



EIGHTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

(UNREVISED)

FIRST SESSION

FRIDAY 07 FEBRUARY 2025

CONTENTS

ANNOUNCEMENTS

PAPERS LAID

QUESTION (*Oral*)

MOTION – S.O. 10(2)

BILL (*Public*)

MOTION – Government Programme 2025-2029

ADJOURNMENT

THE CABINET

(Formed by Dr. the Hon. Navinchandra Ramgoolam)

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

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

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MAURITIUS

Eighth National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 03 of 2025

Sitting of Friday 07 February 2025

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

The National Anthem was played

(Madam Speaker in the Chair)

ANNOUNCEMENTS
S.O. 17(2) – ORDER OF BUSINESS

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, I have two points to raise at the beginning of today's Sitting.

By virtue of Standing Order 17(2), I have the power to allow the Order of Business, set out on the Order Paper, to be altered in respect of any particular Sitting.

After consultation, I have, therefore, decided that for today, the Second Reading of the Public Bill will be taken as item 6 before we resume the debate on the Motion on the Government Programme.

S.O. 39(9) & S.O. 40(1) & (2) – DEBATE & SPEECH RULE

The second point, hon. Members, I would like to tell you is that it is now a little bit more than two months since we all were sworn in, including myself as Speaker of this Assembly. And I suppose we do not all, including me, master all the proceedings of the Assembly; the intricacies of the procedures of our Assembly.

One principle, however, that I do know – I am sure that most of you know; maybe some of the newcomers do not yet realise it – is that a Member is not allowed to read a statement when we are debating an issue, including on the Motion, and it will be the same for the Bill, except the person who has been chosen to make the main speech, like the hon. Second Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka did. Of course, I did not stop her because the Standing Order is quite clear on this.

Let me, myself, read. You can read when you are citing. So, I am going to read because I am going to cite you Standing Order 39(9) –

“A Member shall not read his or her speech, but he or she may read extracts from written or printed papers in support of his or her arguments and may refresh his or her memory by reference to notes. Reading of speeches is permitted for opening addresses (...).”

It was in this spirit, therefore, that I allowed the hon. Second Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka to read her speech. But several Members, I think, tended to read their prepared speeches. Of course, it is always easier.

I also want to draw your attention to Standing Order 40(1) and (2).

“40. (1) A Member shall confine his or her observations to the subject [matter] under discussion and may not introduce matter not relevant thereto.”

I prefer to say it now rather than stop you.

“40. (2) It shall be out of order to use unbecoming words or expressions or to use offensive language about Members of the Assembly [on whichever side].”

So, I hope, hon. Members, that you will help me in maintaining the high standard expected of such an august Assembly as ours. I promised you when I was sworn in that I would uphold the dignity of the National Assembly. Remember also that children and adults are watching us both from Mauritius and from abroad.

Thank you very much.

PAPERS LAID

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

A. Prime Minister's Office

Ministry of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications

Ministry of Finance

Ministry for Rodrigues and Outer Islands

The Annual Report and Audited Report of the Consolidated and Separate Financial Statements of the Bank of Mauritius for the year ended 30 June 2024.

B. Ministry of Education and Human Resource

- a) The Annual Report and Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Mauritius Institute of Education for the year ended 30 June 2023.
- b) The Annual Report and Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate for the year ended 30 June 2023.
- c) The Annual Report and Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Rabindranath Tagore Institute for the year ended 30 June 2023.
- d) The Annual Report and Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Mahatma Gandhi Institute for the year ended 30 June 2023.

ORAL ANSWER TO QUESTION

Madam Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition!

ROAD ACCIDENTS & FATALITIES – SPEED CAMERAS – MEASURES

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr G. Lesjongard) (*by Private Notice*) asked the Minister of Land Transport whether, in regard to road safety and the current situation on our roads, he will –

- (a) for the benefit of the House, obtain for the period 01 January 2025 to date, information as to the number of –
 - (i) reported cases of road accidents, indicating the types of vehicles involved and the number of fatalities, and
 - (ii) contraventions issued, indicating in each case the offences committed;
- (b) state the number of speed cameras currently not operational, indicating the regions thereof, and
- (c) state the measures presently being taken to address the increasing number of road accidents.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Madam Speaker, I wish to thank the hon. Leader of the Opposition for this PNQ which provides me the opportunity to address the House on road safety, which is a subject of national concern.

Since this Government has taken office, the issue of road safety, including road accidents, is central to its priorities.

Madam Speaker, as announced in the Government Programme 2025-2029, Government will come up with a 20-year strategic Master Plan which will provide a strategic orientation for the land transport sector. The Master Plan will also include walkability into the country's larger mobility strategy that connects seamlessly with public and private transport, and cycling infrastructure. This will reduce dependency on vehicles and, therefore, lessen the risks of road accidents.

As Government expands and modernises the land transport, it will also ensure greater road safety by introducing a Graduated Licensing System, which was announced in the

Government Programme, undertaking projects to eliminate risk-prone spots, and enhancing enforcement and road safety education. I shall come up to these issues later on in my reply.

Madam Speaker, if we are in the current situation today, it is because of the contradictory policies of the previous Government. In line with the UN Decade of Action, a National Road Safety Strategy 2016-2025 with the objective of decreasing the number of fatal and serious accident by 50% had been adopted, but the target had not been met. It is an obvious failure of the previous Government. I have already caused for a new 5-year National Road Safety Strategy to be elaborated and it will be finalised during the course of this year.

Why I say contradictory policies, Madam Speaker, is that over the last 10 years, there was a complete relaxation and leniency on enforcement on road safety with very negative impact on our roads and road users. We are today observing havoc on our roads, and I must say, the hon. Leader of Opposition who is an influential Member of the then Government – was and is still in his party – that his party did nothing much to improve on road safety.

Over the last 10 years, the number of fatalities was 1,482, and this is alarming for our country. One death is too many.

The blunder committed by the previous Government is that it cancelled the ‘Penalty Point System’ (*Permis à Points*) in the wake of the promises made in the electoral campaign 2014. The cancellation was surely for political reasons, without any rationale and solid scientific reasons.

Incidentally, one former Police Officer, highly knowledgeable in the field of road safety, Mr B. M. – he is a public figure, Mr Barlen Munusami – publicly stated yesterday on Radio Plus that *Permis à Points* introduced in 2013 by the Labour Government led to a positive result in terms of improved behaviour of drivers and motorcyclists.

I wish to inform the House that with the *Permis à Points* System, the number of fatal road accidents decreased from 156 in year 2012 to 136 in 2013, showing the effectiveness of that system. With the *Permis à Points* System, there was a culture of cautious driving on our roads by all vehicle drivers, including motorcyclists.

Madam Speaker, with the abolition of the *Permis à Points*, which led to a lot of reckless driving on our roads, the previous Government introduced the Cumulative Road Traffic Offence (CRTO) with only 11 offences. The number of offences were increased to 23

in June 2024. However, my predecessor did not cause the proclamation thereof and he has to provide an explanation to the people of Mauritius on this shortcoming.

I can only guess that the reason for this, yet political, that is, not to lose popularity at the eve of the last general elections, therefore putting the life of people at risk on our roads just like the cancellation of the *Permis à Points*.

Not promulgating the penalties for auto and motorcycle for their safety has rendered the public more vulnerable on our roads. These include failing to wear high visibility clothing, failing to overtake traffic on the right, riding a motorcycle abreast of another two-wheel vehicle, very valid proposition, but, unfortunately, not implemented due to political reasons and the fear of losing popularity at the eve of general elections, like I just mentioned earlier.

Madam Speaker, in regard to part (a)(i) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that there were 579 road accidents, including 14 fatal road crashes, causing 17 deaths for period starting 01 January 2025 to 06 February 2025. The types of vehicles involved in the fatal accidents are 9 cars, 6 heavy goods vehicles, 1 bus, and 11 two-wheelers.

Regarding part (a)(ii) of the question, I am informed that the Commissioner of Police is compiling the number of contraventions issued for the period 01 January 2025 till date and along the categories of offences. The information will also be tabled. However, I can provide figures for the last day of 2024, that is, 31 December 2024, and the first day of 2025, meaning 01 January 2025, whereby there were 441 contraventions, out of which 17 were for drink driving and 150 for over-speeding.

Drink and, particularly, drug driving is a matter of concern and the hon. Prime Minister has recently last Tuesday replied on the drug driving aspect in his reply to PQ B/3 of hon. Quirin, during which he provided information on road accidents from 01 January 2024 to date and measures being taken by the Police thereto, including number of fatal road accidents and measures being taken by the Police to deter the use of drugs by drivers.

Madam Speaker, as regards part (b) of the question, I am informed that there is a network of 63 Fixed Speed Cameras installed on our roads around the island, out of which 4 out of the 63 are currently not operational at the following locations: St Julien, Calebasses on Motorway M2, Brisée Verdière, and Case Noyale. I am informed by the TMRSU that not a single new speed camera was procured by the previous Government. All they did was to

relocate four existing cameras, and have four dummy sites instead – dummy cameras. I wonder whether in putting this question, the Leader of the Opposition was even aware about these facts.

Coming back to these 4 defective speed cameras, these have been sent to the Manufacturer Truvelo UK at the end of January 2025 for diagnosis and repairs, and are expected to be operational by April 2025.

It is a matter of great concern, Madam Speaker, that immediately after the 2014 General Elections and as promised, the MSM-led Government switched off all the speed cameras over a period of 7 months. This was indeed a reckless and irresponsible decision of putting lives of people of our population at risk.

Madam Speaker, I wish to inform the House that the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit (TMRSU) of my Ministry has embarked onto a consultancy exercise that seeks to revamp the whole speed camera system whereby a new Photographic and Video Camera Detection System will be implemented as a matter of priority for enhancement of road safety violations in Mauritius being given that the speed camera system dates back to more than 10 years, and according to the TMRSU, is no more responsive to the current international road safety requirements. The whole system will be holistically looked into and not on a piecemeal approach, and will cover other offences like red light violations, and non-wearing of seat belts apart from speeding.

Madam Speaker, with regard to part (c) of the question, I wish to inform the House of the measures being taken by my Ministry to address the rising number of road accidents –

- (i) Immediate review of road safety policies with focus on reduction of road accidents.
- (ii) Assistance will be sought from the UN Secretary General's Special Envoy for Road Safety, Mr Jean Todt, to improve our road safety. This is an initiative of the hon. Prime Minister, in due course.
- (iii) Conversion of other highways from single to dual carriage way where needed as was the case for the La Vigie to SSR International airport implemented under the leadership of our Prime Minister. The House and the population will recall how this road was prone to accidents before its conversion.
- (iv) Adoption of a global approach to road safety instead of the piecemeal approach as carried out by the previous Government.

- (v) Revisiting the whole system of granting of driving licenses by the Police to make our drivers more skilful and responsible on the road by introducing a Graduated Licensing System aiming to provide drivers and riders with specific knowledge, skills and driving experience gradually over time in a mix of training environment. The Graduated Licensing System will comprise four phases, namely a pre-licensing phase, a learner licensing phase, a probationary licensing phase, and a post-licensing phase.
- (vi) Reconstitution of the Board of the National Road Safety Council with experts in the field of road safety. I am informed that during his tenure of office, the previous Chairperson under the previous government, Mr A. J., a well-known person, only nine meetings were held. And he did not succeed to have the support of his members, and meetings had to be cancelled time and again due to lack of quorum. Today, we are paying a high price for such inaction.
- (vii) Finalisation of the curriculum for implementing Road Safety Education in secondary schools. The programme will be launched shortly. In the same vein, the Ministry of Education and Human Resource has been requested to undertake an assessment on the road safety knowledge imparted to primary schools' students for the cohort of Grade 6 this year.
- (viii) Elimination of the 45 accident blackspot locations in the country through appropriate re-engineering works over the next 5 years. Some additional 300 kilometres of road will be rehabilitated to enhance road safety standards as these roads are hazardous to road users.
- (ix) Working together with the Traffic Branch of the Police to enhance enforcement on road, supported by the proposed new "*Permis à Points*" system.
- (x) Revamping of the TMRSU into a National Road Safety and Traffic Lead Agency, a dedicated institution for road safety that will implement national strategies for reduction of road-related fatalities.
- (xi) Modelling of traffic jams throughout the country so as to propose remedial measures, which will enhance traffic flow and in the same vein, road safety. The support of drone technology will be used to make the modelling more effective.
- (xii) Carrying out of an extensive survey island-wide with a view to assessing the state of the road traffic signs, and road markings. Where needed, we would reinstate all road signs and marking. This was neglected over the last 10 years. I have time

and again been receiving complaints from my colleague MPs to go to their individual constituencies.

- (xiii) Increasing of penalties for road traffic offences; those not wearing retroreflective vests will be taken to the Police Station concerned – this is a proposition – and will be only allowed back on the road if the rider obtains the prescribed retroreflective vest. I believe amendment will have to be made to the law.
- (xiv) Introduction of legislation to make it compulsory to use child restraint devices in vehicles where applicable.

And last but not least,

- (xv) Working together with the Ministry of Education and the MITD for the revamping of the Professional Driving Training Centre into a modern one with international norms.

Madam Speaker, I launched a sensitisation campaign on drink and drug driving on 24 December 2024 ahead of the festive season. I have personally participated in a crackdown operation conducted by the Traffic Branch of the Police in Grand Baie, known for being a high-risk area in view of being a major tourist and entertainment locality. I also participated in the distribution of retroreflective vests to sensitise motorists' riders. Comprehensive programmes to improve road user behaviour would be developed and implemented, along with public awareness and education to increase seat belt and helmet wearing and to discourage speeding, among others.

This Government, Madam Speaker, is much more committed than the previous one to bringing necessary changes to enhance road safety and build a culture of responsible driving so as to manage road accidents in the country and in this respect, the hon. Prime Minister has stated that foreign expertise will be sought when needed.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Thank you, hon. Minister. Hon. Leader of the Opposition!

Mr Lesjongard: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I thank the hon. Minister for his reply. This is a matter of national interest, and the number of fatal accidents since the beginning of this year is quite alarming. Can I ask the hon. Minister to inform the House whether he has chaired a crisis committee with all stakeholders to address this issue of road accidents, and if yes, what has been the outcome?

Mr Osman Mahomed: Madam Speaker, I have had meetings with many stakeholders, including the Police which is the main one, but like I said earlier, the National Road Safety Council is being constituted, and once constituted with the right person at its head, unlike the previous one who chaired only nine meetings in his tenure of office, we will crack the way forward on this very important issue.

Madam Speaker: Thank you. Hon. Leader of the Opposition!

Mr Lesjongard: My question was whether the hon. Minister himself chaired a crisis committee.

With regard to illegal rally of motorcycles, I believe the hon. Minister is aware that in certain regions of the country, particularly at night, there are some illegal rallies taking place, and I can mention two places. I know one is within the Jin Fei area and the second one is very often along the highway between Roche-Bois and Terre Rouge. Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether deterrent measures have been put in place since the month of December...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: What's going on?

Mr Lesjongard: ... and the outcome thereof, and what measures are being taken to prevent these illegal rallies at night?

Mr Osman Mahomed: Madam Speaker, this is really a problem, and it is not new. It has been going on for quite some time now. The law has been amended – as the hon. Leader of the Opposition as former Minister would know himself – in June 2024. But like I said earlier, it was never proclaimed. So, this is the issue. We undertake to do it, Madam Speaker.

Mr Lesjongard: I believe the Minister must be aware that our youngsters participate in these illegal rallies because there are huge sums of money involved, and most of these rallies are sometimes organised by drug lords, Madam Speaker. Is his Ministry looking into that issue also, and what measures are being taken to prevent that?

Mr Osman Mahomed: Yes, I believe the Police are doing the needful.

Madam Speaker: I cannot hear you!

Mr Osman Mahomed: I believe the Police are doing the needful on this. I will again talk to the Commissioner of Police. But, like I said, the Achilles' heel in this whole system is that currently, the Police are not empowered by the law to crack down on these illegal

operations because my predecessor never promulgated the law. I have to stress on this point because the previous Government stroke a balance between popularity and road safety, and popularity prevailed over road safety! This is why we are in this sorrow state of affairs today!

Mr Lesjongard: Madam Speaker, his predecessor is no more sitting in that office. He is sitting in that office now!

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: You have to bear all the consequences!

(Interruptions)

Mr Lesjongard: Madam Speaker, may I ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware that most of those vehicles that participate in those rallies have their engines modified to increase their performance? Can the hon. Minister inform the House what operations are being carried out by his Ministry to crack down those involved in these illegal modifications of those engines?

Madam Speaker: Okay!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Now, this is an important question. For this one, a Cartesian approach is warranted, Madam Speaker. Do you know why? We cannot possibly control every car and motorcycle that is being modified in the country. But the Police will have to check on the garages that are doing these modifications. If they are doing it illegally, which I am sure they are, because permits are required for these kinds of modification, then we will definitely take actions against them. So, a Cartesian approach rather than an individual approach is warranted in this case.

Madam Speaker: Yes!

Mr Lesjongard: Thank you, Madam Speaker. In his reply, the hon. Minister mentioned that his Ministry is reviewing the National Road Safety Strategy. Can we know what are the main components that would be reviewed in the National Road Safety Strategy?

Mr Osman Mahomed: In fact, there are a lot of issues to be looked into. I had a meeting with the UN office here. A holistic approach will have to be taken in this respect. So, the issue that will have to be taken into consideration is very technical. It is a very technical ministry, hon. Lesjongard, and I have been in this office for two and a half months.

I will give you the points exactly. So, we will look at the three E's which are important in this respect –

- 1) Engineering our roads and the vehicles, as he has just mentioned.
- 2) Enforcement by the Police, and
- 3) Perpetual Education. This is important because our kids, right from school, have to be taught road safety principles.

Sensitisation is also one of them. We have done it last December. Post-crash care is also important.

So, among all the issues that we have to take on board in this Strategy, I have listed a few, as you have requested for.

Madam Speaker: Hon. A. Duval!

Mr A. Duval: Thank you, Madam Speaker. We have seen a gradual degradation...

Madam Speaker: I cannot hear! I cannot hear!

Mr A. Duval: ... particularly with regard to motorcycles not wearing high visibility vests, not wearing helmets and, of course, modified exhausts, especially in coastal villages. We have seen that Police posted at local police stations are now powerless and, in fact, have given up on enforcing road traffic. Can I ask the hon. Minister whether he will consult with the Commissioner of Police and ensure that specialised police units are posted from time to time along these places to ensure that those...

An hon. Member: *Bizin pa bwar kondir!*

(Interruptions)

Mr A. Duval: ... persons who are usually... *al demann laba ...*

(Interruptions)

... who are usually...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Member, please!

(Interruptions)

Mr A. Duval: ...are usually...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Let him...

Mr A. Duval: ... who are usually people who are on record...

(Interruptions)

... who post bail, etc., that he takes them to task. This is a major issue.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Madam Speaker, the main causes of accidents are the following: ...

The Deputy Prime Minister: Happy hours!

Mr Osman Mahomed: ... reckless driving and not respecting the law.

Madam Speaker: I still cannot hear you very well!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Reckless driving is the first one.

Madam Speaker: Yes!

Mr Osman Mahomed: And this includes speeding, drink and drug driving, and the use of mobile phones, many times in the car and on motorbikes. Madam Speaker, I have seen a mother carrying her child on a motorbike without a helmet and while the mother was on the phone!

Madam Speaker: Oh my God!

Mr Osman Mahomed: These things happen. So, the Member has mentioned reflective jacket. I have mentioned in my initial reply that we intend to change the law because many times, after 6 o'clock at night, when it is mandatory to wear a reflective jacket, motorcyclists do not wear it because they do not seem to bother. Sometimes, the jacket is with them; sometimes, it is not. So, we are proposing to fine them, as it is being done right now, perhaps even more. And if they are not in possession of a jacket, to have their motorcycles escorted to the police station and they come and take it once they come there with their reflective jacket. This will make them think twice before embarking on their ride without a jacket.

The hon. Member has mentioned about illegal modifications of motorbikes. The Cartesian approach will apply to this one as well at the garages instead of individual motorbikes.

Madam Speaker: The hon. Member over there, please!

