corail Airport Development Project.

(Withdrawn)

CWA – ILLEGAL WATER CONNECTIONS – CASES & ACTIONS

(No. B/1129) Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to illegal water connections, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Water Authority, information as to the number of detected cases thereof, since January 2025 to date, indicating the –

(a) nature of the actions taken against the offenders, and

(b) total revenue collected in terms of fines booked in connection therewith.

Reply: I am informed by the CWA that it has an Anti-Fraud Unit which presently comprises 15 officers who are deployed across the island.

I am further informed that from 01 January 2025 to 30 June 2026, the Anti-Fraud Unit has investigated a total of 3,613 cases. Out of these, 741 cases were confirmed as illegal water connections.

With regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that actions taken vary depending on the individual case. However, all confirmed illegal connections are disconnected and monitored. Offenders are first notified about the offence they committed and the resulting consequences. They can either admit to having committed an illegal connection and agree to pay CWA based on a computation of amounts owed to CWA. The water connection needs to be regularised. Or in case a person refuses to admit the offence and sign the written agreement, the case is referred to the Police for investigation and legal action as appropriate.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that for the period 01 January 2025 to 30 June 2026, an amount of Rs14,085,650 has been collected by the CWA with respect to water charges associated with illegal connection cases. This amount does not include service fees, connection fees and other contribution fees payable to the CWA to regularise connection status by the offenders.

FINANCIAL SERVICES ENTITIES – LICENCE FEES – REPRESENTATIONS

(No. B/1130) Mr K. Rookny (Third Member for Pamplemousses & Triolet) asked the Minister of Financial Services and Economic Planning whether, in regard to the recent

increase in licence fees applicable to financial services entities, she will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to whether –

(a) a benchmarking exercise was carried out against competing jurisdictions prior to the implementation thereof, and

(b) representations have been received from industry stakeholders in relation thereto and, if so, indicate the actions taken, if any.

(Withdrawn)

LOCAL FRUITS & VEGETABLES – PRODUCTION & CONSUMPTION – SEEDLINGS DISTRIBUTION – PRODUCTION PLANNING MECHANISM

(No. B/1131) Mr S. Jugurnauth (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Agro-Industry, Food Security, Blue Economy and Fisheries whether, in regard to the production and consumption of local fruits and vegetables, he will state whether consideration will be given for the –

(a) distribution of fruit/vegetable plants seedlings on an annual basis to each local authority for distribution to members of the community, and

(b) introduction of a production quota or production planning mechanism for selected crops, with a view to ensuring food security and maintaining affordable prices for consumers.

(Withdrawn)

PHOENIX – RAMPAT LANE & IQBAL LANE – URGENT REINSTATEMENT

(No. B/1132) Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to the Rampat Lane and Iqbal Lane, in Phoenix, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council of Vacoas-Phoenix, information as to whether consideration will be given for the urgent reinstatement thereof, including upgrading of drains and asphalting works and, if so, indicate the expected start and completion dates thereof.

Reply: I am informed by the Municipal Council of Vacoas-Phoenix that consideration has indeed been given to the urgent reinstatement of both Rampat Lane and Iqbal Lane, including the upgrading of drainage infrastructure and the resurfacing of the roads concerned.

The House will recall that I have already provided detailed information on the drainage programme for the Municipal Council of Vacoas-Phoenix in my reply to Parliamentary

Question B/735, including the technical, administrative and financial procedures governing the implementation of such projects.

In the present case, the works at Rampat Lane and Iqbal Lane form part of that broader programme. The implementation of these projects involves a number of statutory and technical stages, including site investigations, engineering design, cost estimates, technical clearance from the Land Drainage Authority, financial clearance, preparation of bidding documents, Central Procurement Board procedures, invitation of bids, evaluation, award of contract and construction.

Given the technical nature of the question and in the interest of providing complete and accurate information to the House, a comprehensive document prepared by the Municipal Council of Vacoas-Phoenix is being placed in the Library of the National Assembly. The document sets out, for each lane, the present condition of the road, the drainage requirements, estimated costs, approvals already obtained, the remaining procedures to be completed, together with the indicative implementation timetable from the design stage through to the expected commencement and completion of the works.

The information tabled also indicates that –

- Rampat Lane is expected to proceed to procurement upon completion of the remaining financial and procurement requirements, with construction expected to commence in February 2027 and be completed by October 2027.
- Iqbal Lane road resurfacing has been approved under the Council's resurfacing programme, whilst the proposed collector drain is currently at the design and approval stage. The detailed implementation schedule will be finalised once the remaining technical and financial clearances have been secured.

I trust that the comprehensive information being tabled today fully addresses the hon. Member's question. Should the hon. Member require any additional technical clarification after examining the documents, I am informed that the Mayor, the Chief Executive and the Technical Officers of the Municipal Council of Vacoas-Phoenix remain available to provide any further explanation within their competence.

SWAMI SIVANANDA GOVERNMENT SCHOOL – INFRASTRUCTURE UPGRADING – SURVEY

(**No. B/1133) Dr. Ms R. Daureeawo (Third Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac)** asked the Minister of Education and Human Resource whether, in regard to the

Swami Sivananda Government School, he will state whether a survey has been carried out to assess the state of the infrastructure thereof and, if so, indicate –

(a) the findings thereof, and

(b) where matters stand regarding the requests for the upgrading of the infrastructure and relocation of the toilet facilities thereat.

(Withdrawn)

COLORECTAL CANCER – SCREENING & DETECTION – NATIONAL POLICY INTRODUCTION

(No. B/1134) Dr. S. Prayag (First Member for Piton & Rivière du Rempart) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the increasing incidence of colorectal cancer and the importance of the early detection and prevention thereof, he will state whether consideration is being given for the introduction of a national policy for the systematic and mandatory screening thereof and, if so, indicate whether same will also be extended to asymptomatic persons falling within high-risk categories as from a prescribed age group.

(Withdrawn)

POTATO SEEDLINGS (2025 SEASON) – STOCK, PROCUREMENT & SELLING PRICE

(No. B/1135) Ms J. Bérenger (First Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Agro-Industry, Food Security, Blue Economy and Fisheries whether, in regard to the potatoes seedlings supplied by the Agricultural Marketing Board for the 2025 cultivation season, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Agricultural Marketing Board, information as to the –

(a) remaining stock thereof currently held, indicating the value thereof;

(b) measures being envisaged for the disposal thereof, indicating the estimated cost therefor, and

(c) overall financial balance of the procurement and resale thereof, giving a breakdown thereof.

Reply: As regards part (a), I am informed that the Agricultural Marketing Board has advised that there is no remaining stock of seed potatoes from the procurement for the 2025 cultivation season currently held. Accordingly, the value thereof is nil.

As regards part (b), since the Agricultural Marketing Board holds no remaining stock of seed potatoes from the 2025 cultivation season, no further measures are required or envisaged for the disposal of such stock. Accordingly, the estimated cost of disposal is nil.

As regards part (c), the Agricultural Marketing Board does not prepare a separate financial statement specifically for the procurement and resale of seed potatoes for each cultivation campaign. The financial transactions of the Agricultural Marketing Board are reflected in its Annual Report and audited Financial Statement, a copy of which is laid before the National Assembly.

For Campaign 2025, the prevailing wholesale selling price of imported seed potatoes was Rs80,000 per tonne, while the Agricultural Marketing Board selling price was Rs20,000 per tonne, representing a government subsidy of Rs60,000 per tonne.

RIVIÈRE DU POSTE – PONT ROUGE FOOTBRIDGE – REPAIR & REHABILITATION

(No. B/1136) Dr. Ms R. Daureeawo (Third Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure whether, in regard to the proposed repair and rehabilitation of the Pont Rouge Footbridge in Rivière du Poste, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to where matters stand, indicating the –

(a) reasons for the delay, if any, that occurred in the implementation thereof, and

(b) expected completion date thereof.

(Withdrawn)

FOREIGN WORKERS – RECRUITMENT – PRIVATE AGENCIES SERVICES

(No. B/1137) Mr A. Ramdass (Third Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle) asked the Minister of Labour and Industrial Relations whether, in regard to the hiring of foreign workers, he will state whether it is obligatory to have recourse to the services of private recruitment agencies therefor.

(Withdrawn)

PLASTIC POLLUTION REDUCTION – POTABLE WATER – PUBLIC REFILL STATIONS

(No. B/1138) Dr. S. Prayag (First Member for Piton & Rivière du Rempart) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to potable water, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Water Authority, information as to whether

following the extension of the excise duty on plastic bottles as from 01 October 2026, consideration will be given for the installation of free public refill stations thereof island-wide to reduce plastic pollution and encourage the use of reusable water bottles.