Mr Ramdass: A number of road accidents are caused by the fact that some traffic lights in strategic parts of the island have not been operational for months now. I can personally cite two examples: one at Seegoolam Tohul Government School in Rose Belle, and the second one near Pont-Colville Mosque in Nouvelle France. Will the hon. Minister consider the advisability of having the TMRSU carrying out an audit of those traffic lights which are not operational, and see to it that the needful is done for them to be fixed?

Madam Speaker: We had issues of traffic lights already. Please!

Mr Osman Mahomed: I will just remind the hon. Member what I have said to hon. Ms Anquetil. We are aware of all the traffic lights that are faulty. The Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit has the list. But the problem is, again, I am told my predecessor has consumed all the budget there was before my arrival at the Ministry. So, I have to make a fresh application for funds, and this is being done.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Allow the Minister to speak!

Mr Osman Mahomed: And this is being done in the interest of road safety. But I must say that many times, those traffic lights are faulty because, like I explained the other day, the trunking underneath the road is jammed.

Madam Speaker: It is defective.

Mr Osman Mahomed: It is defective, and is full of mud for poor work that was done in the past. Civil works are warranted and it is very costly to replace those cables that are giving false signals or no signals at times.

Madam Speaker: Okay! Very important question. Hon. Leader of the Opposition, your last question and then...

Mr Lesjongard: Last?

Madam Speaker: Well, three minutes left!

Mr Lesjongard: Let me get to the Graduated Licensing System. The hon. Minister talked of reintroduction of that System. Will the hon. Minister assure the House that proper consultations will be held with relevant stakeholders, that is, lorry drivers, taxi drivers, bus conductors, before the introduction of the System?

Mr Osman Mahomed: As a matter of fact, Madam Speaker, the whole National Road Safety Strategy and Action Plan will be implemented in a bottom-up approach. Therefore, fully participative.

Madam Speaker: Thank you for your brief answer. *Peut-être qu'il y a encore une minute.*

(Interruptions)

Yes, let the hon. Leader of the Opposition!

The Deputy Prime Minister: *La aussi zot laguer ?*

Mr Lesjongard: Thank you, Madam Speaker. May I ask the hon. Minister whether he can give due consideration to the use of safe city cameras to control traffic offenders?

Mr Osman Mahomed: Like I said earlier, what I can reply for sure is that the new speed cameras that will be implemented – because the last ones are more than 10 years old and maybe need to be revised – will comprise these features. But whether the safe city cameras can have these features is a very technical question. I can take it up with the Commissioner of Police.

Madam Speaker: Thank you. Last minute! I have one last minute, yes.

Mr Beehook: The Minister has spoken about the modification of vehicles, engines, etc., which gives extra power to vehicles. Will the hon. Minister please consider the possibility of fitness centres having the adequate equipment to monitor the horsepower of vehicles which are modified, which can be deprived of their fitness certificates, and these vehicles are the ones that are being used for those illegal rallies and causing accidents?

Mr Osman Mahomed: Yes, the law will have to be modified. As it is now, only seven years old vehicles go to fitness centres. But then, those modifiers of vehicles are very clever. Before they go, they will remove the system for them not to be penalised. That is why I favour the Cartesian approach: going at the garages that do the modification, and pinch them there itself.

Mr Lesjongard: Can I have one last question, Madam Speaker?

Madam Speaker: Time is up! Time is up! I have been very patient and very fair. I think we should stop because we have got a very long night ahead, not to say morning.

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

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

The Deputy Prime Minister rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

PUBLIC BILL

Second Reading

THE FINANCIAL CRIMES COMMISSION (MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS)**BILL**

(NO. I OF 2025)

Order for Second Reading read.

(3.41 p.m.)

The Attorney General (Mr G. P. C. Glover): Madam Speaker, I beg to move that the Financial Crimes Commission (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill (No. I of 2025) be read a second time.

Madam Speaker, today, I rise before this august Assembly to present the Financial Crimes Commission (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill (No. 1 of 2025), a measure that is as much about legal rectification as it is about the restoration of our nation's fundamental principles: democracy, constitutionalism, and the rule of law.

This Bill is not merely a technical amendment to an errant statute. It is an unequivocal statement of the new Government, elected by the people with a mandate to restore democracy, that it will not tolerate legal aberrations that corrode the integrity of our constitutional order. What we seek to do today is re-establish the proper balance between the branches of Government, fortify the sanctity of our institutions, and reverse the legislative vandalism that was perpetrated in a manner both reckless and unconstitutional.

Hon. Members will remember and recall that when the Financial Crimes Commission Act 2023 was passed last year, it was widely criticised for purporting to confer upon the FCC

powers that directly violated the Constitution. Powers that encroached upon the prosecutorial powers and role that our supreme law reserves for the Director of Public Prosecutions and for the Director alone. This was no oversight, nor was it a mere error of judgment; it was a deliberate and calculated attack on the prosecutorial independence enshrined in our legal system. It was a move to open our criminal justice system to insidious political interference.

Indeed, I can today inform the House that the version of that Bill that was enacted in 2023 was not the version that had been submitted to the Director of Public Prosecutions for his initial views. It was not the version that the DPP had agreed to. No, it was a version that was further tweaked and twisted and to which the learned DPP raised serious constitutional objections.

Thus, Madam Speaker, the DPP himself had no choice but to seek constitutional redress before the Supreme Court, challenging this blatant encroachment upon his domain. And here, we must pause to reflect on a truth that too often is neglected these days, that is the law can only function effectively if those entrusted with its enforcement uphold their duties with integrity and independence. The Constitution provides, Madam Speaker, for several independent institutions, from the Commissioner of Police to the Public Service Commission. But how many of these actually operate independently at all times? To his credit, the learned DPP acted to defend the role attributed to him by our supreme law. And in undermining the DPP, the previous Government did not merely violate the Constitution; they committed a graver offence: they undermined the very foundation of justice.

Madam Speaker, let me be absolutely clear on why this is so egregious. Our democracy is built upon the principle of separation of powers. Those who make the laws must never be the ones who administer justice. This principle is deeply ingrained in our national ethos, forged through centuries of democratic struggle to end the absolutism of despots, where rulers once held unchecked power as judge, jury, and executions.

Madam Speaker, one does not need to have read Montesquieu to grasp that something would be profoundly wrong if, tomorrow, a minister were to preside over cases at the Intermediate Court or if a prime minister were to interfere in the conduct of a judicial enquiry.

However, some in this country still fail to grasp the danger of placing prosecutorial powers under political control. They argue, rather simplistically, I must say: “Isn’t the DPP part of the executive in any case? What is the problem if suspected offenders are brought to justice through Government action?” they asked. “After all, independent judges and magistrates will ultimately decide the case...”.

These are probably the same persons who, in recent weeks, have been demanding why has the new Government not yet arrested X and Y? Why has X or Y not been prosecuted for this or that offence?

To them, I say this: this is not how our system works. If it were, and the Government had the power to direct criminal investigations and prosecutions, two grave risks would threaten our nation –

- Firstly, individuals could be targeted for prosecution based on political motives. And we have all witnessed, have we not, in recent years, how opposition figures and I will not name them here, have been subjected to a barrage of provisional charges only for these to be struck down by the courts, months or years later, due to lack of evidence.
- Secondly, members of the Government, or their associates, could be shielded from scrutiny and prosecution. Again, we have seen how investigations into prominent figures of the previous administration have stagnated to the point of near abandonment.

Madam Speaker, as Attorney General, I do not stand before this House to engage in partisan politics, let it be very clear. But I would be derelict in my duty as the Government’s chief legal adviser if I failed to highlight these serious transgressions and to put forward how we can ensure they are never, never repeated.

To avoid these two dangers I have just highlighted, it is crucial that the Government truly allows the police, the FCC and the DPP to operate independently. If you appoint the right people in the right place, give them the means and the freedom to do their job, then and only then can you expect enquiries to be fair, irrespective of who is being investigated; it is only then that you can have prosecutions based solely on legal considerations, evidence, and the public interest; it is only then that you can have the rule of law instead of the dominion of men. This, Madam Speaker, is the difference between justice and vengeance. And this is what

the framers of our Constitution had in mind, Madam Speaker, and perhaps here a little history at this juncture, would not go amiss.

Prior to independence, at the Mauritius Constitutional Review Conference of 1961, it was decided that the Director of Public Prosecutions should be “solely responsible, in his discretion, for the initiation, conduct, and discontinuance of prosecutions”. He would be “independent of the Attorney General”, who would remain the legal adviser of Government and a Member of Cabinet. This put an end, in fact, to the overlap that had existed until then, and which stemmed from the colonial-era office of “Procureur and Advocate General”. The post of DPP was thus formally established through the Mauritius (Constitution) Order of 1964. It’s very *raison d’être*, from the outset, Madam Speaker, was therefore to establish a clear and inviolable separation between two fundamental functions of the State: governing and prosecuting.

That same year, Madam Speaker, Professor de Smith argued in his Constitutional Commissioner’s Report that the DPP should be given judicial security of tenure, as was already the case in other jurisdictions. In 1965, at the Constitutional Conference at Lancaster House in London, the principle of prosecutorial independence was further reinforced, and it was decided that only a person qualified to be a Judge of the Supreme Court could act as a DPP. After independence, these provisions were retained and enshrined in section 72 of our Constitution which provides that the DPP is appointed by the Judicial and Legal Service Commission, ensuring insulation from executive interference.

Section 72(3) of the Constitution confers upon the DPP the power to institute, take over, and discontinue any criminal proceedings before any Court of Law. The framers of our Supreme Law added, at subsection 6 thereof, that –

"In the exercise of the powers conferred upon him by this section, the Director of Public Prosecutions shall not be subject to the direction or control of any other person or authority."

This is why, in his plaint for constitutional relief, the learned DPP described his position as being “the apex prosecution authority”.

The independence of the DPP, Madam Speaker, has been consistently upheld by our Courts. For instance, in 1994, a full Bench of the Supreme Court observed that –

“A distinguishing feature of our Constitution, like that of some of the new Commonwealth countries, is the splitting of executive functions between what one might call political Executive which remains answerable to Parliament and an independent non-political Executive, in specific matters, consisting of, amongst others, the Director of Public Prosecutions, the Service Commissions and the Electoral Supervisory Commission, which are not answerable to Parliament. The purpose of this device [the learned Judges continued] institutionally was to insulate certain areas in the conduct of public affairs from political responsibility and control, thus ensuring their autonomy and independence.”

Similarly, our Law Reform Commission, in a 2009 report, described the importance of safeguarding “the stream of criminal justice from being polluted by the inflow of noxious political contamination” by segregating “the process of prosecution entirely from general political considerations.”

And for years, statutes have respected this principle, including when the Independent Commission against Corruption was set up, allowing the DPP to remain truly the apex prosecuting body of our country. That is, until the infamous, ill-reputed Financial Crimes Commission Act of 2023.

Madam Speaker, the Explanatory Memorandum of the FCC Bill of 2023, explicitly declared that the Financial Crimes Commission was to be “the apex agency in Mauritius to detect, investigate and prosecute financial crimes and any other ancillary offence connected thereto”. That Act therefore provided at its section 4(3), that –

“(...) subject to this act, the Commission shall, in the discharge of its functions and exercise of its powers, not be under the direction and control of any person or authority”.

A similar provision is made at section 11(3) for the role of Director-General of the Commission. Here already, we see how a law passed by a simple majority aims to displace the DPP’s constitutional prerogative under the section 72 of the Constitution.

This purported apex prosecuting authorities to be, as per sections 7(3) and sections 10(1) of the Act, composed of Commissioners and a Director-General – and this is where the important bit comes in – appointed by the President, acting in accordance with the advice of the Prime Minister after the latter had consulted with the Leader of the Opposition.

The terms and conditions of these appointments are to be determined by the Prime Minister alone. The possibility of political influence and considerations which endure during the tenure of the appointees is thus clear. The more so as the Constitution allows, at its section 113(4), for anyone appointed in such a way, to –

“(…) be required to vacate their office at any time after a general election held after their appointment”.

Madam Speaker, of course, a responsible and honest Government would appoint to the FCC, persons of integrity and moral independence. Of course, such a Government would not try to interfere in the work of the Commission through secret backchannels. And of course, appointees do not necessarily neglect their duties under the law to please those who put them in place but, and this is the big but, Madam Speaker, one does not build a ship for fair weather. It is the storm that must be provided for.

The same goes for our institutions and our laws. Their good functioning cannot depend only on the hope that morality and duty will prevail. There must be checks and balances to prevent any temptation to slide into the arbitrary. There must be safeguards for the day when the unscrupulous try to abuse the system. Which is why, as we maintain the mode of appointment of the FCC for the time being, and I stress, for the time being only, it is critical that the DPP whose appointment is quasi-judicial, exercises scrutiny over the prosecuting function of the FCC.

Unfortunately, Madam Speaker, this is not what the FCC Act of 2023 catered for. As the law stands today, after its investigations, the FCC has the power to institute criminal proceedings. Section 142(1) of the Act does pay a lip service to the constitutional role of the DPP, by stating that the FCC’s ability to initiate prosecutions is without prejudice to the DPP’s powers under section 72 of the Constitution. As such, it is said the DPP can discontinue prosecution in any criminal case which the FCC has lodged. That is what was advocated by the Bill’s supporters in 2023. But My Lady, the fact of the matter – Madam Speaker, do excuse me. I must confess, I have just been appearing before the Supreme Court, so I slipped. I am very sorry, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: That is alright.

Mr Glover: But when the DPP is not put in presence of the file which led to the prosecution, how could the DPP, in fact, exercise his powers under section 72 and step in to actually stop the prosecution? It would obviously not be possible.

You see, Madam Speaker, the Prevention of Corruption Act of 2002 compelled the ICAC to submit a report to the DPP after the conclusion of an investigation. Such a report had to contain all material information, statements and documents uncovered during the enquiry, as well as a description of any evidence which was still in the ICAC's custody and it had to be accompanied by the ICAC's recommendations. This allowed for the DPP to be properly informed of the outcome of the investigation and to be able to assess whether criminal proceedings were warranted or not. And, he had the final say on the matter.

In stark contrast, Madam Speaker, there is no such provision in the FCC Act. There is no report to be sent to the DPP. He therefore cannot be in a position to appreciate whether a prosecution initiated by the FCC is justified or not. In the absence of any information on a case, how can the DPP exercise his ability to discontinue proceedings, or to step in to continue them, as the Constitution gives him the power to do? His role under the section 72 of our Supreme Law is thus severely curtailed to say the least.

Now, the aberrations, Madam Speaker, do not stop here. As at today, if the FCC decides that it will not prosecute, because there no report to the DPP, the latter may never know whether proceedings ought in fact to have been initiated. In fact, none of us would know. He may not even know that an investigation has been stopped. No one would know! Not even us! Because there no obligation on the FCC to inform him. Again, the exercise of his powers under the Constitution was thus neutralised.

The FCC Act does not stop here and it goes a step further in its blatant disregard for the Constitution. Its section 150, Madam Speaker, allows the Commission to compound any offence under the Act or under the Declarations of the Assets Act. That is, if an investigation has uncovered an offence, the Commission has the discretion to grant to the offender the possibility of paying a fine, of an amount not exceeding the maximum penalty. When this happens, there can be no criminal proceedings thereafter with respect to that offence. In other words, the FCC has the authority to offer to someone, against the payment of a fine, protection from prosecution, conviction before our courts and jail sentences, and it can do so whenever it wishes to. It has no obligation to communicate on such a decision. That is so, so wrong!

It is true that compounding does exist under a number of our statutes, mainly for offences related to banking, fiscal and financial offences. But in all of these cases, there is an obligation on the compounding authority, MRA or the like, to first obtain the DPP's prior

authorisation. The latter can decide that compounding will not do, and criminal proceedings should be initiated instead. The DPP has no such power when it comes to compounding under the FCC Act.

What is more, he is deprived of his ability to initiate proceedings of his own against the offender, as section 150 of the FCC Act prevents any case from being brought against a person who has benefitted from compounding by the FCC. Once again, the Director of Public Prosecutions is robbed - and there is no other word, is robbed - of his prerogatives under section 72 of the Constitution.

Madam Speaker, this is the situation which this Bill addresses. The different clauses of our Bill aim to restore the DPP as the apex prosecution authority in our land, including for cases that fall within the FCC Act. Accordingly, clause 5 of the Bill provides amendments to the Financial Crimes Commission Act 2023 so that no prosecution for an offence under that Act or the Declaration of Assets Act shall be instituted except by, or with the consent of, the Director of Public Prosecutions. The Financial Crimes Commission will therefore have no discretion in instituting or discontinuing criminal proceedings under those enactments.

In addition, further related amendments are being brought to the Financial Crimes Commission Act 2023 to provide that –

- (a) where the Financial Crimes Commission determines that an investigation should be discontinued, it shall - and there is an obligation there - send a report to the Director of Public Prosecutions setting out its reasons;
- (b) in another case, if the Director of Public Prosecution does not advise prosecution or any action, he may also require the Financial Crimes Commission to conduct such further inquiries as he considers fit to advise;
- (c) any offence to be compounded under either the Financial Crimes Commission Act 2023 and the Declaration of Assets Act must henceforth be with his consent and approval.

Madam Speaker, there is also a series of consequential amendments to other statutes, in order to erase the act of legislative vandalism that has been made against our constitutional order. Clause 2 of the Bill provides for amendments to be brought to the Courts Act with a

view to empowering the Director of Public Prosecutions to be the sole authority to determine whether an information relating to a financial crime shall be laid before the Financial Crimes Division of the Intermediate Court or the Financial Crimes Division of the Supreme Court.

Clause 3 of the Bill, Madam Speaker, provides amendments to be brought to the Criminal Appeal Act to restore the right only to the Director of Public Prosecutions to make an appeal to the Court of Criminal Appeal against a final decision of the Supreme Court with regard to any offence under the Financial Crimes Commission Act 2023 and the Declaration of Assets Act.

The Financial Crimes Commission was given a similar right of appeal to the Supreme Court under the District and Intermediate Courts (Criminal Jurisdiction) Act against a final decision of the District Court or the Intermediate Court with regard to any offence under the Financial Crimes Commission Act 2023 or the Declaration of Assets Act. Clause 4 of the Bill, Madam Speaker, therefore provides for amendments to be brought to the District and Intermediate Courts (Criminal Jurisdiction) Act to restore that right of appeal only to the Director of Public Prosecutions.

Madam Speaker, the FCC Act 2023, a law passed by a simple majority, cannot trump - no pun intended - the provisions of our Constitution. It cannot be allowed to curtail the prerogatives of the DPP under section 72 of our supreme law. And it most certainly cannot contravene the principles of democracy enshrined in its Section 1.

The passage of this Bill today is not simply a legislative correction; it is a moral obligation. It is a declaration that our institutions are not bargaining chips in political games, that our Constitution is not a plaything to be contorted at will. It is a message to our citizens that they can once again believe in the fairness of our laws and the impartiality of our justice system.

Madam Speaker, through this Bill, we do not merely amend a law – we seek to restore justice, reaffirm democracy, and recommit ourselves to the ideals that make the Republic of Mauritius a sovereign and democratic State.

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

Dr. Boolell rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Madam Speaker: So, now I will call on the hon. Leader of the Opposition!

(4.05 p.m.)

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr G. Lesjongard) : Merci, Madame la présidente, de me donner l'occasion d'intervenir, cet après-midi, sur ce projet de loi, c'est-à-dire, la *Financial Crimes Commission (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill (No. 01 of 2025)*.

Madame la présidente, c'est un projet de loi, selon *l'Explanatory Memorandum*, qui propose des amendements afin de donner le pouvoir au directeur des poursuites publiques d'entamer des poursuites ou de ne pas donner suite à des enquêtes effectuées par la *Financial Crimes Commission*.

Madame la présidente, l'ancien gouvernement avait avec raison mis en place la *Financial Crimes Commission* afin de créer une autorité de régulation indépendante pour la mise en œuvre des mesures strictes de lutte contre, premièrement, le blanchiment d'argent et le financement du terrorisme. Et cette commission, Madame la présidente, avait permis à l'île Maurice de faire face à ces défis spécifiques dont elle a été confrontée en tant que centre financier international. La mise en place de cette commission souligne l'importance de la coopération et de la collaboration internationale dans la lutte contre les crimes financiers transnationaux.