(Withdrawn)

MINI DAMS CONSTRUCTION – PROJECT STATUS

(No. B/1139) Mr K. Rookny (Third Member for Pamplemousses & Triolet) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the proposed construction of mini dams, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to where matters stand, indicating the timeframe, if any, set for the implementation thereof.

(Withdrawn)

DISABILITY MAINSTREAMING – NATIONAL STRATEGY – MEASURES

(No. B/1140) Mr J. Edouard (Fourth Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity whether, in regard to the national strategy on disability mainstreaming, he will –

(a) state the measures taken to ensure equal access of persons with disabilities to infrastructure, employment and public services in mainland Mauritius and Rodrigues Island, and

(b) for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to where matters stand regarding the implementation of the National Action Plan for Persons with Disabilities.

Reply: The National Assembly has enacted the Constitutional Review Commission Act 2026, which provides for the establishment of an independent Constitutional Review Commission to examine and make recommendations on constitutional reforms including the fundamental rights of persons with disabilities.

As regards part (a) of the question, in relation to accessible infrastructure for persons with disabilities, accessibility standards for public buildings and facilities have been in-introduced. New public infrastructure projects are required to incorporate adapted design principles including ramps, lifts, accessible sanitary facilities, tactile paving and appropriate signage, while existing public buildings are progressively being upgraded to improve accessibility in accordance with the Building Control Act 2012 and Building Control (Accessibility and Gender Compliance in Buildings) Regulations 2017 (amended in 2022).

To date, 10 public buildings are equipped with disable-friendly amenities, namely Post Offices at Stanley Rose Hill, Terre Rouge and Montagne Longue; NPF Building at Plaine Magnien; Community Centres at Notre Dame, Argy and Belle Mare; Social Welfare Centre at Camp de Masque, and District Court at Grand Port and Black River.

Given that we are in a transition period with a law which dates back to 30 years and another law – The Protection and Promotion of The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2024, which has been voted by this Assembly, but not yet proclaimed, we have taken remedial actions to ensure a minimum compliance with the present law. After the issue was raised in this Assembly, advice has been obtained from the State Law Office and procedures will be initiated for the reconstitution of the TEDPB and the National Council for the Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons Board, who during the transition period will be responsible for employment and training of persons with disabilities.

In parallel, procedures are now in progress for the training of approximately 35 persons with disabilities in the Secretarial and I.T fields, which is expected to start by end of September 2026. Trainings are also ongoing at the level of the Empowerment Unit of my Ministry in collaboration with the Society for the Welfare of the Deaf and the Mauritius Institute of Training and Development, whereby 30 persons, including 15 public officials, have been trained in basic Mauritian Sign Language (MSL) in the previous Financial Year. From among these trainees of basic MSL, 10 will be offered advanced training in the current Financial Year 2026-2027, to acquire skills to act as Interpreters, whose services may be enlisted in Schools, Universities, Ministries, Courts and other public service instances. An amount of Rs1.3 million has been made available for training in my Ministry's budget.

Concerning access to public services, measures have been taken to facilitate access to basic services including education, healthcare, social protection, transport and information. At the level of my Ministry, a panoply of services is provided to persons with disabilities residing both in Mauritius and Rodrigues, as listed below –

(a) Refund of travelling expenses (bus fare) to children with disabilities attending day-care centres, specialised, integrated and mainstream schools;
(b) Refund of taxi fares to students with severe disabilities (blind, wheelchair-users and those suffering from blind Autistic Spectrum Disorder and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) attending primary schools, including SEN Integrated

Unit and SEN Resource & Development Centres, secondary schools and tertiary institutions;

(c) Scholarship Scheme for students with disabilities through the François Sockalingum Award organised by the National Council for the Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons;

(d) Concessionary airfare to persons with disabilities including children with disabilities travelling by Air Mauritius;

(e) Concessionary Fee for Passport application;

(f) Free Parking Coupons to enable easy access to public places;

(g) Respite Care Programme organised at our four Recreation Centres across the island;

(h) Duty-Free Facilities of 100% to purchase adapted cars not exceeding 1600 cc once every 7 years;

(i) Loan facilities through Employees Welfare Fund for purchase of assistive devices, upgrading of the living conditions (through infrastructural adjustments and purchase of furniture & equipment, for medical treatment, studies /training (locally or abroad);

(j) Cash grant for purchase of assistive devices such as wheelchairs, hearing aids, dentures, spectacles, bath chairs and other assistive devices;

(k) Yearly vaccination against influenza;

(l) Monthly domiciliary visits for those in receipt of a carer's allowance;

(m) Assistance to the visually impaired persons and access to education for pre-primary and primary level blind students through the Lois Lagesse Trust Fund;

(n) Presentation of news bulletin in Mauritian Sign Language in collaboration with the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation and Society for the Welfare of the Deaf, and

(o) two return airfares for parents from Rodrigues accompanying their wards attending SEN schools in Mauritius.