À l'époque de la création de la FCC s'inscrivait également dans le droit-fil des engagements que nous avons pris avec le Groupe d'action financière (GAFI) selon lesquels Maurice va continuer à se doter d'institutions fortes pour mener une lutte sans relâche, Madame la présidente, contre toute forme de transactions illicites qui transitaient par notre centre financier.

Alors, l'objectif de l'ancien gouvernement avec l'introduction de cette loi était en finalité, Madame la présidente, d'améliorer la réputation de notre île comme une juridiction propre et transparente...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Prime Minister: *Met impe zorey ici!*

Mr Lesjongard : Et aujourd'hui, Madame la présidente, le présent gouvernement propose des amendements pour redonner le pouvoir au Directeur des poursuites publiques d'entamer des poursuites après les enquêtes de la *Financial Crimes Commission*. La question qu'on est en droit de se poser cet après-midi, Madame la présidente est : est-ce que ces amendements apporteront des meilleures retombées dans les enquêtes contre les crimes financiers ou est-ce que cela ne va pas retarder les poursuites ? Le temps nous le dira, Madame la présidente.

Je note d'abord, Madame la présidente, que ces amendements visent uniquement à restaurer les droits de poursuite au Directeur des poursuites publiques. Alors je suis en droit, Madame la présidente, de présumer donc que le gouvernement considère que le reste du *Financial Crimes Commission Act* est correcte et représente une amélioration sur la précédente loi qui était la *POCA* et qui était introduite par le gouvernement MSM/MMM en 2002.

Madame la présidente, je pense qu'il est de mon devoir de rappeler à cette Chambre brièvement certaines grandes avancées sous le *Financial Crimes Commission Act*. À commencer par l'introduction d'une nouvelle définition de '*property*' qui n'a jamais existé dans aucune loi avant, et '*property*' a maintenant, Madame la présidente, une définition plus large qui inclut '*any right or interest in the property*'. Donc, même si une personne n'est pas le propriétaire *official of the property*, un intérêt prouvé dans ce *property*, qui est lié aux crimes suffirait, Madame la présidente. Il y a aussi cette notion de *compensation order*. Une personne contre qui un *confiscation order* ou un *attachement order* a été injustement émis peut désormais demander *a compensation order* en cour. Il y a aussi, Madame la présidente, l'introduction de *corruption in private entities*...

Mr Mohamed: On a point of order, Madam Speaker!

Madam Speaker: Yes, one moment!

Mr Mohamed: My point of order is as follows: the hon. Leader of the Opposition should stick to the subject matter of the debate. It should not be an opportunity for him to revisit the bill, the debate that took place in 2023, and this is precisely what he is doing; saying there was this, there was that, and there was something else. We are here to stick within the parameters of the Bill and this is what the Attorney General did.

Madam Speaker: This is what I said this afternoon.

Mr Mohamed: Yes, so let us be relevant.

Madam Speaker: Please try and follow.

Mr Lesjongard: Yes, I am trying to do that, Madam Speaker, but I am not being irrelevant. We are amending the Financial Crimes Commission Act although it is being referred to some specifics, the Attorney General himself said that we will come with further legislations.

Hon. Members: Wait! Wait!

Madam Speaker: No, but then you will...

(Interruptions)

Let me... Everybody is the Speaker today!

Then you will intervene when he comes. It is true that today, *c'est très bref en fait, c'est très clair et très net. Donc, venez directement sur l'amendement lui-même et non pas sur la loi telle que c'était et qui va peut-être être amendée plus tard. Essayez d'être plus direct, on va dire.*

Mr Lesjongard: I shall try, Madam Speaker, and I will be brief also. Let me get back to my speech because I mentioned some of the specific clauses related to the Financial Crimes Commission Act which today allow us to be more prudent in what we are doing.

Madame la présidente, ...

Madam Speaker: Excusez-moi, monsieur le leader de l'opposition, le débat, si j'ai bien compris, en plus en tant qu'ancien Attorney General, je devrais le dire, le débat est sur la fonction du DPP qui est restaurée. C'est là-dessus qu'il faut parler. Vous pouvez ne pas être d'accord, bien sûr, et non pas sur le projet de loi dans son ensemble.

Mr Mohamed : Vous êtes d'accord, c'est bon.

An hon. Member : Tout à fait !

An hon. Member : Vous êtes d'accord.

Mr Lesjongard: Alors, permettez-moi, comme vous le dites, Madame la présidente, d'aborder la pomme de discorde de ces débats.

Madam Speaker: Voilà !

Mr Lesjongard: Mais cela concerne les pouvoirs du Directeur des poursuites publiques. Alors permettez-moi de prendre comme référence ce qu'avait dit l'ancien Premier ministre lors des débats sur le *Financial Crimes Commission Act* en 2023 concernant les pouvoirs...

Madam Speaker: Voilà!

Mr Lesjongard: ... du Directeur des poursuites publiques. *And I quote* –

“It is to be noted that the constitutional powers of the DPP are not being affected at all. The DPP will retain his powers under section 72(3) (b) and (c) of the Constitution and can, therefore, take over and continue or discontinue, at any stage, any such criminal proceedings instituted by the

FCC. Where he decides to discontinue any such proceedings, he may give reasons as he may deem fit for such discontinuance. However, an aggrieved party may apply to the Supreme Court for a Judicial Review of his decision.”

The Deputy Prime Minister: 60-0!

Mr Lesjongard : Et je me réfère à ce que l'honorable qui avait pris un *point of order* tout à l'heure-là, l'honorable Shakeel Mohamed, avait dit et réagit à cette partie du discours de l'ancien Premier ministre, *and I quote* –

“(...) I agree with the hon. Prime Minister that the DPP retains the right to discontinue proceedings. I totally agree with section 72(3) (b) and (c).”

Et je cite –

“Je n'ai pas de problème avec.”

Mr Mohamed : Avec la constitution, oui !

Mr Lesjongard : Je voudrais aussi, Madame la présidente, revenir sur un extrait du discours parce que moi aussi j'étais intervenu ce jour-là, d'un autre intervenant lors des débats de 2023 et en particulier, l'ancien Premier ministre adjoint Ivan Collendavelloo qui évoquait la *Prosecution Commission Bill* et avait dit ceci, je cite –

« [Le DPP] n'est pas exempté d'erreurs. Il n'est pas *above the law*. »

Naturellement, je ne mets pas en question l'intégrité de l'actuel Directeur des poursuites publiques, loin de là, Madame la présidente.

Madame la présidente, après avoir dit ce que j'ai dit, et en restant toujours dans le droit fil de ce projet de loi, je vais conclure, Madame la présidente, avec un message suivant pour le gouvernement : vous avez, certes comme l'honorable Paul Bérenger l'a dit tout à l'heure-là, vous avez été élu avec une majorité absolue et c'est très bien mais un peu...

Ms Anquetil: Évidemment ! Il n'y a pas de quoi !

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: Merci Jésus!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Let everybody have a good laugh.

Mr Lesjongard: Yes!

Madam Speaker: It's good for the... you know. You can also have a good laugh!

Mr Lesjongard: C'est bien mais c'est moins bien pour la démocratie.

(Interruptions)

Mais ainsi est faite notre système, Madame la présidente, et ce peuple ne souhaite aucun abus de votre part. J'en ai terminé, Madame la présidente.

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: *Pa pou ena!*

An hon. Member: *Comme l'ancien régime!*

Madam Speaker: Hon. Damry, I think, if I am not mistaken! Yes!

(4.18 p.m.)

The Junior Minister of Finance (Mr D. Damry): Madam Speaker, with a copy of our sacred Constitution in my hand, I commend the Attorney General for introducing this Bill of massive importance to the Financial Sector and to the nation.

Back in 2023, the proposed enactment of the Financial Crimes Commission Act caused a public row that highlighted the scandalous attempt by the previous government to infringe on the powers of the Director of Public Prosecution. The transfer of powers of prosecution for financial crimes to be newly appointed Director of the Financial Crimes Commission, an

officer appointed by the Prime Minister only was a gross attempt to flout our sacred Constitution and undermine the very foundation of justice. Wilding powers of prosecution to an individual who is not independent is not only anti-constitutional; it is cruel. Loyalty and independence are inherently contradictory.

Allow me to quote William Shakespeare in Macbeth –

“Who can be wise, amazed, temperate and furious, loyal and neutral in a moment?”

No man, Madam Speaker, no man can claim to be independent under the circumstances set by the previous version of the Financial Crimes Commission Act. Yet, the previous government chose to push for this provision. They felt emboldened enough to go one step further in the systemic state capture of our institutions. It illustrates the utter disregard for our Constitution, for the democratic principle that we, Mauritians, cherish; utter contempt for the rule of law. This, Madam Speaker was the hallmark of the previous government.

At the end of 2023, it became very clear that Mauritius was slowly but surely drifting towards autocracy. The Prime Minister, Dr. Ramgoolam knew too well the risk of a biased Financial Crime Commission applying arbitrary charges on Mauritians of all walk of life. On the ground of diverging political opinion, he himself has been the victim of the political vendetta. You will recall, maybe not many of you know in this House that the Prime Minister, Dr. Ramgoolam, joined politics for a cause – to fight for justice in the courts and in all spheres of life, he fought to maintain the Privy Council as the highest Court for Mauritius sparing the country from threat that an autocratic government would infringe on the judiciary and deprive Mauritians of a fair justice system.

It is in his DNA to fight, to reconstitute the full powers of the DPP. In the light of the past experience of the previous government, it became obvious that the only route to restore the systems of checks and balances in the financial system was to kick the previous government out of office and its MPs out of Parliament. The people of Mauritius voted intelligently. This, Madam Speaker, is such a relief. I still wonder what drove the previous government to hijack the democratic system prevailing in this country...

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

Madam Speaker: Yes, one moment! There is a point of order.

Mr Lesjongard: I believe that the speaker is being very irrelevant.

Madam Speaker: Yes, and also you are reading from your paper. Try and come and talk on the Bill, please.

Mr Damry: Yes, I think I am speaking about the powers of the DPP at the moment.

Madam Speaker: Well, try and...

Mr Damry: Yes. Okay. So, perhaps it was the illusion of isolation. Being on an island, they assumed their catastrophic mismanagement would escape international scrutiny. While we were producing this glaring loophole in our financial legislation, Madam Speaker, the financial community was ringing alarming bells. Madam Speaker, in his address, the hon. Leader of Opposition stated that the 2023 Act was passed to strengthen our financial services sector.

That is what the hon. Member said. So, let us analyse his Statement for a moment. World over, governments are reinforcing their legislation to curb the flows of illegal finance and consolidate the trust in their financial system. The track for illicit funds and illegal financing cuts across borders and jurisdiction. When our Financial Crimes Commission Bill was voted, Mauritius had just been able to entangle the threat of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) that was choking our global business sector, the last thing we needed was another blow to our reputation. A law that allowed some financial crime could go unprosecuted and therefore, unpunished.

Did it occur to the previous government that this legislation was about to weaken the fundamentals of an economic activity that accounts for 15% of our GDP? Did they even consider the impact of a poor legislation on the much-needed flow of foreign currency that keeps our balance of payment afloat? Was it an overconfidence bias or just sheer incompetence that led the previous government to believe that the integrity of our financial centre would not be damaged from such obvious flaws in our laws? This is not mine to answer. I am just happy that we are now undoing the process and restoring trust and confidence in our jurisdiction for the benefit of all motions.

As we are turning the page on this sad chapter in our legislative history, it is time to look forward and think of what we would like to build for the future. In our program, we said we wanted to build a bridge to the future. Yes, we are restoring the powers of the DPP in the matters of financial crime. Our goal is to ensure that in the future, there is manifest independence in the conduct of prosecution of all prosecutions. Luckily, we are not the previous government. We are not a bunch of mindless, power-hungry politicians. Otherwise,

we would have already used the provisions of the present Financial Crimes Commission Act to put charges on the previous government's leaders and the cronies. It would have been so easy to do it but we chose not to. We did not do it because we wanted to show that we are faithful to the spirit of the Constitution, faithful to the ideals of our founding fathers. We want the public to see that we mean business when we say that important prosecution decisions will be exercised on strictly neutral grounds.

Meanwhile, Madam Speaker, there are numerous suspicions of financial crimes from the previous government that the public would like to see brought to Court. Understandably, the public is impatient, thirsty for accountability but the public needs to know that any proceedings will be carried out with fairness and impartiality as we pledged to do. We are building a system that is made to last, not a short-lived framework to mark a political transition.

With this, I commend the Attorney General for bringing the Bill to the House. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: I will suspend the House for about half an hour.

At 4.27 p.m., the Sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 5.12 p.m. with Madam Speaker in the Chair.

Madam Speaker: Please be seated! We have the quorum, we can start. Next person is hon. Lobine!

Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix): Thank you, Madam Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to say a few words on this very important amendment Bill. First of all, let me seize this opportunity to congratulate you, Madam Speaker, for being elected as Madam Speaker, and the Deputy Speaker. So, we have restored some dignity and decorum in this temple of democracy.

Talking about democracy, the hon. Attorney General has very vividly portrayed what is the vision of this Government: restoring democracy. This is a stepping stone; this is the correction of the *dérives* of the previous regime with regard to systematically attacking our democracy.

Our basic principle of separation of powers has always been hampered by this previous government. Restoring the prosecutorial powers of the Director of Public Prosecutions goes

in line with what we have promised to the people of Mauritius. We have been voted to come here and to represent the people of Mauritius overwhelmingly.

Madam Speaker, if I may, the advent of the Financial Crimes Commission Act, when we were in the Opposition during the last mandate, we vociferously condemned this Bill. We vociferously voiced out our concerns as to the way things were going. Surprisingly, the former government paid no heed to what we saying. It was just like *dilo lor bred sonz!*

So, Madam Speaker, when we were elected overwhelmingly to represent the people in Mauritius, the first and foremost function was to restore the dignity within the ambit of separation of powers. The Executive has got its role; the Judiciary has got its role, and the Parliament has got its role. The Director of Public Prosecutions, as clearly pointed out by the hon. Attorney General, has a very important constitutional role. This, Madam Speaker, goes in line, if I may quote the Government Programme at page 2, under the very important caption of Democracy, Governance, Integrity and Constitutional Reform, paragraph 6, 4th line

—

“Government is committed to restoring the trust of the nation in independent and impartial institutions.”

So, this very first amendment to this very infamous Financial Crimes Commission Act is the first step to restore the powers of the DPP that has been curtailed several times by the previous government. When I was listening to the hon. Leader of the Opposition, I am not surprised at all as to the argumentative with regard to their views on the powers of the DPP because we know way back in 2015, how the previous government, the MSM led government, the *l'Alliance Lepep* government wanted to create history in the wrong way by introducing the Public Prosecution Bill and amending the Constitution to curtail the powers of the DPP.

This is in the DNA of the MSM! But I am very surprised...

The Deputy Prime Minister: And now, PMSD!

Mr Lobine: ... and astonished that the PMSD, in 2024, swallowed their pride! You know, we were so happy of getting out of government to preserve democracy and yet, they sat with the MSM! Mr Xavier-Luc Duval in his speech during the Financial Crimes Commission Bill, condemned the way the powers of the Director of Public Prosecutions was being curtailed. Yet, the PMSD went along, condoned this act of treason against our

democracy, against the people of Mauritius! Fortunately, the people of Mauritius have sent us here and have sent these two gentlemen there.

Madam Speaker, this first stepping stone is now another stepping stone for the hon. Attorney General to come forward with a comprehensive legislation, a robust, a transparent legislation that would really combat fraud and corruption and financial crimes in this country. Here again, Madam Speaker, I shall refer to page 5 of the Government Programme whereby at paragraph 10, it is clearly stated – the hon. Leader of the Opposition was saying that we need to have a legislation that will fight fraud and corruption –, but here it is, I quote –

“Government will repeal the Financial Crimes Commission (FCC) Act and will set up a national crime agency which will be better equipped to deal more effectively with financial and other serious crimes.”

So, it is clearly stated in the Government Programme.

The first and foremost is to act promptly to stop the rot that is being caused with regard to our penal system, to restore the dignity, to give to the Director of Public Prosecutions his own right to act in his role as per the provisions of the Constitution. And, the second step is to repeal this infamous Financial Crimes Commission Act and have a comprehensive legislation that will set up this National Crime Agency.

So, I welcome this Bill, we support this Bill and I am sure that the nation at large today is breathing with a sense of relief that at least we are preserving a very important institution, that is, the Director of Public Prosecutions. All those cases that we have in court will remind the DNA of the MSM to curtail the office of Director of Public Prosecutions way back in 2015 after trying through the backdoor to come with this Public Prosecution Bill. They removed the administrative control in the hands of the Director of Public Prosecutions and reverted back to the Attorney General’s Office; this case is still before the Supreme Court. The DPP lodged a case in the Supreme Court and we are still awaiting this case to be heard. Just to tell you how the image of the country took a back seat with the MSM-led government trying curtail the powers of the DPP.

Those are things of the past. We are looking toward the future so that let Mauritius be Mauritius again. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Thank you. Hon. Minister!

(5.20 p.m.)

The Minister of Labour & Industrial Relations (Mr R. Uteem): Madam Speaker, the object of the Bill as stated in the Explanatory Memorandum is to restore the prosecutorial powers of the DPP under the Financial Crimes Commission Act.

Let us remind the House again what Section 72 sub-section (6) of the Constitution reads –

“(6) In the exercise of the powers conferred upon him by this section, the Director of Public Prosecutions shall not be subject to the direction or control of any other person or authority.”.

And, yet, as has just been highlighted by my learned friend, Hon. Lobine, the MSM has systematically tried to control the DPP in the exercise of his constitutional powers and the enactment of the Financial Crimes Commission Act in 2023 is one, but the last of the long series of attempt to curtail the powers of the DPP. Hon. Lobine mentioned that right after coming to power in 2015 the first legislation that was passed, the Financial Amendment Bill, was to take the financial and administrative independence of the DPP and put in under the aegis of the Attorney General. Since then, each time the DPP had to travel or an officer of the DPP’s Office had to travel they had to ask for permission from the Attorney General and very often these permissions were denied. So, that was one means of putting pressure on the DPP.

Another means was the Prosecution Commission which, at that point, the PMSD decided not to support because it was anti-constitutional. But there was more; there is more, Madam Speaker. Back in 2015, let us remember, that was the time of terror. One of the darkest times of the democracy of Mauritius. One of the darkest days of democracy where people were being handcuffed, humiliated, brought before courts with unsubstantiated provisional charges. And, among the long list of people who suffered this political vendetta, there was also an attempt – let us not forget – to arrest the Director of Public Prosecutions. One early morning, he had to sneak out from the backdoor and seek legal protection from the judiciary under what was a blatant case of abusive arrest.

So, Madam Speaker, what happened in 2023, the attempt by the government to curtail the powers of the DPP was not innocent. It was a deliberate and calculated policy to curtail the role of the DPP. As rightly pointed out by the Attorney General, the Director of Public Prosecutions decided to seize the Supreme Court for constitutional redress. And, what is the Director of Prosecutions asking the Supreme Court to state?

The DPP humbly praised from the Supreme Court for a declaration pursuant to Section 83 (1) and 83 (2) of the Constitution that the Financial Crimes Commission Act 2023 contravenes Section 1 and Section 72 of the Constitution and is accordingly void.

This is exactly what we, when we were in the Opposition, we stated when the Bill was debated. We stated unequivocally what was going to happen; what was happening was against the Constitution. Today, with this Bill, Madam Speaker, we are correcting a wrong. We are giving back the power of the DPP; we are restoring his constitutional powers. And, we are doing it in three ways; there are three sets of amendments which are being brought by this Bill.

The first one, is restoring the power of the DPP to institute prosecutions in financial crimes. Under the existing legislation, once the Commission has completed its enquiry, it can decide, without having to go through the DPP's Office, it can decide to institute prosecutions. Now, this can be subject of abuse when we know that the Financial Crimes Commission is manned by political nominees, handpicked by the Prime Minister, whose terms and conditions are known only to the Prime Minister. So, it is very easy to see the risk of the Prime Minister dictating to the Financial Crimes Commission to initiate criminal prosecutions for financial crimes against opponents of the then government.

But, now, with this amendment the Financial Crimes Commission when they complete their investigation, they are duty-bound to send the file to the DPP and it is the DPP who will institute prosecution or the DPP who will authorise the Financial Crimes Commission to institute criminal proceedings. So, this is the first amendment that we are bringing.

The second amendment which for me is more fundamental and more important than the first one. It relates to the constitutional power of the DPP not to prosecute; to discontinue prosecution. Now, before we had the Financial Crimes Commission Act, we used to have the Prevention of Corruption Act. Under the Prevention of Corruption Act, ICAC, the Independent Commission Against Corruption, had to investigate a criminal crime and then they decide, after gathering all the information, they write a report and send everything to the DPP's Office with a recommendation. The recommendation can be, we prosecuted or we discontinue investigation; we close the file. But, they had, they were under the legal obligation to refer the file to the Director of Public Prosecutions. They could not close an enquiry without informing the DPP because the DPP may very well not be on the same wavelength as the FCC. Even if the FCC thinks that there is not sufficient evidence to bring

prosecution, the DPP could have thought otherwise. This is why, Madam Speaker, ICAC never sent to the DPP files relating to Angus Road, to bet365, to *l'affaire Saint-Louis*, to stag party because they knew that they could not close the file without the consent of the DPP including Alvaro Sobrinho.

So, in 2023 what they did they do? They amended the law to allow the Financial Crimes Commission to terminate enquiry, to set aside the file, close the file in the back, behind the DPP and there is no legal obligation for them to send the file to the DPP. So, the DPP is not in a position to know whether there is a case, what the status of the case is, whether there is sufficient evidence to prosecute or not but now we are changing it.

With this amendment, the Financial Crimes Commission is dutybound. When they finish their investigation, they have to transfer the file to the DPP and the DPP will decide. The DPP can decide that 'okay, prosecute' or 'okay, go back and investigate further' or the DPP can say 'we discontinue'. I say this is the most important aspect of the Bill, Madam Speaker, because the power that was given to the Financial Crimes Commission was the power to cover up all the mistakes, all the fraudulent activities of those close to power. *Donc, c'était une institution pour blanchir les criminels et les corrompus.*

The third set of amendments, Madam Speaker, relates to compounding of offense. Now, what is compounding of offense? You are caught red-handed; you have given a bribe or you have taken a bribe or you have used your influence unduly for gratification. You have acted corruptly or you have mismanaged funds, *dilapider les fonds publics*. So, you are caught red-handed and you have to be prosecuted. Today, as the law stands, the Financial Crimes Commission can call you and say 'ah, you have been a naughty boy, you have been a bad guy. So, you know what? I will give you a fine. Pay me Rs10,000, case closed and once I have compounded your offense, no one can prosecute you for what you have done'. No one, however big the crime, however much you have stolen, however big the corruption offense, the Financial Crimes Commission was given the power to compound and once they have compounded an offense, no one, not even the DPP could have prosecuted that person for that offense.

Now, how can that be that in a democracy, people can get away with it when we know that the FSC is manned by politically appointed people? So, what we are doing today, Madam Speaker, is amending the law so that before the Financial Crimes Commission can compound any offense, they have to refer the file and get the consent of the DPP. So, this is the

safeguard. The DPP obviously, they may agree with the compounding or they may not agree with the compounding but the power is restored back to the DPP. And it is the same in many other legislations. For example, in the Customs Act, you have the possibility to enter into an agreement with the MRA, you pay the penalty and your offense is compounded but it is subject to the consent of the DPP. So, as the law state, we did not have this safeguard. So, what we are proposing to do now with this amendment is to get the consent of the DPP before the Financial Crimes Commission can compound any offense.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition stated that we are only amending a few provisions of the law which means that we agree with the remaining provisions of the law and therefore we agree that the other provisions of the law are good law. No, Madam Speaker. No, we have pledged in our electoral manifesto, in the Presidential Address a fortnight ago that we are going to repeal the whole of the Financial Crimes Commission Act, we are going to replace Financial Crimes Commission with a new national crime agency which will be totally independent, which will be robust and which will have the means to do their work effectively and efficiently but it will take time. It will take time after consultations to come up with this piece of law. So, in the meantime, through this Bill, we are addressing the most urgent and objectionable provisions of the Financial Crimes Commission which is the power that was usurped from the Director of Public Prosecutions so that now when we do come with our National Crime Agency, Madam Speaker, there never will be a covering machine again. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Thank you. Yes, hon. Narsinghen, please!

(5.34 p.m.)

The Junior Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade (Mr H. Narsinghen): Madam Speaker, thank you to give me the floor. My intervention will be on the following points –

- I will comment briefly on the structure of the Bill and its importance;
- I will be commending the Attorney General;
- I will be speaking about the political motives behind the Financial Crimes Commission and how the law was *ad hominem*;
- I will be commenting briefly on the violation of the Constitution and violation of democracy;

- Commenting on violation of fundamental principles of justice and the criminal justice system and referring to the independence principle of fairness and impartiality, and finally
- The shortcomings of the Financial Crimes Commission.

Comme point préliminaire, Madame la présidente, j'attendais beaucoup de l'intervention du leader de l'Opposition. Comme vous le savez, cette auguste Assemblée est supposée maîtriser l'art de la dialectique. J'attendais beaucoup, et moi j'allais réfuter, et je pensais que le leader de l'Opposition allait réfuter l'honorable *Attorney General*. Je suis resté sur ma faim, mais donc ce sera pour la prochaine fois.

So, commenting on the structure of the Bill, Madam Speaker, the Bill comes to cure a mess and I would say a big mess created by the previous regime and what may qualify the FCC Act of 2023 as a vicious and insidious attack on democracy and our criminal justice system. Entrusting powers to the Director General of the FCC was potentially a breach of section 72 of the Constitution but also section 1 and section 10 of the Constitution.

Madam Speaker, we should not have a short memory but let us not forget as pointed out by earlier speakers that there was an attempt to undermine the powers of the DPP with the introduction of the Prosecution Commission Bill and in 2023, the killer of democracy and human rights repeated the crime again. *Il récidive, Madame la présidente*. As if it was not enough to be the serial killers of people like Mr Kistnen, Kanakiah and others, they are also serial killers of our democracy under cardinal principles of our criminal justice system. The FCC Act of 2023, Madam Speaker, breaches section 72(6) which reads as follows –

“(6) In the exercise of the powers conferred upon him by this section, the Director of Public Prosecutions shall not be subject to the direction or control of any other person or authority.”

So, indirectly, the DPP has always been having sole responsibility in matters of prosecution.

Now, coming to my second point – commending the Attorney General, I must commend the Attorney General for the celerity with which he has come with such a Bill. Today in fact, with the calibre of the Attorney General, we are in safe hands; not in the hands of those who will neglect their job and enjoy stag parties. Let us remind the population that

the actual Attorney General has left a lucrative practice to be at the service of the nation and he has to be commended for that.

Madam Speaker, I am also impressed by the comprehensiveness of the Bill and the quality of the drafting. I know you got a team behind you but at the same time, we can feel that it has got your touch. Thank you. And above all, when we read the amending Bill, we can see the clarity and also the improvement which has been brought to the Bill.

But above all, when we read the amending Bill, we can see the clarity and also the improvement which has been brought to the Bill. I can cite a few examples –

- the Commission is now made accountable to the DPP when an investigation is discontinued by virtue of section 5 of the Bill;
- the DPP may also, you will see, requests the FCC to give reasons, and this is quite new, for discontinuing with an investigation, and
- compounding offences under the FCC Act or Declaration of Assets Act will also require the consent of the DPP. *Donc, retournons à César ce qui appartient à César !*

More importantly, Madam Speaker, the Director-General of the FCC shall not prosecute except with the consent of the DPP. This is in line with the letters of the Constitution; not only the letters of the Constitution, but more importantly, what we do not realise, with the spirit of the Constitution. So, it seems that the previous regime was either not aware or did it deliberately to forget the very spirit of the Mauritian Constitution. So, obviously, even in the past, the DPP could delegate and give consent for others to prosecute, even the Police could prosecute, but with delegation of powers. Nobody could usurp his powers.

Now, I come to a very, very important point, what I call: what was the political motive? The Leader of the Opposition was giving a number of reasons, but when you look at the substance of the Bill at that time, which eventually became a law, we did not see any curative measure to address the concerns of international organisations. So, at face value, the Bill seemed to have noble intention and legitimate intention. However, let us not forget the obsession and the compulsion, what we call in the French medical jargon, a *TOC*, which many of the politicians in the previous regime suffered from. To understand what is *TOC*, it is to kill politically the actual Prime Minister when he was on the ground. The FCC Bill came

after the failure, just remember, of more than 12 or 12 concocted cases against the actual Prime Minister. In the same vein, the Good Governance and Public Integrity Bill, which later became an Act, with its noble, probably intended objectives, was, however, primarily destined to kill politically the actual hon. Prime Minister.

So, it was - and I would lay emphasis - a consulted plan and a plot to finish the main opponent, conducted by Judas, but also, the master of Judas and other accomplices like the Stag Party men who were involved. They strategized, they conspired, nothing less than one of the biggest - and I hammer on that - conspiracies in our political history, Madam Speaker. One Judas in under arrest for now, but I believe that the King of Judas is still scot-free. So, you know how the actual Prime Minister saved him from la *poubelle de l'histoire* in the by-election that we had.

My appeal, Madam Speaker, we should never, ever have *ad hominem* laws in our country. Even if it will not please the Leader of the Opposition, this was definitely a law destined to finish off one man who was haunting the mind of a dictator's dream. Sad for our beloved country!

Now, coming to another very important point where we saw a violation of the Constitution and democracy. You will see, Madam Speaker, one of the fundamental tenets of democracy, a legal concept, touched by many of my friends, enshrined in our Constitution, which is not a mere rhetoric. This concept of separation of powers is not concrete in our Constitution, I concur, but it is underlying throughout multiple sections of the Constitution and consecrated by many eminent judges, like the father of the Attorney General, Justice Glover, Justice Rault, Justice Lallah and so many others. Many tend to think that separation of powers is just a classical separation of powers as expanded by Montesquieu, as referred to by the Attorney General. But over time, many other jurists in US, in India have further refined this concept of separation of powers. This is where, in my own humble opinion, the DPP in trite law is not a pure member of the Executive.

According to me, in the course of our future revisiting of the Constitution, we have to think whether we should place the DPP under the heading of the Executive or we have to create another chapter where we have, for example, quasi-judicial bodies. This is food for thought, reflection for the upcoming amendment of the Constitution.

So, when we look at the post of the DPP provided by section 72 of Constitution, you will see and you will understand, Madam Speaker, that this has been purposely entrenched and constitutionalised to make him independent and impartial. The Attorney General also mentioned that, that quotation came from Professor de Smith, himself, where he said –

“(...) to safeguard the stream of criminal justice from being polluted by the noxious political contamination (...).”

In fact, the Law Reform Commission took on board the quotation coming from the horse’s mouth, that is, the Professor de Smith, the founding father of the Mauritian Constitution. That is what the previous regime did with the FCC, and shame for this abominable crime against our democracy and Constitution. The same words hammered, as mentioned rightly by the Attorney General, during the Lancaster House conference. As per section 72, the role of the DPP is to prosecute, but also to oversee investigation.

This is where, for example, in the case of Kistnen, where the DPP asked the Police to make *un complément d’enquête*, and this is possible. The Police or the ICAC or the FCC is meant to investigate, not to prosecute. Never in the history of Mauritius has any politician thought to give such powers to the Police, and they gave it to the FCC. So, the segregation within the Executive itself prevents any form of conflict of interest. This is very important for the population to know. You will see that the DPP and its officers are guided by stringent international standards as well as local standards in order to guarantee fairness, independence and impartiality.

Besides the violation of the Constitution, you will see a number of fundamental principles of the criminal justice system has been violated. I think at this stage, it is important to understand the difference between the appointment of the DPP and the Director-General of the FCC. You will note that the DPP, a very important point, is appointed by the Judicial and Legal Service Commission whereas the Director-General of the FCC is appointed by the President, but very important point to note, upon the advice of the Prime Minister, which in effective terms, means that the Director-General of the FCC is a stooge person of the Prime Minister. You cannot take powers from the DPP and give these powers to the Director-General of the FCC.

This is not done in any democratic country. Look around, in so many countries, this was the reason why most of the time you will confer powers to one DPP or with a collegial

system. At most, one day, while revisiting the Constitution, if we want to improve the role of the DPP, maybe, my suggestion is to have a collegial system. This is a possibility. However, it depends who you place at the helm of the institution. When referring to the *ad hominem* law, they were not only aiming at our actual Prime Minister, they were aiming also at the previous DPP and the actual DPP. So, they were not only aiming the Prime Minister, but three persons at one go with one shot. This is what they wanted to do.

Another very important point, unlike the DPP, you will see that the DPP enjoys security of tenure, which is guaranteed by section 93 of the Constitution. We cannot just put in the DPP and then you vote him out. No, this is not done. You have to follow strictly the provisions of section 93 of the Constitution. Whereas the post of Director-General of the FCC, at any time, you can boot him out. This is not acceptable in a democracy. So, security of tenure is a *sine qua non* condition to ensure independence, impartiality and above all integrity.

Whether these people who were at the FCC or the ICAC, whether, at that point in time, they commanded integrity. Integrity, Madam Speaker, is very important. You will see that the DPP is the servant of the Constitution and the State and public interest above all, but not to the PM of the day. He is guided by the Constitution and, as I mentioned, by international standards.

Now, another very important point, Madam Speaker, by the fact that the DPP is the sole authority to prosecute, this will ensure uniformity and the use of objective standards. So, once more I would reiterate to say that the spirit of the Mauritian Constitution, that is beautifully defined in the enlightening article of Professor S. A. de Smith – this is a must for everybody to read; go and read that article: ‘Constitutionalism in a plural society’. Two things here: firstly, we are in a plural context, in a plural democracy, and secondly, very important, we are in a small jurisdiction. Reality and perception of bias exist and De Smith, in his beautiful article, explained how there are certain unique features in our Constitution. So, allowing the FCC to prosecute did not guarantee uniformity and consistency. At the same time, you will see that we had a system of check and balance when it comes to the DPP, in which you could have judicial review but not with the FCC.

Madam Speaker, I will stop here. To conclude I would say, yes, this Act of Parliament, the FCC was an *ad hominem* law. It violated basic principles of democracy. It violated the

principles of separation of powers and this is a shame for the previous regime to tamper with our democracy, human rights of Mauritius. Thank you for your attention.

Madam Speaker: Thank you! Hon. Beehook, try and keep an eye on your time as well.

Mr Beehook: I will keep an eye on you.

Madam Speaker: Yes, on the Whip!

Mr Beehook: She will do the job.

(5.50 p.m.)

Mr R. Beehook (Second Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil): Merci, Madame la présidente. Lorsque j'écoute les orateurs précédents, je vois qu'il y a parmi des éminents légistes, des avocats, un spécialiste de la finance donc les avocats, ils ont abordé ce sujet, ce problème sous le thème d'une approche très légaliste et moins de par ma formation, je vais essayer d'aborder ce problème qui est effectivement un problème mais avant tout est un problème démocratique.

Donc, lorsque j'ai étudié cela, ce problème, j'ai essayé de comprendre. Je faisais ce qu'on appelle la généalogie de ce problème pour essayer de comprendre comment cela se fait que dans l'histoire de notre démocratie, il y a, sauf erreur de ma part, il y a eu cinq tentatives d'amender la Constitution. Cinq fois ils ont amendé la Constitution et à chaque fois lorsque je regarde le MSM est au pouvoir. C'est le MSM qui touche à la Constitution. Je ne dis pas que c'est mauvais mais essayons de creuser un peu plus loin. Pour comprendre cela, je regarde la composition de cette Assemblée, je constate qu'il y a, à peu près neuf partis politiques représentés. J'essaie de comprendre dans l'histoire de ce pays, comment cela se fait qu'il n'y a que le MSM, qui lorsqu'ils sont au pouvoir, touche aux fondamentaux de notre société, et je reviens justement...

Madam Speaker: Je peux me permettre de vous arrêter ?

Mr Beehook: Oui Madame.

Madam Speaker: Il y a d'autres gouvernements qui ont amendé dans le bon sens.

Mr Beehook: Oui, je suis d'accord avec vous. Moi, je dis pourquoi...

Madam Speaker: Il ne faut pas non plus penser qu'il n'y a eu que ce type d'amendement constitutionnel. Je suis bien placée pour le savoir.

Mr Beehook: Je suis tout à fait d'accord. C'est pour cela que je dis qu'il touche aux fondamentaux de notre démocratie. Donc, ici, le problème dont il s'agit, c'est qu'on touche à quoi ? On touche à la liberté du Directeur des poursuites publiques. Il ne s'agit pas, comme certains de mes amis l'on dit, de réduire le pouvoir du *DPP* ; il s'agit de confisquer, d'arracher les pouvoirs du *DPP*.

Lorsque je fais une analyse de cette salle, je regarde les partis politiques. Nous avons remporté les élections 60-0, Madame la présidente, il y a 64 membres qui sont dans la majorité. Nous avons la majorité absolue pour amender la Constitution et pour faire ce que le MSM a fait. Si on avait comme objectif, par exemple : la revanche politique, on aurait pu amender la Constitution et tous ceux qui ont commis des offenses, des crimes contre la république, nos institutions, les finances publiques, ils seraient derrière les barreaux. *But why don't we do it?* Parce que nous sommes républicains et démocrates.

Si j'analyse plus profondément sur les neuf partis politiques, représentés ici dans le parlement. Ce n'est pas une surprise, il y a un seul parti qui n'est pas républicain ; nous sommes tous républicains : le Parti travailliste, le MMM, *Rezistans ek Alternativ*, Nouveaux Démocrates, même le PMSD, nos amis Rodriguais, ce sont des partis ici de la république, mais qu'est que le MSM ? Le MSM est avant tout un parti qui n'est pas républicain, c'est un *Trust*. C'est une propriété privée...

Ms Anquetil : Yes !

Mr Beehook: ... de la famille Jugnauth. Et lorsqu'on gère un pays en tant qu'un démocrate et lorsqu'on gère un *Trust* en tant que gérant d'un *Trust*, une entité privée, voilà ce qu'il arrive, on essaye d'instrumentaliser toutes les institutions possibles au profit des gestionnaires de ce *Trust*. Voilà symboliquement ce que le MSM a voulu faire avec l'*office* du Directeur des poursuites publiques.

Je prends l'exemple : lorsqu'ils ont introduit, Madame la présidente, le *Prosecution Commission Bill* en 2016, contextuellement, pourquoi l'ont-ils fait ? Parce que les charges qu'ils avaient mises à l'encontre de l'ancien Premier ministre, l'une après l'autre les charges étaient, à juste titre, abandonnées par l'*office* du *DPP* ou l'ancien Premier ministre, il remportait ses procès ou il y avait des non-lieux prononcés par la magistrature.

Donc, que faire à ce moment-là ? Ils ont essayé d'introduire le *Prosecution Commission Bill* en 2016 avec comme objectif *the issue of directions by the Prosecution Commission* qui était un corps politique *appointed by the executive* et l'exécutif est un corps politique, donc avec un agenda politisé, *to the Director of Public Prosecutions*. Donc, ils voulaient tout simplement faire tomber le Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, cela n'a pas eu lieu. Rebelote avec *FCC Bill*. Donc nous voyons qu'il a une constance dans la logique du MSM, il y a une constance d'éroder et d'appropriier les pouvoirs non-seulement de l'*office* du *DPP*, mais de toutes les institutions possibles du pays. J'appelle cela l'intervention et l'ingérence nauséabonde, machiavélique du MSM. Il y a plusieurs exemples, Madame la présidente, il n'y a pas que l'*office* du *DPP*. Nous avons eu, pour la première fois dans l'histoire, des *appointments* à la Commission électorale...

Madam Speaker: Excusez-moi.

Mr Beehook: Oui Madame.

Madam Speaker: Il vous reste trois minutes. Essayez de conclure.

Mr Beehook: Oui, je vais essayer de conclure.

Madam Speaker: Non, mais essayez de vous concentrer sur le projet de loi.

Mr Beehook: J'y reviendrai, Madame la présidente.

Il y a eu plusieurs exemples comme la Commission électorale, la tentative de d'arrestation du *DPP*, le complot Dufry-Frydu ; on oublie le *phone tapping*. On a vu comment le Commissaire de police donnait des instructions pour faire arrêter...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: No, I am trying to do it by myself.