Regarding Rodrigues, I am informed that the Rodrigues Regional Assembly has organised several sensitisation campaigns and meetings with relevant stakeholders to ensure that persons with disabilities have improved access to public infrastructure, education, healthcare, social services, employment opportunities and community-based support programmes, taking into account the specific needs and context of the island.

Coming specifically to part (b) of the question, I wish to inform the House that on 28 November 2025, Government approved the setting up of an Inter-Ministerial Committee to be responsible to oversee, coordinate and monitor the effective implementation of the 73 recommendations made by the UNCRPD in its Concluding Observations –

(i) the formulation of a National Strategy and Action Plan on Disability 2026–2030;
(ii) recommended Constitutional Amendment(s), and
(iii) adhering to the Optional Protocol(s) of the UNCRPD.

Complete the harmonisation of all disability-related national legislation and policies and disability assessment criteria in line with the Convention, adopting a unified concept of disability in all professional and legal areas that reflects a shift from the medical model of disability to the human rights model.

The Inter-Ministerial Committee is chaired by me and comprises my colleagues from 12 relevant Ministries. The Terms of Reference include the formulation of a National Strategy and Action Plan on Disability, amongst others. The Inter-Ministerial Committee met on 16 December 2025.

In addition, a Steering Committee chaired by the Senior Chief Executive of my Ministry and comprising representatives of all the relevant Ministries and Departments, has been constituted to evaluate and monitor the performance of each Ministry concerned in respect of the realisation of the 73 recommendations. Ten thematic Sub-Committees have been established to drive the implementation of same within their respective areas of responsibility.

The Steering Committee met on 10 February and 24 March 2026. As at date, all ten thematic Sub-Committees have met and once all the reports of these Sub-Committees are received, the Steering Committee will meet again to finalise its findings and recommendations to be submitted to the Inter-Ministerial Committee.

As regards the development of the National Action Plan on Disability Inclusion, a request has been made to the Ministry of Finance (through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade) to seek technical assistance from international organisations and foreign/donor countries. Same is under process. The aforesaid plan will be devised in consultation with the Rodrigues Regional Assembly.

This Government is committed to ensuring that persons with disabilities enjoy equal access to infrastructure, employment and public services in both Mauritius and Rodrigues, in line with the Constitution, other prevailing legislations and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

DABYDIAL & AUZIM LANES, TRIOLET & MANDIRAM LANE, D'EPINAY – ROAD WORKS PROGRESS

(No. B/1141) Mr K. Rookny (Third Member for Pamplemousses & Triolet) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure whether, in regard to the proposed construction and/or asphalting of Dabydial Lane at 7ème Mille and of Auzim Lane at 8ème Mille, in Triolet and at Mandiram Lane, in D'Epinay, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Development Unit, information as to where matters stand.

Reply: I am informed that the three road projects were awarded under the current Framework Agreement for Roads to Square Deal Multipurpose Cooperative Society, being the lowest evaluated responsive bidder, as follows –

- Dabydial Lane, 7ème Mille, Triolet – awarded on 22 October 2025 for Rs1,628,337.96, inclusive of VAT;
- Auzim Lane, 8ème Mille, Triolet – awarded on 24 April 2024 for Rs1,356,592.33, inclusive of VAT, and
- Mandiram Lane, D'Epinay – awarded on 24 October 2025 for Rs2,562,914.29, inclusive of VAT.

The implementation of these projects encountered a number of unforeseen circumstances, mainly relating to utility works, site conditions and the availability of construction materials.

Dabydial Lane, 7ème Mille, Triolet

The project was delayed principally because the existing water supply network had to be upgraded following recommendations of the Central Water Authority. The supply of the required pipes and fittings was delayed, and the road alignment could only be finalised after the installation of the new water pipes.

Implementation was further delayed following a request from a resident carrying out major construction works adjacent to the road. During these works, part of the road collapsed and had to be reinstated after completion of the building substructure before road construction could safely resume.

Following the resolution of these issues, the contractor has been instructed to remobilise and is expected to commence works this week. Subject to weather conditions, the project should be completed within approximately four weeks. I am further informed that no Extension of Time with additional costs will arise under the Framework Agreement.

Auzim Lane, 8ème Mille, Triolet

Following the award of the contract, the contractor experienced shortages of construction materials on the local market, resulting in a delay in completing the works.

Subsequently, during the handing-over process, the District Council of Pamplemousses requested that minor water ponding identified by residents be rectified before taking over the project.

The contractor has already milled the affected road surface and will complete the final asphalt layer once the supply of bitumen stabilises. Completion is expected by the end of this month.

Mandiram Lane, D'Epinay

This project was delayed mainly because of –

(i) the late delivery of pipes and fittings required for the installation of a new water supply network by the Central Water Authority, and

(ii) the need to construct additional retaining walls, which became necessary after site clearance and could not reasonably have been foreseen during the initial design stage.

The retaining walls, kerbs, water pipe installation and crusher run works have now been completed. The remaining asphalt works will be carried out once bitumen supplies become available, and completion is expected by the end of this month.

I wish to reassure the House that the issues affecting these projects have largely been resolved. My Ministry is closely monitoring the contractor's progress to ensure that the remaining works are completed at the earliest opportunity.

SALAZIE, PONT BON DIEU ROAD – PROPOSED WIDENING

(No. B/1142) Mr R. Beechook (Second Member for Flacq and Bon Accueil) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure whether, in regard to proposed widening of the last stretch of the Pont Bon Dieu Road, in Salazie, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to where matters stand, indicating the expected completion date thereof

(Withdrawn)

ATHLETES WELFARE SCHEME – OBJECTIVES, ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA & PROCEDURES

(No. B/1143) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the Athletes Welfare Scheme, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to –

(a) the objectives thereof;
(b) the eligibility criteria to benefit thereunder;
(c) the procedures applicable therefor, and
(d) how the transparency and accountability thereof is preserved.

(Withdrawn)

ECOLOGICAL PROJECTS – GREEN & BLUE BONDS FINANCING – STRATEGY

(No. A/68) Dr. Ms B. Thannoo (Second Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) 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 issuance of green bonds for the financing of ecological projects, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Bank of Mauritius, information as to –

(a) the current and forthcoming projects that align with the green bond financing strategy, and
(b) whether a strategy has been devised to access international green bond financing based on the carbon sink capacity of sea grass, having regard to the need for the strict and rigorous ecological protection thereof across the Mauritian oceanic space.

Reply: A number of initiatives have been undertaken to establish an appropriate regulatory framework for the issuance of sustainable financing instruments, including green bonds.

These include –

(a) the publication by the Bank of Mauritius, in June 2021, of a Guide for the Issue of Sustainable Bonds in Mauritius, sets out the requirements and processes for issuing and listing sustainable bonds;

(b) the issuance by the Financial Services Commission, in December 2021, of Guidelines for the Issue of Corporate and Green Bonds in Mauritius, supplements the Guide of the Bank of Mauritius, and

(c) the establishment by the Ministry of Finance, in August 2023, of a Sustainable Finance Framework, under which Government may issue green, social, sustainability and thematic financing instruments.

With regard to part (a) of the question, the Climate Finance Unit has identified a number of high-impact public-sector climate projects in the areas of energy, water, agro-industry, blue economy, coastal adaptation, solid-waste management, transport and disaster management.

However, there is currently limited interest to finance these projects as well as other private sector projects through the issuance of green bonds. The reason for this is that such projects should meet the following criteria –

(a) they should be bankable and financially viable, capable of yielding a high return to attract potential investors;

(b) they should be of an adequate scale in order that they be floated on the international financing markets;

(c) the issuance of the bonds should preferably be made through a development partner with a high credit rating, so as to be able to secure financing at a reasonable cost, and

(d) they should include a significant grant component, together with appropriate de-risking measures.

At present, many green projects benefit from blended concessional financing from sources such as the Global Environment Facility, the Green Climate Fund and other international financial institutions. As such, financing is generally available at a cost below prevailing market rates, it may be more attractive than funding raised through green bonds.

Consequently, green bond financing has not, at this stage, been the preferred financing option for such projects.

As regards part (b) of the question, notwithstanding the above, Government is engaging with development partners that are able to provide significant grant support for ecological projects, together with appropriate de-risking instruments.