Mr Beehook: ... l'honorable Duval. L'interventionnisme du MSM, c'est même étendu jusqu'à la presse. Par cela, ce que j'ai envie de dire, c'est que cette tendance à vouloir s'accaparer des institutions de l'état et de le mettre au profit du MSM, c'est ce qu'ils ont essayé de faire avec ce *Bill* et je félicite ce gouvernement et notre Attorney General qui est venu avec cet amendement non pas comme je vous ai dit pour, on va dire, donner la liberté à l'*office* du *DPP* en matière de poursuite et d'arrêt de poursuite mais aussi on a essayé, on a empêché la création d'un monstre politique qu'aurait pu être le *FCC*.

On a donné plusieurs exemples. Je prends l'exemple, rien que lorsqu'il s'agit de l'*appointment* du Directeur général. Essayons d'évaluer le calibre, d'accord ? Pour ce qu'il s'agit du *DPP* –

“No Person shall be qualified to hold or act in the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions unless he is qualified for appointment as a judge of the Supreme Court.”

C'est dire la carrure d'un homme qui doit représenter l'*Office* du DPP et on a voulu faire quoi ? Le remplacer par qui ? Navin Beekarry ! Ce même Navin Beekarry qui lorsqu'il y avait le procès de Medpoint, a changé de version du jour au lendemain dans ses *submissions of Privy Council*. Comment voulez-vous que le peuple fasse confiance à cette substitution ? Ce n'est pas possible. Il n'y a pas de comparaison entre un DPP digne de ce nom et un Navin Beekarry. Voilà, je terminerai par dire, Madame la présidente – je dois respecter mes 10 minutes – que nous avons sauvé la démocratie, nous avons restauré la confiance dans le processus judiciaire et John Locke et Montesquieu doivent se réjouir dans leur tombe. Nous avons restauré la séparation des pouvoirs.

Merci, Madame la présidente.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Minister Ramful!

(6.00 p.m.)

The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade (Mr D. Ramful): Madame la présidente de la Chambre, puisqu'on parle aujourd'hui aux amendements des pouvoirs d'une institution – le Bureau du Directeur des Poursuites Publiques, permettez-moi de dire ceci. Il y avait un temps dans ce pays où nos institutions, supposément indépendantes, étaient muselées et enchaînées, où on ne pouvait plus faire respirer la démocratie. Je ne parle pas, Madame la présidente, de l'air pré-indépendance ou colonial. Je parle de l'année dernière, la période de 2019 à 2024 où le régime, l'empire MSM était au pouvoir et cet empire qui voulait faire de Maurice un pays autocrate.

Madame la présidente, comme le Premier ministre nous a révélés mardi dernier pendant la *PNQ*, le *PMQT* – on avait une période, la période dont j'ai mentionnée, on avait des *bay looker* du MSM, on avait aussi de *bay ekouter* du MSM qui mettait nos téléphones sur l'écoute et comme avait bien dit le Premier ministre, personne n'échappait à la surveillance étatique qui veut dire que nos droits à la vie privée pendant cette période n'existaient plus sous le régime MSM.

Un autre exemple, le plus flagrant Madame la présidente, et cela, les Mauriciens le suivaient en live chaque semaine. C'était la manière dont les travaux dans cette auguste Assemblée étaient arbitrés, une institution aussi importante que le Parlement, supposée être la voix du peuple, arbitrée par un Speaker hautement politisé. Ses *rulings* n'avaient ni queue ni tête, non-sens. Je me souviens pendant la campagne, Madame la présidente, l'honorable *DPM* avait dit que si nous retournions au pouvoir, on va faire enlever tous ces *rulings du Hansard*. Je crois qu'il est temps de le faire.

Mr Assirvaden: *Si mo ti ena foto la, mo tir li mo mem.*

Mr Ramful : Et c'est la même chose qu'on a voulu faire Madame la présidente, avec la loi sur le *FCC*, introduite l'année dernière pour remplacer l'*ICAC*. Cette loi était pire que la loi sur l'*ICAC*. D'ailleurs, l'*ICAC*, en tant qu'un *Law Enforcement Agency*, même sans les pouvoirs de décision sur les poursuites, était déjà hautement controversé et vous vous souvenez Madame la présidente, puisque vous êtes avocate vous aussi, vous souvenez du jugement d'une magistrate sur les contrats alloués pendant le Covid. L'*ICAC* était taxé de *Undergoing Selective Investigation* et on sait déjà la liste de ces nombreux cas, qu'on appelle des *high profile cases* dénoncés à l'*ICAC* mais qui pour des raisons qu'on sait n'a pas eu d'aboutissement à ce jour mais on aurait cru quand on avait passé la *FCC* que le *MSM* allait se ressaisir et qu'on allait nous proposer finalement une loi pour remédier à la situation mais on nous a proposé une loi sans précédent, pire que *le Prosecution Bill* proposé par le père Jugnauth et qui avait fait le *PMSD* prendre la porte de sortie pour re-renter après.

La loi *FCC* qu'on avait proposée, c'était une loi exceptionnelle qui frôlait l'inconstitutionnalité, entachait les principes de séparations du pouvoir et qui menaçait l'état de droit. C'est ce que nous avons été proposés sous la *FCC*, et même Beekarry. C'était très clair, Madame la présidente. C'était une tentative délibérée à travers une simple projet de loi d'éroder l'*Office* du *DPP* de ses pouvoirs sacrosaints, ceux d'instituer et d'entreprendre des poursuites dans tous les cas criminels inclus les crimes financiers. Pire, ce qu'on a voulu donner, on a donné ces mêmes pouvoirs, les pouvoirs constitutionnels à une nommée politique, le Directeur de la *FCC*.

Madame la présidente, j'étais surpris pendant les débats sur le *FCC Bill* – comment certains politiciens – je ne dis pas tout – certains politiciens, chevronnés et expérimentés qui étaient supposés de donner l'exemple, se contredisaient avec ces mêmes principes qu'ils défendaient dans le passé. Parmi, il y avait l'honorable Collendavelloo qui disait être le

parrain de l'ICAC puisqu'il avait lui-même présidé le *Select Committee* sur la fraude et la corruption en 2001.

Et vous savez, Madame la présidente, ce qu'il avait dit dans le rapport sur le *Select Committee* sur la fraude et la corruption ? Permettez-moi de citer un extrait, Madame la présidente. Sur les pouvoirs de l'ICAC et du DPP, il disait ceci –

“We have read with alarm the considered opinion of some commentators who feel that ICAC must shoulder its responsibilities all the way and itself conduct the prosecution of cases it has investigated.”

On avait proposé à cette époque-là que l'ICAC aurait dû avoir les pouvoirs de poursuite et d'investigation. Mais l'honorable Collendavelloo, en 2021, n'était pas d'accord. *He said: “We do not agree!”* Alors, il vient justifier cela en disant que: “*By virtue of section 72 of our Constitution, the DPP has the sole and unfettered control over criminal prosecutions.* Il dit: “*Nothing that has been said can persuade us that an exception should be made in respect of fraud and corruption.*”

We believe that it is the DPP and the DPP alone who controls what has been done by ICAC in the course of the investigation and to decide whether the investigation should result in a prosecution. *Il continue, il dit: “The DPP is a highly respected institution in this country. The DPP’s decision may be found to be wrong, but the DPP must continue to act independently. To immerse the DPP in conquering two parts of investigative process is to cloud the DPP’s judgement from the very start. It would also be wrong to concentrate into ICAC the task of intelligence gathering, investigating and prosecuting at the same time.”*

This would lead to the creation – *regardez cela* – this would lead to the creation of a monster....

An hon. Member: MSM!

Mr Ramful: ...who would soon get out of control by reason of this over concentration of power. Et c'est ce qu'ils sont venus faire avec la FCC, Madame la présidente. *They have created a monster !* Heureusement pour le peuple, la population a réagi ! La population a réagi. On a gagné. Je félicite l'*Attorney General* et je félicite le Premier ministre. Aujourd'hui, on a restauré les pouvoirs constitutionnels du DPP.

Madame la présidente, je ne vais pas être long. Vous savez, there is one symbol and basic reason, les légistes vont le savoir, why the power to prosecute should remain with the

DPP. It is because the DPP is not a political nominee, but an independent judicial officer. When he takes his decision, he does not look at your political colour. He acts in the public interest as per the code of public prosecutors in order to uphold the integrity of the judicial system. Most importantly, he does so without fear or favour. He is only answerable to one institution: the Court of Justice. Not to the Prime Minister, not to the Leader of the Opposition!

Alors, c'est clair, Madame la présidente, que le MSM voulait créer, comme je l'ai dit, un monstre politique. C'était une loi régressive. Et encore une fois, je remercie le Premier ministre et l'*Attorney General* d'avoir pris l'initiative de redonner à notre DPP son indépendance sur toutes les poursuites criminelles. Merci, Madame la présidente.

Madam Speaker: Merci. Oui!

(6.14 p.m.)

Mr A. Duval (Fourth Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue): Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, let me say at the outset that in the PMSD, we welcome the amendments being brought by the Attorney General.

We welcome it because we have always, in the PMSD, fought for independence of institutions. We welcome it because under every PMSD government, there has been the working of institutions independently. We welcome it because, as rightly pointed by speakers before me, the PMSD has left its mark on this country's destiny throughout its years of existence through the positions it has taken to strengthen our Constitution, to strengthen independence of institution and to allow for institutions to work as intended by the Constitution.

Madam Speaker, there is *une différence de taille* however with this FCC Act and the Prosecution Commission which we tend to forget here in the debate. The hon. Attorney General has embarked on speaking on appointment, and that was the crux of the matter for the Prosecution Commission. It was not that it would exercise already the power of the DPP. It was that in the first proposal/ draft, the hon. Prime Minister would appoint directly the President of the Prosecution Commission and the Prosecution Commission had the power to direct the DPP to take or not to take an action. Refusal to abide by its directions would lead to the sacking of the DPP. That was the Prosecution Commission. That is the crux of the matter: appointment and termination of appointment.

It is a missed opportunity, however, Madam Speaker. The more so as the office is vacant at the moment. For the Director General of the FCC, we have waited, but we are missing the opportunity to change the mode of appointment.

In the PMSD, Madam Speaker, we have always strived to have, for institutions like the FCC and the ICAC, a mode of appointment similar, if not exact to that of the Director of Public Prosecution or the Chief Justice through the Judicial Legal Services Commission. I hope that this is the kind of amendment that the hon. Attorney General is thinking of bringing to the House. I hope in a not-too-distant future. Why, Madam Speaker? The ICAC, before the FCC, as rightly pointed out by hon. Uteem, did not have the powers to compound, did not have the powers to initiate persecutions or not to send reports to the DPP when it decided not to persecute, not to carry out a further investigation.

What powers did it have? It had virtually the same powers as the FCC. But that did not stop the ICAC from putting those enquiries, those declarations that were not favourable to government *dans le fond du tiroir*. Since its creation, the ICAC has been like that. So, what changes now, Madam Speaker, if the appointment is virtually the same? What difference is there in the appointment between the ICAC and the FCC, one might ask? Simply, that in the FCC, it is the President who appoints, after recommendation from the Prime Minister and after consultation with the Leader of the Opposition, whereas before, it was the Prime Minister appointing after consultation with Leader of the Opposition.

But, Madam Speaker, we have heard it so many times. In fact, the Leader of the PMSD himself, as Leader of the Opposition, complained so many times that the consultation exercise basically amounted to merely sending a letter to the Office of the Leader of the Opposition. And then, completely ignoring any consultative views that were provided to the Prime Minister!

Therefore, it is basically a rubber stamp exercise. So, Madam Speaker, that does not change. We will fill the position and that is the question – will we fill the position once again, and the change the mode of appointment like it has been for the Head of State, too late, too little? Or will we seize this opportunity and change the mode of appointment before filling in that vacancy? That is the question, I hope, the Attorney General will answer.

Madam Speaker, that power then to cover up – to use the words of hon. Uteem – is still here depending on the appointment that we make. Unfortunately, the wrong person at the head of the institution will be a *déjà-vu*. Therefore, to ensure that the appointment process is

without any doubt, that have independent, then we will, Madam Speaker, unfortunately, still raise these questions. Therefore, Madam Speaker, I hope that this is replied: will we fill the position pending the new body that is being promised? If so, are we filling that position after amendments, after the new legislation or are we contemplating to fill that position now? Madam Speaker, that is simply what I wanted to say.

On the whole though, Madam Speaker, I have to say something: true it is that the PMSD in 2016 has no doubt saved the destiny of this country with the Prosecution Commission. True it is that institutions have shown, again, where one government gives too much or too much influence that virtually, nearly all institutions can be influenced. Therefore, this change that is being promised starts with security of tenure at the level of the FCC and at the level of all other institutions that have been used so often to oppress in the past.

(Interruptions)

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Thank you very much. Hon. Deputy Prime Minister!

(6.21 p.m.)

The Deputy Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I won't spend much time over what we have just heard. He is sitting next to one of the culprits. They have made of Mauritius; what they have tried to make of the DPP ...

Mr Lesjongard: On a point of order, Madam Speaker!

Madam Speaker: He hasn't finished ...

Mr Lesjongard: The Deputy Prime Minister cannot treat me as culprit.

The Deputy Prime Minister: You are!

Madam Speaker: He hasn't finished his sentence.

Mr Lesjongard: No, I want him to withdraw what he has just said, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Prime Minister: You are guilty!

Mr Lesjongard: If we start like this...

An hon. Member: *Kat pat!*

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Prime Minister: The person who spoke just before him, the Member, told us what crime was committed against democracy, against the DPP with the Financial Crimes Bill, what they tried to do and what they did! And now he comes and gives us lessons? Shame on him, Madam Speaker! Shame!

An hon. Member: Shame! Shame!

The Deputy Prime Minister: Now, let us get to more serious things.

Mr Lesjongard: Madam Speaker, may I please? I raised a point of order...

The Deputy Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I hope he won't do that every five minutes, with your permission.

Mr Lesjongard: ... for the Deputy Prime Minister to remove the word 'culprit'.

The Prime Minister: Culprit, you are!

The Deputy Prime Minister: You are a culprit! You are guilty!

An hon. Member: *Coupable!*

The Deputy Prime Minister: *Devant l'histoire!*

Madam Speaker: I think you will take this as your being in a party and they are talking ...

Mr Lesjongard: No, you cannot treat somebody as culprit!

The Deputy Prime Minister: Culprit you are! *L'électorat vous a condamné !*

Mr Lesjongard: This is what you say!

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: *Coupable!*

The Deputy Prime Minister: You are a culprit!

So, Madam Speaker, I will get to more ...

Madam Speaker: Let him ...

The Deputy Prime Minister: ... of the happy hour.

Mr A. Duval: Madam Speaker, if I may on a point of order! It is clear in the Standing Orders that we may not comment on the conduct or character of a Member without bringing a

substantive motion. Therefore, I think this will be the proper course of action, especially since they have 64 Members!

The Deputy Prime Minister: Everybody speaking here has been condemning what you have done as a government in the case of MSM, and as a culprit with that government until the last general elections.

Mr Lesjongard: You cannot use these words.

The Deputy Prime Minister: So, Madam Speaker, I will do away, hoping that they will walk out. But please don't order them out; it is not worth it.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: You are making it very difficult for me, all of you.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Let me get to more serious things, Madam Speaker...

Madam Speaker: You are making it very difficult for me.

(At this stage, hon. Lesjongard left the Chamber)

The Deputy Prime Minister: *Ale, ale, ale!*

(Interruptions)

Pa kapav tande!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker, ...

Al pendi do!

Mr A. Duval: Madam Speaker!

The Deputy Prime Minister: You are staying?

(Interruptions)

Mr A. Duval: You want there to be no Opposition?

The Deputy Prime Minister: *Non, non !* There is one behind you!

Madam Speaker, let me get to more serious things.

Mr A. Duval: ... consolidating democracy!

The Deputy Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, this Government, our Government, has a very, very ambitious democratic agenda. As you know, Madam Speaker, we mean to make of Mauritius *une démocratie exemplaire*, and that is what we are doing today, and we will keep on doing. We want to make of Mauritius *une démocratie exemplaire après dix ans de viol et de crime contre la démocratie*.

C'est notre but et faire de l'île Maurice une démocratie exemplaire, cela veut dire quoi ? Je ne parlerai pas trop longuement là-dessus. C'est faire quoi ? C'est d'abord rendre au parlement toute sa dignité et tout son rôle et c'est déjà fait, pas complètement, nous avons encore beaucoup à faire. Mais déjà ce que nous avons fait pour rendre au poste de *Speaker*, au parlement, ses lettres de noblesse, c'est extraordinaire.

Ensuite, la *MBC*, c'est déjà fait mais nous avons encore beaucoup à faire. Mais, si on prend la peine de regarder la *MBC*, après dix ans de propagande quotidienne, nous allons dans la bonne direction.

Faire de l'île Maurice une démocratie exemplaire, c'est faire les élections régionales et mettre dans la constitution la démocratie régionale. Et là aussi, c'est déjà commencé ; les élections municipales sont derrière la porte et nous continuerons dans cette direction, *Madam Speaker*.

Faire de l'île Maurice une démocratie exemplaire c'est réussir une bonne réforme électorale que nous réussirons cette fois après avoir essayé, dans un passé pas trop lointain, le Premier ministre, moi-même, et tous ceux qui comprennent quelque chose à la démocratie.

Faire de l'île Maurice une démocratie exemplaire, c'est de venir de l'avant avec un *Protection of Information Act*, que nous ferons ; c'est dans notre programme.

Faire de l'île Maurice une démocratie exemplaire, c'est en finir avec les *provisional charges* qui ont existé jusqu'à présent et qui ont permis ce que nous savons qui s'est passé.

Faire de l'île Maurice une démocratie exemplaire, c'est rendre ses pouvoirs au *DPP*. Nous avons dit que nous allons faire cela ; non seulement rendre ses pouvoir aujourd'hui au *DPP* mais consolider ses pouvoirs et je reviendrai là-dessus à la fin de mon intervention.

Je peux parler encore mais faire de l'île Maurice une démocratie exemplaire pour nous c'est ne pas du bla-bla-bla comme ce que nous venons d'entendre. Nous sommes en train de faire vraiment de notre pays une démocratie exemplaire et nous sommes fiers de cela.

Aujourd'hui, c'est un début. C'est un *first step*! Mais un *first step* très important : de rendre tous ses pouvoirs au *DPP* ; c'est déjà énorme. C'est pourquoi moi aussi je salue, bien sûr c'est une décision du gouvernement pas de *l'Attorney General*.

C'est le gouvernement à travers *l'Attorney General* qui a fait un exposé magistral un peu plus tôt. C'est un premier pas, mais c'est un grand pas pour faire de l'île Maurice une démocratie exemplaire. Le but de ce projet de loi est *to restore the prosecutorial powers of the DPP*. C'est ce que nous faisons aujourd'hui. Ce que nous allons faire dans l'avenir, je reviendrais là-dessus à la fin de mon intervention.

Aujourd'hui, nous rendons au *DPP* tous ses pouvoirs usurpés par le MSM et ses complices jusqu'aux dernières élections. Il ne faut pas l'oublier, les crimes qui ont été commis. Aujourd'hui nous rendons à un *DPP* exemplaire lui aussi, tous ses pouvoirs mais, nous n'allons pas nous arrêter là. Déjà, c'est énorme, mais nous n'allons pas nous arrêter là. Nous (*l'Attorney General*, le gouvernement) viendrons avec un nouveau *Financial Crimes Bill*, à moins que ce soit remplacé par une autre loi encore plus démocratique, encore plus avant-garde que ce que nous avons jusqu'à présent mentionnée.

Cela viendra ! Aujourd'hui, ils sont plus pressés que tout le monde. Ceux qui ont essayé de tuer le *DPP*, aujourd'hui, ils trouvent que nous n'allons pas assez vite.

Enfin, il a pris son temps, mais c'est arrivé ! *Happy hour*!