Such partnerships would enable Mauritius to take advantage of opportunities to mobilise green bond financing, where these arise.

In this context, a number of initiatives are under way.

I am informed that a Seagrass Assessment exercise was completed in 2024 by the Ministry of Agro-Industry, Food Security, Blue Economy and Fisheries, with the support of the United Nations Environment Programme.

Under the assessment –

(a) 80 per cent of the total seagrass area around Mauritius was mapped and verified through field surveys, and

(b) the carbon-storage capacity at five important seagrass meadows was determined.

Based on the assessment, the Albion Fisheries Research Centre has set up a long-term monitoring mechanism of these seagrass meadows. This reinforces measures already taken to protect the seagrass, such as designating seagrass as a protected marine ecosystem under the Fisheries Act.

A Blue Carbon Readiness Assessment is currently being undertaken to evaluate Mauritius' capacity to integrate blue-carbon ecosystems, including mangroves and seagrass, into its climate policies, financing framework and national development strategies.

The assessment is expected to strengthen institutional coordination, identify pilot projects for ecosystem restoration and carbon-credit generation, as well as support the development of a national roadmap for blue-carbon investment.

The findings of this assessment will facilitate the development of a strategy to tap on the appropriate international financing options, including green and blue bonds, based on the carbon-sink potential of seagrass for the financing of viable projects.

LIVESTOCK PRODUCTION – ANIMAL FEED SUBSIDIES – FUNDS DISBURSED & STRATEGY

(No. A/70) Dr. Ms B. Thannoo (Second Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Minister of Agro-Industry, Food Security, Blue Economy and Fisheries whether, in

regard to subsidies on animal feed granted to local breeders for livestock production, he will –

(a) for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the amount of funds disbursed in terms thereof since January 2025 to date, and
(b) state the strategy being envisaged by his Ministry for the support and promotion of the local production of hemp-based sustainable animal feed.

Reply: Subsidies on animal feed granted to local breeders for livestock production are managed by the Small Farmers Welfare Fund (SFWF). The aim of the scheme is to assist local breeders in reducing feed costs and improving livestock production efficiency. With regard to part (a) of the question, since January 2025 to date, an amount of Rs74,806,804.80 has been disbursed to livestock breeders.

As regards part (b) of the question, the Food and Agricultural Research and Extension Institute (FAREI) has informed that, at present, there is no local production of hemp-based sustainable animal feed.

In 2025, FAREI had conducted desk research on the use of hemp seed for animal feed, while research on industrial hemp held in 2022 was focused on fibre production. The findings demonstrated that industrial hemp has the potential to, *inter-alia*, contribute to –

(i) diversification of agricultural production systems;
(ii) reduced dependence on imported protein feed ingredients;
(iii) increased resource-use efficiency through the utilisation of fibre, seeds, biomass and processing residues, and
(iv) development of climate-smart and circular agricultural systems.

The legislative and regulatory framework, the cost-benefit analysis comparing local production with imported feed, investment costs as well as the coordinated approach involving research institutions regarding the hemp-based sustainable animal feed will eventually be assessed by my Ministry.

SURVEYED & REHABILITATED BOREHOLES – LOCATION LIST

(No. A/71) Dr. Ms B. Thannoo (Second Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the recently surveyed

and rehabilitated bore holes, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain and table information from the Central Water Authority as to the respective locations thereof.

Reply: I am informed by the Central Water Authority that a list of twenty regions was submitted to the Water Resources Commission (WRC) for hydrogeological investigations to identify suitable sites and define the pegging points for prospective boreholes in the regions as follows –

(a) Bras D'Eau;
(b) Endemika;
(c) L'Esperance Trebuchet;
(d) Etoile;
(e) Belle Rose Clemencia;
(f) Petite Retraite;
(g) Balisson;
(h) MDMT Reservoir;
(i) Riviere Dragon;
(j) Les Marres (3 sites);
(k) Valriche;
(l) Trois Mamelles (3 sites);
(m) Trianon;
(n) Alma;
(o) L'Esperance Quartier Militaire, and
(p) Albion/Bosquet.

The WRC has, in June 2026, awarded a contract for the drilling of boreholes at the following locations –

(a) Endemika;
(b) L'Espérance Trébuchet;
(c) Belle Rose Clemencia;
(d) Petite Retraite;
(e) MDMT Reservoir;
(f) Les Marres, and
(g) Trianon.