Nous viendrons avec un full Bill ou une loi encore plus démocratique, encore plus solide pour remplacer le *Financial Crimes Commission Bill* d'aujourd'hui. Nous avons même dit que nous allons amender la Constitution. Nous allons voir des détails au gouvernement parce qu'il y a des nuances là-dessus. Comment le faire ? Faire quoi exactement ? Mais, nous avons dit que nous allons amender la Constitution pour que les pouvoirs plus étendus du *DPP* soient inscrits dans la Constitution. Nous viendrons avec cela après un *full discussion* dans le gouvernement. Est-ce que nous viendrons avec un *DPP Act* ? S'il le faut, oui. C'est *l'Attorney General* qui nous conseillera. Est-ce que nous viendrons donc avec un *full DPP Act* ?

Tout cela, nous le ferons, et je vous dirais franchement, Madame la présidente, qu'à chaque budget que nous avons voté depuis des années, *mo disan galoupe* ! Quand je vois que le *Local Government Service Commission*, une institution très importante, mais le *Local*

Government Service Commission dans nos *Estimates, stands alone*. Ils ont leur budget, un *standalone* sous le Premier ministre d'une façon générale alors que le *DPP* tombe sous le vote de l'*Attorney General* ? L'*Attorney General* d'aujourd'hui on peut lui faire confiance, mais dans le principe même, il faut que le *DPP* dans les *Estimates* que nous lui donnions tout ce qu'il a besoin comme pouvoir, comme indépendance dans la Constitution. Si nécessaire, à travers un *DPP Act*, mais dans les *Estimates* avant tout.

Nous allons voter un prochain budget, mais nous veillerons à ce que l'*Office of the DPP stands alone* comme une liste d'institutions qui *stand alone*. Donc, tout cela, nous avons dit que nous allons le faire et nous le ferons. Aujourd'hui c'est un pas, premier pas, mais un pas de géant. C'est déjà énorme. Nous allons voir bien qu'est-ce qu'il faudra mettre quand nous amenderons de façon plus poussée la loi, mais déjà c'est énorme, c'est fantastique ce que nous sommes en train de faire. J'avais envie de pleurer quand j'écoutais je crois le ministre Ramful qui citait Ivan Collendavelloo en 2001. C'était sous notre gouvernement et vraiment, il a été un ami, un ami personnel, mon avocat, un vrai démocrate qui aujourd'hui a fini comme eux, avec le MSM ? Mais, c'est triste à pleurer !

Enfin, c'est la vie, mais nous, nous sommes décidés ; le Premier ministre, moi-même, le Parti travailliste, le MMM, *Rezistans ek Alternativ*, Nouveaux Démocrates, nous tiendrons parole. Aujourd'hui, c'est un premier pas. Nous ferons beaucoup d'autres pas le plus rapidement possible pour faire de l'île Maurice vraiment une démocratie exemplaire.

Merci, Madame la présidente.

Madam Speaker: Thank you. Hon. Prime Minister!

(6.34 p.m.)

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, the Attorney General has been so clear and precise, and so have many orators, including the Deputy Prime Minister and others. I will try not to repeat what has been said.

The Attorney General comprehensively explained the need to restore constitutional order. This is why these amendments to the Financial Crimes Commission Act are necessary until we repeal the FCC Act as announced in the Presidential Address, I think in paragraph 10.

Today, what we are enacting, as the Deputy Prime Minister and others have also said, this is merely the starting point of a broad transformation. For years, our legal and investigative framework have suffered from inefficiency, political interference, and a lack of accountability.

The FCC, Madam Speaker, was used as a tool for persecution of opponents of the regime as so many before me have said. We must do more and patch up the system. We must build anew. That is the first step that we are doing. The people of Mauritius expect real change; they elected us for this, and we will deliver, I can tell the House.

Our goal is not simply to correct the past mistakes but to construct a modern enforcement body that operates beyond political cycles, and by that, I mean whoever comes. They will not come back, but whoever comes. It must be beyond the political cycle and effectively combat financial and organised crime. This will be our legacy. That is why, Madam Speaker, this Government will, in due course – as others have said – replace the Financial Crimes Commission Act. It will be replaced - we said that in the Presidential Address - by a National Crimes Agency, a new institution which will be independent, well equipped, professionally structured to tackle financial and serious crimes decisively.

As Minister Uteem has so well explained, all those who thought that they will have immunity, they will be protected, or they belong to such a community that you cannot touch them, this will not be the case. If they commit financial crimes, I ask them to think again because we will be ruthless against those who interfere with that Agency.

Building a credible investigative authority is not an easy task; it is complex. It will require careful planning and expertise with a solid legal framework. We must create an institution that people can trust, not what ICAC was. They must be able to trust them; it must be efficient, it must bear trust again, free from any external influence.

No one will be allowed to do it. We will draw inspiration, Madam Speaker, from international best practices and also seek the views of those who are already involved in our criminal justice system. That is why we need this amendment. It is a first step, so that the institution respects our democratic principles until we replace it. And we need to restore, Madam Speaker, the public confidence in the institutions that we bring up, ensure that justice is pursued with rigour and impartiality.

With today's amendment, we are securing the independence of the Director of Public Prosecutions. In fact, we are restoring what was taken away from the Director of Public

Prosecutions. When did you see, Madam Speaker, a Commissioner of Police challenging the DPP in Court? It has never happened before! It just shows the mentality of the MSM. They even went to that extent. They tried to arrest the former DPP. He had to run away from his house and get protection from a Judge in Court.

This is why we have to have this new National Crimes Agency, which will be empowered, as I said, to conduct enquires professionally, without any favouritism. Nobody will be allowed to intervene with them or interfere in the conduct of their investigations. They will have specialists; skilled financial investigators. I do not know whether some try not to do their job properly – we have this. They derail the enquiry, and you see the guilty goes away. This will not happen. There will be financial investigators who will know what to do. They will do the investigation. The decision will rest with the DPP. They must be separate; it cannot be together.

The Agency will have full authority to investigate. The cases will be based on facts, not on personal or political considerations. On facts! Then, there will be a scrutiny at the apex by the prosecution services. So, you will get checks and balances. This is why we also want to have a prosecution service, which will be set up under the aegis of the DPP.

During the past ten years, Madam Speaker, there has been unanimous condemnation of the ICAC. Unanimous! It became a politically perverse institution, and at the helm, a self-appointed monarch. To show that immoral minds know no limits, when in power, the previous regime – I find it an insult to the intelligence of Mauritians – adopted the Financial Crimes Commission Act, not only to prosecute opponents, but to stop certain investigations, as my colleague, hon. Uteem, explained so clearly. Files were closed. Angus Road is an example; he gave many examples. ICAC became paradoxically a symbol of State corruption. It violated the Constitution of Mauritius, attacking the functions of the DPP. This was a dark chapter of our history.

The former DPP himself has said that the FCC was created to usurp the power of the DPP. Furthermore, with the mass surveillance that we know happened, including members of the judiciary, including everybody, in fact, the former DPP said he realises now that what was being said in his office by his own people, maybe on the phone, the Police knew! Before they went to Court, they knew. Is this what we want for this country? Then, we abolish everything! But this will change!

A red line, I must say, a very red line has been crossed. This cannot be! Their minds were so corrupt that they were obsessively bent on replacing the Office of the DPP by the infamous, I think it was called Public Prosecution Commission. They appointed their own, I could say, scoundrels at the helm of all criminal prosecutions in our country. Hon. A. Duval is not here; his own father resigned. There were many other reasons probably, but that was what tipped him to resign.

What people should understand is that the decision to introduce the Bill was not by itself an isolated act. If you look at it, it was a broader scheme by the MSM: trying to take the powers away from the DPP, protecting those close to the regime or those who would dare to go and speak in their ear. All this was happening. What they really did was confiscate the major institutions of the country which were supposed to uphold justice and democracy in our country.

The goal of my Government is to put in place a system where those who break the law will have to face the legal consequences regardless of who they are. And certainly not a *politique de vengeance* as they did, where charges were brought against political opponents – I was a victim – and then, they try to concoct, fabricate evidence. Lawyers will know what it means. What a dangerous thing to do; to fabricate false evidence! I have been through this. I know what they did. Not a *politique de vengeance*, but true accountability. That is what we want! A system where institutions will function freely, diligently, and without any interference.

When entrusted to the right individuals, our institutions will ensure that those who have breached the laws, trampled on the rights of citizens or plundered our nation will not escape justice. I can tell you, believe me, Madam Speaker, they will not escape!

Our priority, Madam Speaker, is to build institutions that serve the interests of the whole nation, not one clique, one group or one community. No! The whole nation! Not political agendas, not individual ambitions, but the rule of law itself which has to prevail. This is what we are trying to do.

The future National Crimes Agency will be a model of integrity and competence. Enquiries will be done, and I say again, by professionals. If ever there are leakages, like it has happened just now, as we have seen, action will be taken. There will be sanctions.

Today marks the beginning of an essential reform. But we will not stop there, as the Deputy Prime Minister said very forcefully. We are committed to delivering a truly robust and transparent framework to uphold justice and combat crime. This is not just about amending laws, change a name and put another name. No! It is about shaping a system that serves all Mauritians.

In this effort, Madam Speaker, I take inspiration from the words of President Mandela who wrote, and I quote –

“I have walked that long road to freedom. I have tried not to falter; I have made missteps along the way. But I have discovered the secret that after climbing a great hill, one only finds that there are many more hills to climb. I have taken a moment here to rest, to steal a view of the glorious vista that surrounds me, to look back at the distance I have come. But I can only rest for a moment, for with freedom, comes responsibilities, and I dare not linger, for my long walk is not ended.”

Yes, we have come a long way. We have overcome many obstacles in this country. We have benefitted from the strides of giants before us. Tomorrow, younger generations - there are plenty of them here - will carry on across our bridge to the future. But, for now, Madam Speaker, there are many hills for us to climb. But we will climb them!

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Attorney General! You have got a mouthful of proposals.

(6.47 p.m.)

Mr Glover: Madam Speaker, having heard what the hon. Members of the House had to say today, it is clear that even the Opposition has nothing much to say about the very specific amendments brought about to the Financial Crimes Commission Act.

Indeed, if I refer to the speech of the hon. Leader of the Opposition when the FCC Act was put to Parliament last year, he rightly stated, the learned Leader of the Opposition at the time, that if this law needs to be repealed - because it would mean the destruction of the Office of the DPP and then of our civil liberties. In that respect, Madam Speaker, he said this Bill is an evil precedent.

So, I was a bit surprised to hear hon. A. Duval today make reference to the fact that this Bill, in fact, does not put an end to the possibility of a cover-up. I will come to that in a minute. On a lighter tone, having heard my learned colleagues of the House speak, since very young I have been dead scared of monsters, I don't like them, especially those created for a specific purpose, here for the dismantling of the prosecutorial powers of the DPP. That is what they wanted to do. And let us be clear, the FCC Act, as the Deputy Prime Minister and the Prime Minister have said very clearly, will be repealed in due course. Let me reassure my learned friend A. Duval that he is absolutely wrong when he says the power to cover-up still exists. It is not true, and I will explain why. You see, if you go through the many amendments brought in this Bill, you will have seen that the whole purpose of this Act is to restore the prosecutorial powers of the DPP in relation to the functions and powers of the FCC, that is, that when there is the possibility of stopping prosecution, the DPP will have his way, he will know what to do and what not to do.

Now, of course, these amendments do not go the whole way because we wanted to be very specific in order to ensure that these restrictive amendments today will be only and only a first step, but as the Deputy Prime Minister rightly said, it is indeed a big step in the right direction. We shall restore democracy, make no mistake, as quickly and as swiftly as possible.

So, I note that the amendments per se, the specific amendments have not been attacked in any way. Indeed, there cannot be any attack as the restoration of public confidence by these amendments is paramount, and this Government will not flinch and has gone as quickly and swiftly as possible to bring these first amendments to restore democracy and to make sure that the prosecutorial powers of the DPP are restored.

In fine, what we are doing today is simply restoring the powers of the DPP as provided in the Constitution, as all the Members of this House have stated today. The new law will come in the meantime, but, for now, we have plugged the loophole which would have allowed the FCC, if it was so minded, to stop an investigation which ought to be prosecuted. As the Prime Minister concluded this afternoon, this is the start of a long road that will lead to greater democracy, which our nation will be proud of and will be, of course, free to live in.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Thank you. Hon. Attorney General, you have to commend the Bill again to the House. Just commend the Bill to the House.

Mr Glover: I now commend the Bill to the House.

Madam Speaker: Then I need it to be seconded.

The Deputy Prime Minister rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a second time and committed.

COMMITTEE STAGE

(Madam Speaker in the Chair)

The Financial Crimes Commission (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill (No. 1 of 2025) 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 Financial Crimes Commission (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill (No. 1 of 2025) was read a third time and passed.

MOTION

GOVERNMENT PROGRAMME 2025-2029

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

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

Question again proposed.

(6.56 p.m.)

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

Madam Speaker, let me convey congratulations to the mover of the motion and all those who are delivering their maiden speeches. Madam Speaker, we had the privilege to

listen to some awe-inspiring speeches. I feel proud to be at long last in the temple of democracy and democracy will not only prevail but, under the leadership of Prime Minister, democracy is here today and here to stay. We have to live up to expectations of a nation. What is expected of us, Madam Speaker? Transparency, accountability, reaching out for a better outreach.

The people have spoken and the resounding mandate is a call for liberty, justice and solidarity. What have we witnessed since the last ten years: corruption, decadence and a government whose main agenda was to rip off this country. When the Prime Minister, in a reply to Parliamentary Question, stated that the State has been captured and we have to know the cost of the State capture. That cost has to be computed! On only one item we were told what the cost was. Why? Because big brother was watching.

If we compute the cost of state capture, it would run into several billions of rupees and we have to know who are those who pocketed this money. It is true as has been rightly stated, we are in a democratic country and the demarcation line between democratic institution has to be wide and not blurred, but, let me issue a note of warning to those who serve their pockets and probably will end up with a double hernia – let me tell them – they may enjoy armchair comfortability, they may relax but the time has come for them to be arrested, arrested under the provisions of the law as has been stated very clearly in this House. Yes, the powers of the DPP had to be restored but I am sure the DPP is not next to God. Some people say he is next to God but I'm sure he will motivate his decision in relations to cases of prosecution or no prosecution, cases of major importance.

This is democracy and democracy is prevailing and when we talk to people outside the ambit of this House, they feel that they are free at long last and at large. This is the reason why I say it and I say it to all of us – those who were in this House during the time that they were in power, we knew what we went through and as the then Leader of the Opposition, I had no choice but to move a Motion of Confidence in the Speaker; only seven months after the MSM government was sworn-in and we know the circumstances which provoked his departure and he was of course, replaced by the gatekeeper of the MSM. His appointment did not only make him a gatekeeper but the appointment, the nomination was a blatant rape of Parliamentary democracy, Madam Speaker. That's what it was and we knew that their politics was a politics of collusion, the collusion between the Leader of the House and the

Speaker and they turned the House into a walk-in, walk-out Parliament, selectively and arbitrarily picking on those who should be called to walk out.

This is the so-called democracy that prevailed, Madam Speaker. It is over! It is over, now it is a democracy which is deeply rooted and permeated into the lives of a nation; a nation which is on the walk for better freedom, Madam Speaker. So, that is why I say when we talk of State capture, there is a call for responsibility and those who have captured the State, should be made responsible and they have to answer before a Court of Justice.

Madam Speaker, when we make promises, we deliver but we deliver in relations to the provisions of the law. We do not act outside the perimetry of the law, we are law-abiding citizens. What prevailed in the past was cronyism prevailing over integrity, Madam Speaker. And it is precisely this cronyism which enabled them to hand out indiscriminately land to those who were not deserving at the expense of sectors like agriculture and blue economy because those core sectors were neglected and I will quote an architect of the green revolution of India, I will quote Dr. Swaminathan and read the message that he conveyed to student and farmers PhD students –

“If agriculture goes wrong, nothing else will have a chance to go right.”

And our nation’s food security, Madam Speaker, is at a crossroad. Yet, I have said it loud and clear, our policy is to eat what we produce and produce what we eat. Unfortunately, we have a high level of food imports in Mauritius while our local production remains below expectation and it is a situation which is untenable; one that calls for bold reform and decisive action. Under the previous regime, our food bill skyrocketed to over Rs60 billion while local production was left to stagnate. 80% of our food needs are imported, we harvested less than 12,000 tonnes of potatoes, 8000 tonnes of onions and imported more than 20,000 tonnes of fish or other seafood produced. The bulk of it is from fish farm at a cost of more than Rs550 million.

Madam Speaker, if I tell you that you are an inhabitant of a small island developing State, perhaps with a high vulnerability index but if I tell you that you are a citizen of the Ocean State, I am sure you will feel very proud but Mauritius is a coastal State. UK is not a coastal State. I am not going to refer to the ruling given by tribunal under gloss nor am I going to say what was the opinion given by the International Court of Justice nor the massive vote which we reaped at the Un General Assembly nor what the Prime Minister of UK stated in the House of Commons. No, I was not privy to the conversation which he had with our

Prime Minister but Mauritius is an ocean State and our Sovereignty is as clearly spelt out in our Constitution but what stops me tomorrow to say that I am going to give fishing licence for any fishing trawler company or any fishing vessel to go to any part of Chagos; to fish and bring the catch to be landed in our port.

What stops me from saying this, we are a sovereign democratic State. The Prime Minister of UK in the House of Commons has stated that Mauritius is entitled to its sovereignty. Hence, the Republic of Mauritius! Why should we be a net importer of fish produced when we can go to any part of Chagos barring Diego Garcia if the deal is sealed. We do not have any fisheries partnership agreement. We are on our own. We have the authority, the moral authority, legal authority, legitimate authority to fish in our Exclusive Economic zone, Madam Speaker.

So, let me say – it is time for us to achieve self-sufficiency. I do not see any reason why we have to be a net importer of fish produced and when I say self-sufficiency, not only going out for a bigger catch but I mean key crops like potatoes, onions and pulses produced locally and cross-border initiative for self-sufficiency.

I just came back from a summit. Of course, the hon. Prime Minister gave me the privilege to attend a summit which was held in Kampala on Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme. They wanted us to earmark 10% of our total public expenditure to invest in full production. I made it quite clear to them that there is a threshold that we can use because we are an Ocean State.

Inasmuch as we are going to invest in production inland, we have to make sure that we widen the circle of opportunities for those who are going to make the most of the Ocean State. But we have to modernise and we have to make sure that institutions deliver. We need the skills and the commitment, and this leadership is coming from this Government. For far too long, there has been indolence in this country. Time to wake up! As we say: arise, awake and stop not till the goals are reached! We are encouraging land optimisation through agro mapping and land use planning.

We are going to set up special agricultural zones together with Landscape, MSIRI and the Land Use Division of the Ministry and we will publish a map with clear leases on land suitability for specific crops. India is willing to offer immediate technical assistance to accelerate the process. It is time for us to think positively and invest in digital and precision agriculture. Artificial intelligence and biotechnology to boost productivity. Strengthening

Food and Agricultural Research Extension Institute (FAREI) to provide better support to farmers, notwithstanding interline cropping. Land lease will be encouraged to Public-Private Partnership.

Madam Speaker, a national insurance policy for agricultural resilience will be introduced. We are actually at the level of bid evaluation committee. Would you imagine, giving the opportunity to every farmer, every planter, every grower, every breeder to be entitled to an insurance scheme! We said it and we are going to deliver. The sugar industry, Madam Speaker, is part of our national heritage and we will ensure it remains viable. Sugarcane is one of the best carbon dioxide cleansers. The previous government failed to protect small planters allowing the industry to decline. But we will reverse this trend by increasing the sugar price to Rs35,000 per ton to support small planters. It may vary from Rs38,000 to Rs45,000 per ton of sugar.

Promoting special sugar for niche market to maximise return, expanding biomass production using bagasse, bamboos and cane thrash. What did they say? They said that 60% of our electricity needs will be generated from biomass. They were criminals! Today, there is a risk of power blackout because they failed to invest in renewable energy. They had no vision! This is the situation where we are! But my friend, the hon. Minister of Energy and Public Utilities is forcefully addressing this issue together with the Government.

Madam Speaker, securing local production, sugar production and invest in domestic sales for appropriate measure. But you may tell me, how is it you are promising to give planters Rs35,000 per ton from the proceeds of sale of the sugar? Where will it come from? We have a domestic market and this domestic market will become a guaranteed market with a guaranteed price for small planters. Why is it that the corporate sector from SADC or the corporate sector from elsewhere should take advantage of our remunerative market in Mauritius? That market should exclusively go to small planters in the name of special and differential treatment.

Madam Speaker, would you believe it, de-cultivation? I have met the promoters. These are being revitalised with special mechanised project and increase focus on value added products such as bubble tea and flavour infusion. Two high value-added projects are being implemented.

Let me now turn to the blue economy. As I stated earlier, we are an Ocean State and we all ocean citizen. We will drive the blue economy by turning the port of Port Louis into a

modern port to increase transshipment capacity and global competitiveness and ensuring our country becomes a key maritime hub in the region. There are four criteria which are essential to the smooth running of a modern port –

- (i) velocity of traffic;
- (ii) fronting insurance policy;
- (iii) bunkering and storage,
- (iv) stable and competitive pricing.

We have to draw lessons from the success of how the port in Namibia is being run and managed. It is a success story. As I said, there are lessons to be learned. Ship chandler is a big business in Walvis port. 40,000 ships ply the sea route of the western Indian Ocean. We should be a port of call for at least 20,000 vessels. Would you believe it if I say that there are no direct shipping lines between many African ports and Port Louis nor direct shipping line between Mauritius and India? Under the decadent and filthy regime of the MSM, Mauritius received a low-ranking in-Container Port Performance Index 2022 reported by the World bank! It came at a measly 327th out of 344 ports globally! An abysmal performance indeed!

So, as I have said earlier, we have to expand sustainable fisheries. The construction of a fishing port; the setting up of an international auction market; strengthening, monitoring and surveillance to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing; developing marine biotechnology to exploit high value oceanic resources, and promoting aqua culture as a viable alternative to traditional fishing. Vietnam is willing to share its experience and partner with Mauritius. Launching a second National Dialogue on the Ocean Economy to drive policy innovation – the last one was held in 2013! –; setting up the largest marine protected area to ensure long term ocean sustainability; developing blue carbon sinks as part of our commitment to climate change mitigation. We will also implement a natural marine protected area to enhance biodiversity and establish a blue carbon sink, aligning with our sustainability commitment. Mauritius has a leading role to play on the biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I am just about to conclude. Let me remind the House that climate change is a direct threat to life in our marine ecosystem. It is impacting on our marine ecosystem, a direct threat to food security. To build resilience, we will expand reforestation and afforestation efforts to protect soil biodiversity. Introducing smart irrigation systems and

water harvesting techniques, the construction of Rivière des Anguilles Dam is long overdue. The hon. Minister of Energy and Public Utilities has given firm assurance he will deliver.

Madam Speaker, I have reached almost the end of my speech. As we say, we are here today and here to stay, but also here to deliver. As an alliance which understands the meaning of *changement*, *changement* is going to be meaningful and effective. The only factor which remains constant in life is change. So, we have opted for change, hands up and outreached to one and all.

Thank you very much.

(7.18 p.m.)

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Member!

Mr A. Duval (Fourth Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue): Yes, Madam Speaker, thank you. So, Madam Speaker,...

Madam Speaker: Speak up! Speak up!

Mr A. Duval: I am speaking up. I am just...

Madam Speaker: Getting organised!

Mr A. Duval: Yes, trying to!

Madam Speaker, the Government Programme, like most Government Programmes, sounds good on paper, but, then, the real test is always in the delivery. It is an ambitious programme. It is regretfully vague in places where clear promises have been made and sometimes hard to read, for example, between the line of free transportation, I still have some difficulties in understanding what Government meant in the paragraph – ‘we will put everything in place to pave the way for free transportation’, whether or not that means that we will see free transportation.

Basically, Madam Speaker, the Programme is ambitious; it sounds good, but the proof of the pudding is in the eating. We will see to it that Government implements its agenda and we will comment as and when we see these being done. I have said it before, *cela mérite d’être dit, le gouvernement a eu une chance que peu avant ont eu pour apporter un vrai changement. Et, même si, par exemple, en tournant la seconde page du programme, on voit de belles promesses –*

“Government will foster ethics and integrity as core values...”

Donc, on voit une promesse d'intention de changer réellement la gouvernance, et je ne peux m'empêcher, Madame la présidente, de faire un parallèle entre le cas des dépenses électorales à l'époque des *Kistnen Papers* qui avait été, à l'époque, repris ici dans la Chambre par le leader de l'opposition d'alors, l'honorable Mohamed, qui avait été repris, bien sûr, par *Rezistans ek Alternativ* sur les dépenses électorales au-dessus du palier légal qui, à juste raison, on en avait fait tout un plat et qui s'était même ensuivi d'une *Private Prosecution* en cour de justice, et ici, dans le cas de déclaration faite par voie d'affidavit ...

Madam Speaker: But this is not on the Programme.

Mr A. Duval: Well, ethics and integrity is.

Madam Speaker: Yes.

Mr A. Duval: And if you will allow me, Madam Speaker, electoral reform, political financing, free and fair election, all of which is on the Programme. So, this falls within that.

Now, again, ...

Madam Speaker: Except, you don't go in the nitty-gritty of what you just said because it is still pending.

Mr A. Duval: Madam Speaker, if you will not pre-empt what I am saying and allow me to deliver my speech, being the only here, save and except for hon. Franco Quirin who is independent, of the Opposition.

Madam Speaker: Carry on!

Mr A. Duval: Thank you. What I was saying, Madam Speaker, again, we do not need to wait for a constitutional amendment to bring about free and fair elections, to bring about the principles of ethics and integrity in our electoral process, and we should treat matters of the same nature similarly. This is why I can only but recall how *Kistnen Papers* were being treated and I can only see, here, the paradox that this is being treated as if it didn't happen. In fact. Madam Speaker, ...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: I did not follow you. I can't follow you.

Mr A. Duval: *Si j'en crois aux déclarations qui ont été faites par certains membres du gouvernement qui sont satisfaits des explications*, then I understand that it is not an issue.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Understand what?

Mr A. Duval: I don't want to go and name who said what. They will recognise themselves, but it has been that. Madam Speaker, this is a speech on the Government Programme.

Madam Speaker: Yes.

Mr A. Duval: It is very wide and has been commented on largely. I will simply say, Madam Speaker, that we do not need to wait for the implementation of that part of the constitutional amendments to put the ethics and integrity in practice. If Members of Cabinet are now embroiled in what appears to be the start according to ...

The Deputy Prime Minister: On a point of order, Madam Speaker!

Madam Speaker: Yes.

The Deputy Prime Minister: A real point of order! We know what is taking place; we know that the Electoral Commissioner is looking into the matter, I am sure. If it is going to the Police, the Police will be looking into the matter, but he cannot, in the House, interfere into an ongoing enquiry if there is one.

Madam Speaker: Really, you can't.

Mr A. Duval: Alright!

Madam Speaker: I ruled and I tried to tell you. I tried to tell you. It is not sub-judice yet...

Mr A. Duval: Yes!

Madam Speaker: ... but it is still being investigated.

Mr A. Duval: Like all cases which are referred to from the past government, we understand; like all of them. What I am going to say simply is that ethics and integrity...

Madam Speaker: Okay. Carry on with ethics.

Mr A. Duval: ... would entail resigning from Cabinet until the provisions, in fact, of the law - there is a mechanism in the law to apply, as you may know, Madam Speaker, until those provisions are satisfied. That, in my opinion...

Madam Speaker: But you do not ...

Mr A. Duval: I am merely commenting ...

An hon. Member: Collect this man!

Mr A. Duval: ... would be what needed to be done.

Madam Speaker: No, you cannot ...

The Deputy Prime Minister: Call him to order, Madam Speaker!

Mr A. Duval: The more so, Madam Speaker, ...

Madam Speaker: Hon. Member ...

An hon. Member: Collect this man!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: You have been sitting here ... I did not even hear.

Hon. Member, you have been sitting...

(Interruptions)

May I?

Hon. Member, you have been sitting in this Chair. You know how very difficult it is. I gave a ruling. Please, carry on with the Government Programme.

Mr A. Duval: I am, Madam Speaker. Would you like me to quote?

Madam Speaker: Yes!

Mr A. Duval: Okay, I will quote.

Madam Speaker: But do not ...

Mr A. Duval: Yes, I will quote.

So, one must read the Government Programme, page 2 –

“Government will foster ethics and integrity as core values in all walks of life”

Page 3, there will be an Electoral Commission to be set up to bring reforms in our Electoral System.

We talked about the rights of recalling Member of Parliament.

Madam Speaker: Yes!

Mr A. Duval: “To enhance transparency in the political sphere, combat corruption and ensure free and fair elections [new legislation will be introduced for] funding of political

parties”. So, it is relevant to what I am saying. What I am merely saying, Madam Speaker, is that my understanding is that this should be considered, when I read the phrase –

“Government [which] will foster ethics and integrity as core values.”

Now, Madam Speaker, let us about the same page 3. We are talking about anti-defection provisions; in the same chapter, we talk about consolidation of democracy. Now, Madam Speaker, as you see, I am alone here; the Leader of Opposition has walked out. Rightly so; I would have done the same had I not had to make this speech and because some are being bullies.

(Interruptions)

Let’s not forget, we are two in this Parliament ...

The Deputy Prime Minister: Two and a half!

(Interruptions)

Mr A. Duval: ... and we have to listen to bullies.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Member ...

Mr A. Duval: To a bully, in fact!

An hon. Member: Bully?

Madam Speaker: If you carry on in this vein, ...

An hon. Member: *Taler to kone ki enn bully!*

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: ... it is not going to help anybody. Don’t forget I have come to this House to uphold the dignity of the House. We know what has happened before; we don’t want this to happen again. So, I have told you in the past, I will defend the rights of everyone, including the rights of the Opposition, and you have seen how I have acted up to now. So, don’t overdo it; don’t put me in a difficult position. That also goes for everybody else.

Mr A. Duval: Yes, Madam Speaker. So, I was talking about the anti-defection provisions. I was saying, we are two! *Deux malheureux membres de l’opposition!*

Madam Speaker: Mais c’est comme ça !

Mr A. Duval: Hopefully three soon!

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Prime Minister: *Koste! Koste!*

Mr A. Duval: ... but for now, we are two!

Madam Speaker: You see, you are provoking!

Mr A. Duval: No, I am not! Madam Speaker, I am making my speech. Am I not allowed to express my views and comments on the issue?

Madam Speaker: Don't talk about the independent Member.

Mr A. Duval: But why is that? I am talking about Parliament, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: He can defend himself.

Mr A. Duval: Okay, fair enough! I won't talk about hon. Quirin.

Madam Speaker, anti-defection provisions!

As I said, we are two, and Government has expressed the intention to consolidate democracy. That is clear from the Electoral Programme; that is clear from the Government Programme. But, Madam Speaker, one can only but ponder why is it that after the election, 60-0 plus 2 MPs from Rodrigues as is the custom, 62 for...

An hon. Member: Four from Rodrigues!

Mr A. Duval: Government did not see it a problem. Knowing how the Best Loser System works, how myself, hon. Lesjongard and two other Members have been appointed as Best Losers for the Opposition. I am sure, Madam Speaker, you are well aware of the provisions, the mechanism of the Best Loser system. So, the four MPs *repêchés sous le système du Best Loser ont été repêchés pour servir l'Opposition*.

Madam Speaker: *Je n'ai jamais...*

(Interruptions)

Members! I know this very well. You cannot say that. When you have the Best Loser System, if you look at the First Schedule or the Second Schedule of the Constitution, it does not say that you are going to be in the Opposition. I think hon. Bérenger has been a Best Loser in the past. It does not say where you are going.

Mr A. Duval: Well, Madam...

Madam Speaker: You only... Let me say it. I know the Constitution fairly well. It only says that so-and-so, because *il y a un calcul, on va nommer monsieur untel ou madame unetelle, mais on ne dit pas où cette personne doit siéger. Je n'ai jamais vu cela nulle part!*

Mr A. Duval: Madam Speaker, it follows that if two different alliances have faced each other at an election in Rodrigues, that two of them must be from the Opposition...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: No, I will not....

The Deputy Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, on a point of order!

Madam Speaker: Yes, yes.

The Deputy Prime Minister: We have a Constitution, we have an Electoral Commission; we go by the law. He cannot be allowed to challenge what has happened. He is out of order!

Madam Speaker: Of course, hon. Member...

(Interruptions)

You have already gone beyond your time because I am giving so many rulings!

Mr A. Duval: I understood from the...

Madam Speaker: I will give you time.

Mr A. Duval: No, but I...

Madam Speaker: I will give you a little bit more time...

Mr A. Duval: Madam Speaker...

Madam Speaker: ...but you cannot raise such issues in this debate!

Mr A. Duval: It is our understanding with the Whip that time has not been limited, curtailed for this debate for the Opposition.

Madam Speaker: Of course! Of course!

Mr A. Duval: It is not!

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: Come back to earth!

Madam Speaker: I have. I have...

An hon. Member: Happy hour...

Mr A. Duval: I am not aware of the time allocated to me!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: But don't... in any case...

(Interruptions)

Okay, I will give you time. You had ten minutes from the paper that I have. If you would have called on me this morning, we would have sorted things out.

(Interruptions)

Mais, I will invite you next time to come and see me and I say that...

(Interruptions)

DPM, please! I am saying to everybody...

Mr A. Duval: Okay, let me move on since I have no time...

Madam Speaker: No, but let me say to everyone. You are free to come and see me in my office when you do not understand something, or if you want, you can contact me even by phone. We did talk on the phone today.

Mr A. Duval: Yes, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Okay, I am giving you some more time but do not...

Mr A. Duval: So, how much time do I have exactly? 10 minutes?

An hon. Member: 10 minutes!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: You did have ten minutes, but you are left with five minutes now.

Mr A. Duval: Okay, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: I give you five minutes now.

Mr A. Duval: Let me move on.

Madam Speaker: Yes.

Mr A. Duval: I come back to the answers...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Members!

Mr A. Duval: ...given by the Prime Minister on the last occasion during the Prime Minister's Question Time regarding the massive scandal, that is, phone tapping.

Madam Speaker: Yes.

Mr A. Duval: Right. Now, there is provision in the Government Programme to bring legislation to, of course, ensure that covert surveillance is carried out strictly and necessarily for the purpose of prevention of crime. However, from the reply given by the Prime Minister, the questions arise now as follows with regard to the uncovering of data that is being done.

The first question is whether this legislation which I suspect will come after the exercise of enquiry has reached sufficient stage of uncovering data. I would ask the Prime Minister to come up with a proper safeguard. Either, I have asked for the appointment of a Commission of Inquiry, that is, to shed light on the whole affair and I think he has understood the point. But the other point, with regard to data that has now been uncovered, which is being retrieved, I am asking the Prime Minister, pending this new legislation, to put it under some sort of judicial oversight, judicial control so we know, we are sure that data which – do not forget is unlawfully obtained anyway – is not subject to, and I am not saying by the Prime Minister, I am not saying that. I am saying by any person who might be same persons who

have done it before. How do we know? So, make sure if you are not prepared and I think you should go with the Commission of Inquiry, make sure that you put proper standards, safeguards; independent safeguards in place before uncovering the data which you were confident in your answer, hon. Prime Minister, that you would have got.

So, that is my question.

Secondly, Madam Speaker, I hope that this new legislation will be set up and headed by either a former Judge of the Supreme Court or a former Judge of the Commonwealth as an oversight so that we ensure...

Madam Speaker: You do not mean as an oversight. That would mean something else.

Mr A. Duval: Well, as a form of control.

Madam Speaker: I know what you mean, but it is not the word.

Mr A. Duval: The Commission would have oversight of the actions.

Madam Speaker: Okay.

Mr A. Duval: It is what I mean, as an oversight of whatever is being done to ensure that it is for covert surveillance in line with the detection of crime and national security. We understand; perhaps it cannot be made through a Parliament Committee because of sensitive information but there has to be some control and oversight.

Now, with regard to the appointment of senior officials, Senior Officials Appointment Committee, I have read in their programme that it is to be done *à la Seychelloise*. This was not said in the Government Programme but it is said in the manifesto, *à la Seychelloise*. It says –

« Recrutement ou nomination des responsables des institutions publiques importantes par un Constitutional and other Appointments Authority à la Seychelloise (...) »

And, Madam Speaker, do you know how it is done in Seychelles, the Constitutional Appointment Authority (CAA)? First of all, the composition is key. Appointment, that was my point to the hon. Attorney General earlier as well. The appointment is key and how is the appointment made? There, there is President obviously with executive powers. Out of five

members of the Commission, he appoints two. The Leader of Opposition appoints two and the four members agree on the appointment of the Chairperson – the fifth member. Any subsequent filling of seats is done in the same manner.

Now, the appointments to be made, Chief Justice. There they call it Auditor General similar to the Director of Audit and Attorney General etc. Other important constitutional appointments are done in a transparent manner. There is a call for candidacy. Then of course, it will go through the applications and then once it has deliberated, it will make recommendations to the President. And for the President to not act on the deliberations, he would have to have a reason, a valuable one and if there is more than one recommendation, then notes are given to the President saying that this choice is better or this choice.

So, Madam Speaker, the question is: is this Senior Official Appointment Committee *à la Seychelloise* – because this is what is done in Seychelles, this is the crux of it.

Madam Speaker: Do not repeat yourself, you are...

Mr A. Duval: Is this...

Madam Speaker: Time is almost up.

Mr A. Duval: Is this Commission Committee...

Madam Speaker: Please, round up.

Mr A. Duval: ...going to be done...

Madam Speaker: Round up!

Mr A. Duval: Do we mean *à la Seychelloise* in that we are going to have parity of members appointed by the Executive and by the Leader of Opposition? Is this what you mean or is it merely a board, a commission that recommends? How is it going to recommend? How is it going to invite for candidacy? All of this, I hope, will be explained...

Madam Speaker: Now...

Mr A. Duval: ...by Members of *l'Alliance*, but, Madam Speaker, I...

(Interruptions)

The Leader of Opposition is not here. He is not.

Madam Speaker: No, but you cannot take his time!

Mr A. Duval: We are two Members of the Opposition...

(Interruptions)

...and I have had to deal with this for half of the speech! So, I would ask you for some additional time.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: I gave you...

Mr A. Duval: Otherwise, you should have stopped them, Madam Speaker!

Madam Speaker: I gave you five more minutes. I am giving you one minute to round up because...

Mr A. Duval: Well, Madam Speaker, there is a lot to say!

Madam Speaker: There was no need for you to explain the Seychelles' method!

Mr A. Duval: There is, Madam Speaker, because that is important! Because it is said black on white; it is a promise! I am merely seeking explanations as to why *à la seychelloise* has not been referred to. I can go on. The case of, for example, provisional charges...

Madam Speaker: You are not rounding up!

Mr A. Duval: I will round up.

An hon. Member: He is arguing, but...

Madam Speaker: Because you know how many things...

Mr A. Duval: I will round up.

Madam Speaker: You know how many issues one can raise regarding that programme?

Mr A. Duval: Yes, I will round up, Madam Speaker. I will round up with provisional charges. It is not part of the programme.

Madam Speaker: Okay!

Mr A. Duval: And I hope, I hope because we have seen the abuse of provisional charges.

An hon. Member: *Pe fer cauchemars lor la!*

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: So, you are making a proposal.

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: *To pena nanien, to pe koz dan...!*

(Interruptions)

Mr A. Duval: I think there is consensus on the abuse of the system and the practice of provisional charges.

Madam Speaker: Exactly! That's what I have gathered.

Mr A. Duval: I hope! I call upon the Attorney General.

And I must say, Madam Speaker, I cannot just criticise, that the Attorney General is doing a remarkable job in the programme with regard to the legislation that he is bringing. I will say the same for the Minister of Education. I think he has done a remarkable job as well. But for the rest, Madam...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Chut ! Il est en train de faire des compliments. Essayez de rester tranquille !

(Interruptions)

Mr A. Duval: For the rest, Madam Speaker, I will simply say, the proof of the pudding is in the eating.

Madam Speaker: Of course!

Mr A. Duval: If I can conclude, Madam Speaker, I will conclude on only one thing. According to the Moody's latest report, and if we believe Mr Sushil Khushiram, who is a respected economist...

Madam Speaker: Don't bring foreigners in the debate, please!

Mr A. Duval: ...if we believe the analysis...

Madam Speaker: I have read it, but don't bring him there!

Mr A. Duval: ...fiscal consolidation which is being expected from this Government means increasing revenue, that is, taxes, and decreasing spending. I will finish by saying that half of this programme provides for increased spending on social benefits, which according to Mr Khushiram, is the obvious...

The Deputy Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, we all read the report.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Mr Khushiram is not here!

The Deputy Prime Minister: Enfin!

Madam Speaker: Somebody else did that also on the other side. We cannot bring strangers...

Mr A. Duval: I will table, if you want, his report.

The Deputy Prime Minister: *Pa konn nanien sa...*

Madam Speaker: No, you are making a speech! You are making a speech!

Mr A. Duval: But I am making a speech!

Madam Speaker: Don't table anything! It is not time for tabling! You are supposed to round up now!

An hon. Member: Time over!

Mr A. Duval: I am rounding up by saying Moody's expects Government, whether they form that expectation on their own or through consultation, to increase revenue, that is, taxes and decrease spending. It must be very difficult for any government, not just this one, to execute the programme on which they have been elected.

The Deputy Prime Minister: *Atann budget!*

(Interruptions)

Mr A. Duval: So, Madam Speaker, that is the conclusion. The conclusion is that...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Wait for the pudding to be ready! Wait for the pudding to be ready!

Mr A. Duval: The conclusion is, Madam Speaker...

Madam Speaker: I have read Khushiram's...

Mr A. Duval: Yes, I am coming to the conclusion.

An hon. Member: *Pou fer konklizion...*

Mr A. Duval: Madam Speaker, if I am being interrupted like this...

Madam Speaker: But you have said three times that you are concluding!

Mr A. Duval: But I have to repeat myself!

(Interruptions)

I cannot even hear myself thanks to the remarks.

(Interruptions)

You are not putting order! I am sorry to say, Madam Speaker!

Madam Speaker: It is difficult because of time. You know why? Because it is a difficult time of the night. You know what happens when people are hungry. You know!

An hon. Member: Thirsty! Thirsty!

Mr A. Duval: Madam Speaker, let me simply say...

An hon. Member: You know when people are thirsty!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order! Order!

Mr A. Duval: If I get...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker, if I get interrupted 10 times, I have to repeat myself 10 times. Because every time I start a sentence, someone behind me is making comments. In front of me, they are making comments.

Madam Speaker: But they would not...

Mr A. Duval: If they allow me to conclude, Madam Speaker, I will.

Madam Speaker: I have allowed you three times already!

Mr A. Duval: No, not you, Madam Speaker. Those around! Those who do not want to listen to that one Opposition MP making his speech.

(Interruptions)

So, Madam Speaker, my conclusion is...

Madam Speaker: Please keep quiet so that we will be able to listen to that conclusion.

The Deputy Prime Minister: No!

Madam Speaker: It better be very good.

Mr A. Duval: I have trimmed down my speech by 95%. I will come to the most important, the conclusion. In light of Moody's expectations that it has formed...

The Deputy Prime Minister: *Atann bidze!*

Mr A. Duval: ...and, in fact, in light of what experts are saying, they should not wait for the budget. These should come now.

Madam Speaker: Okay!

Mr A. Duval: In light of the fact that Statistics Mauritius, that the Financial Secretary, who, according to the State of the Economy Report, has played a role in falsifying figures. These experts are saying he has to be taken to task. Then, I will ask the hon. Minister of Finance, the Prime Minister, that...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker, we...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Mais moi, je vous écoute !

Mr A. Duval: But I can't, I am sorry!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Je vais lever la séance si ça continue ! Laissez-le terminer!

Mr A. Duval: But then, should I just talk in this noise? That's it?

Madam Speaker: No, but...

Mr A. Duval: Is it just the point of talking?

Madam Speaker: You are taking time to finish your sentence!

Mr A. Duval: Because I am getting interrupted, Madam Speaker! I am trying to make a speech; I am getting interrupted at every word I say!

Ms Anquetil: *C'est déjà vingt minutes !*

Mr A. Duval: Look, if it is like that, I will sit down. The Prime Minister will answer!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Okay. Hon. Members, I know it is difficult.

Mr A. Duval: It is difficult to be a single Opposition!

The Deputy Prime Minister: *Aster to'nn konpran!*

Madam Speaker: Hon. Member!

Mr A. Duval: *Ki aster?*

(Interruptions)

Ki aster? Mo pa ti donn twa bien ? Pa ti donn twa bien ?

Madam Speaker: Ah là, ça va pas là!

Mr A. Duval: *Pa ti donn twa bien ?*

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members!

Mr A. Duval: *Al guete! Mo ti donn 15 minit adisyonel lor PNQ...*

The Deputy Prime Minister: *Souser!*

Mr Bhagwan: *To'nn bien zouir laba !*

Mr A. Duval: *Al guete! Al guete!*

The Deputy Prime Minister: *Souser!*

Mr A. Duval: *Al guete!*

Mr Bhagwan: *To'nn bien zouir!*

An hon. Member: *Maja karo!*

Mr A. Duval: *Al guete !*

Madam Speaker: Stop it!

(Interruptions)

Stop it, hon. Members!

Mr A. Duval: *Al guete !*

Mr Bhagwan: *To pa dir pou MSM...*

Madam Speaker: Stop it!

Mr A. Duval: *Lor PNQ Kistnen, mo'nn donn 15 minit adisyonel mwa! Personn pa'nn fer sa dan PNQ!*

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: I am not going to tolerate this anymore!

An hon. Member: *Pas par linpos pou gagn pansion ! Pansion Speaker!*

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: I am raising now! We are going to break for one hour for dinner. Yes, we need one hour to get back to our senses!

At 7.46 p.m., the Sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 8.55 p.m. with the Deputy Speaker in the Chair.

The Deputy Speaker: Please be seated!

Dr. the hon. Mrs Jeetun!

The Minister of Financial Services and Economic Planning (Dr. Mrs J. Jeetun): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as I stand here today and I have to say it is the biggest privilege of my life to serve the people of my country.

For too long our country has been held back politically, socially and economically. It is time for us to move forward to break the deadlock and to set ourselves free. We want more, we demand more. More for Mauritius, more for the people of Mauritius. But before I talk about how to achieve that, let me tell you why this is so personal to me.

My story reflects the experiences of many Mauritians. Born in Triolet to a bus driver who was barely literate and a mother who never went to school and never had the opportunities in life. I saw personally both the problems our people suffer and the determinations that define them. Education transformed my life as it has for so many others.

Our economy has grown rapidly and we are one of the top performing countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. Our country is transformed, but today we are at a crossroad, not taking us forward but allowing us to slide backward. Look at the state we are in. Look at the state of our economy. Look at the state of our failing infrastructure, failing health service, unreliable water supplies, energy sector at the brink of a collapse, roads with one of the highest death rates in the world, inflation, cost of living crisis, and too many great brains, too many talents leaving our country for foreign countries. Look at the state of our institutions: lacking basic integrity and trust, *adharna* – immorality as Lord Krishna would have said to Arjun in Bhagavad Gita – debates suppressed, dissent squashed, contracts not issued fairly but given through nepotism, drugs, mass surveillance everywhere we see, there was evil.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the foundation of our country is broken. The foundation of our society is broken. I love my country and I am very proud of our country. Today, we demand more from Mauritius. The people have voted to end the era of moral decay, the era of economic decay, to eradicate the evils. The people have voted for change. The people, Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, now expect delivery. They demand execution and they want to see the results and this is precisely what this government is going to do. The Presidential Address – ‘A Bridge to the Future’ is not a long list of good intentions and plans. We will deliver it piece by piece. We will prioritise where needed, not everything can be done in the first few months of our mandate or the first year. We will need to adapt to changing circumstances if needed but our commitment to the people of this country is that come what may, we are going to build and rebuild the foundation of this country inch by inch. We will fix the economy; we will fix the debt problem and we will fix the issue of trust in public institutions. No more consumption-driven economic model which has been a recipe from hell for our household because of the dependency on imports.

As the House is aware, government has put in place a Steering Committee for the monitoring of delivery of its program for the next five years and under the able leadership of the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister with their strategic vision, maturity and wisdom, we will establish clear KPIs for delivery. Two months ago, we took cognizance of the state of the economy and the fiscal mess that the country was in. It was nothing less than a wake-up call. We found ourselves at the brink of a disaster and we feared from the worst from Moody’s. Last week, we learnt that Moody’s maintained their rating of BAA3 but downgraded from stable to negative. As an expert has so rightly put it recently, this is Moody’s final warning. We have a year to 18 months to sort out this economic mess that we have found ourselves in at the start of the road to recovery, the bridge to future.

There will be tough times ahead while fiscal consolidation is pursued, increasing government’s revenue, reducing government’s spending, reducing government deficit, public debt to be brought to a tolerable level.

So, big challenges lay ahead. We will need to stay strong, stay resilient and stay together. We will need to stay focused and aligned while we navigate these choppy waters over the coming month but I am convinced that, Mr Deputy Speaker Sir that the people of this country have voted pour un “*langage de verité*” and we will stand together to fight this battle because we can either continue to close our eyes and pretend we push the can down the

road as the previous government did but we are a country of hard-working people. We will get back to work and the reward will follow.

Let me commend the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister for the vision to re-establish the Ministry of Financial Services and Economic Planning. As a nation, we need to understand and appreciate that they want to leave a legacy; a legacy for the future generations, a country standing on solid foundation and a vision and a roadmap for the future and I thank them profoundly for giving me this portfolio. For too long, our country has lacked a clear, cohesive and coherent vision.

Today, the world is changing in an unimaginable way. The financial crisis post-COVID, post-Ukraine war, nations and enterprises are grappling in unknown territories, uncharted waters. Climate change is impacting people's life profoundly. Technology is moving so fast that what comes out today is obsolete tomorrow and populism that feeds on social media shaking the core of our democracies all around the world. It is in this background and context that the Economic Planning Ministry has been restored and will set out the vision for the next 10 /20/25 years. We will not only produce a vision but also a roadmap for the execution of that vision with clear target and achievable goals, setting out resources needed to execute that plan and most importantly, evaluation and monitoring so we can keep track of the progress, adapt and change when needed.

Our traditional sectors have served us well but in the new world order, we no longer can have comparative advantage in many of those sectors. We cannot compete with low-cost countries and as Raghuram Rajan has so well said –

“We will need to break the mould, assess our strength and weaknesses, lay the foundation for new sectors to emerge, move up the value chain in existing sectors such as financial services, reshape our future economic foundation and development model that is fit for the new world order.”

So, the long-term vision with a clear roadmap for 2050 is what we will produce. This is the new Mauritius for the next generation. So, our youngsters are inspired not to leave the country and can see a future for themselves here. We will elaborate a National Planning Framework to provide the structure and coordination mechanism needed to develop and implement the national plan by ensuring that all sectors, all stakeholders and resources align to achieve long-term sustainable development.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, engagement is key. No development will be successful without the full participation of the people. An economic and social development for the people should be with the people. The participation of citizens, academia, businesses and civil society organisation in shaping Mauritius future enhances ownership, promotes accountability and cultivates a stance of national unity. My Ministry would therefore ensure broad-based national consultation with all stakeholders in the process of formulation of economic strategies and reform. The National Planning Framework will align national efforts towards a common vision, optimising limited resources adapting to global challenges and ensuring accountability and transparency.

The National Planning Framework would be more than just a tool, it will be a structure to unite, to prioritise and coordinate efforts to develop and achieve a sustainable national vision. By ensuring efficient resource use, by fostering stakeholder collaboration and by addressing global challenges, the framework lays the foundation for a resilient inclusive and prosperous future. We will ensure, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that planning is followed by effective implementation, underpinned by accountability, efficiency and the required means to realise those projects.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, due to lack of cohesive economic planning in the past, we have missed out on significant investment and job creation opportunities. We will therefore strengthen decision-making process by feeding economic and social analysis into policy formulation and the reform process. We will undertake a comprehensive review of our sectors of economy, develop a plan that will allow the consolidation and diversification of existing sectors while encouraging emergence of new one.

To harness the full potential of technology and innovation, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my Ministry has sought the assistance of the UN Economic Commission for Africa to design a National Fintech Strategy. We shall also plan for more efficient resource allocation as government prioritises spending and investment in areas that align with our vision and development goals. The ultimate objective of the Vision 2050 is to upgrade Mauritius to a high-income status but with a framework for social justice so every citizen can go up that escalator and not be left behind.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the other aspect that I will speak about now is on the financial services sector which currently contributes to 13.8% of our GDP. It has become the main contributor to GDP, overtaking traditional engines of growth. Global business has

shown robust performance contributing 8% of GDP and carries an enormous potential for sustained growth. Since I joined in November 2024, I have been engaging in with many key stakeholders. The aim is to produce a framework for enhancing value creation and upscaling while dealing with inefficiencies, challenges and constraints.

We are undertaking a thorough review of the Mauritius International Financial centre with regard to brand position, reputation and recognition. The new strategic plan will consolidate the reputation and image of Mauritius while improving its product offering, the quality and speed of service delivery. We want to enhance organisational and operational efficiencies, get rid of bureaucratic red tapes seriously compromising efficiency and timeliness.

Since I took the helm of this Ministry, I have been receiving many complaints targeting operational inefficiencies. I am concerned that we have shied away businesses and investors. This is simply not acceptable. So, we shall be relentless in our fight against crippling bureaucracy and inefficiencies. We shall strive for a major culture change within Government institutions for an improved approach to supervision and enforcement of policies aligned with international standards. This is critical as we cannot afford to be again on the Grey List ever.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, ever since I took office, I have prioritised this engagement to make sure that we are aligned on future orientation. Among the agencies at hand, we will focus on rebuilding the Mauritius brand, reinforcing our standing as a highly compliant financial hub in the face of ever-changing markets and investor needs and increasing sophistication level. This said, we will strengthen our historic ties with India while continuing to boost our competitiveness by tapping other markets. Africa is no longer a choice, but an imperative.

AML/CFT is a very important department of our Ministry. When I arrived the national risk assessment was long overdue. Putting a closure to this assessment is a top priority for us. The mutual evaluation exercise of Mauritius whereby we need to demonstrate technical compliance and effectiveness is scheduled for 2027. So, while Mauritius is compliant or largely compliant with all the 40 FATF recommendations, some initiatives are in progress to ensure that Mauritius remains fully compliant with risk assessment requirements.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me now come to a matter that is very close to me and deeply impacting all our economic sectors, all enterprises and the financial services very

much so. The issue of talent recruitment and talent retention. The competition for talent, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is global. The competition among IFCs is prevalent which explains why many of our professionals are leaving for other IFCs. We are exporting the one thing that we not be proud of. Year after year, we are exporting our best brains.

I am all for people acquiring international experience. I have myself been working abroad. but we are now in an era of national emergency regarding skilled workforce. We will work on policies and measures to attract our diaspora back to their homeland. Without the right people, growth will remain an elusive aim.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have taken office amid a dire set of circumstances and an economy on the brink. There are three things I believe can make a difference for the future. Firstly, we want us to rediscover our sense of ambition as a nation. The reason our country became much more than it was in the past is because we wanted to be much more than we were in the past. Where has that spirit gone? We need to restore that big vision, that sense of mission, that ambition. To create a vision for a country with an education system that is fit for purpose, a health service that meets people's needs and a Government that stands for honesty, decency and integrity, are values that we hold dear.

Second, we want to restore the link between hard work and reward. I have huge respect for small businesses, entrepreneurs, farmers, fishermen, self-employed, professionals who give this country what we need. But our country must give them back what they need. We cannot have their hard-earned wealth squandered through corruption and nepotism.

Third, we want ours to be a country where there are opportunities for all. I made it to the top in the private sector through hard work. I want every young Mauritian to know that if they work hard, they will have an opportunity to reach the top. In the public sector and in the private sector, there should be no barriers to anyone's success. No one should be held back because of their gender, their race, their religion or anything else. So, ours, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is a grand vision. It is a grand mission and it is a grand ambition. Now, we want to work with the people to change our story.

Let us write the next chapter of Mauritius, a chapter of innovation, opportunity and shared prosperity. A chapter where every Mauritian can shape their own destiny. The time has come for a new Mauritius. One that honours our heritage while boldly stepping into the future. One where our children's dreams are limited only by their imagination, not their

circumstances. A new Mauritius with new opportunities and a new mission for a new future. I thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Hon. Ameer Meea!

(9.17 p.m.)

The Minister of Industry, SME and Cooperatives (Mr A. Ameer Meea): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. It is with a deep sense of honour that I am participating in the debate on the Presidential Address of the Government Programme 2025-2029 today.

Let me seize this occasion to heartfully thank the hon. Prime Minister, Dr. Navin Ramgoolam, and the hon. Deputy Prime Minister, hon. Paul Bérenger for believing in my capabilities and entrusting me with the ministerial portfolio of Industry, SME and Cooperatives.

I was elected as a Member of Parliament for the first time in 2010. I wish to thank all my constituents for having placed their trust in me for four consecutive mandates. For many years, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I had the privilege of serving my country in the Opposition. It was a role I embraced with dedication, humility and integrity as a member of the MMM party under the leadership of hon. Paul Bérenger.

Today, as I stand here in a new role and capacity as Minister in this Government, I carry forward the same principles that have always guided me. But now, with the added responsibility of contributing to the governance and progress of our nation.

At the outset, I wish to assure the Mauritian population that they can now breathe freely as the days of fear, oppression, demagoguery and surveillance are gone, are over. These were the mantras of the previous government which they cherished to suppress our democratic rights with the illusion of remaining eternally in power. People have said enough is enough and they voted massively on 10 November 2024 for a change in political leadership that would usher into a new era of freedom, socio-empowerment and economic prosperity.

I must say that as Minister of Industry, SME and Cooperatives, I have inherited from a precarious situation which has put at stake the capacity of these sectors to generate sufficient wealth for long term prosperity. In the field of manufacturing, this deplorable state of affairs has caused much prejudice to industry operators who are battling hard to navigate through the turbulences. This has led to a fissure in the foundation of the manufacturing base that need to

be restored, consolidated and fortified in our objective to revamp and accelerate industrial development for the country.

Until 2014, industrial development was on progressive trajectory and I will give the figures set forth to contribute significantly towards wealth creation as part of a vision to make Mauritius a high-income economy. All economic fundamentals pertaining to manufacturing were on the optimistic side and our enterprises were evolving on the fast lane, affirming their capabilities to play in the premier league of industrialised nations. This bright scenario was the outcome of the right mix of policies, strategies and support programmes put in place by the then government to accompany manufacturing enterprises in their development process.

The coming into power of the MSM government in 2015 was a disaster for industrial development and this is fully evidenced by the statistical data which outlines the regressing performance of manufacturing activities over the past decade. Indeed, during all this time Mauritius has experience a substantial erosion of its manufacturing base with contraction in the size of industry, significant drop in employment, dwindling domestic exports and low level of FDI. For example, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the number of EOE's (Export Oriented Enterprises) which stood at 300 in 2014 went down in 2023 to 231. The same tendency was witnessed on DOE's (Domestic Oriented Enterprises) which decreased from 384 to 280 in 2023. Similarly, employment in manufacturing which was more than 100,000 in 2014 declined to less than 85,000 in 2023.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, furthermore, domestic exports which stood to Rs50 billion in 2014 plateaued to only Rs50 billion, but when you take into account the depreciation of the rupee vis-à-vis the dollar, now it represents Rs35 billion which is a decrease of 30% of exports for Mauritius. So, we have lost 30% of export from 2014 to now; this is MSM legacy, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Broadening and expansion of the manufacturing base has also stalled over the last ten years due to lack of consideration on behalf of relevant authority to attract foreign investment in new areas of growth rather which are likely to bring in higher value addition, increase exports and access to high paid jobs. This dismaying situation has resulted into a mere annual average of 5% of total gross direct investment inflows over the past decades being channelled towards the manufacturing sector.

I have demonstrated that the previous government completely failed in the mission to advance the industrial development agenda of the country. It is a fact that the manufacturing

sector is the backbone of the economy in terms of employment generation and foreign exchange earnings. As a matter of fact, immediate and utmost considerations should be given to revive the sector for future growth and that is what this government has embarked on. We are going to win this battle with the able leadership of the Prime Minister. The Government Programme 2025-2029 has outlined critical areas of intervention that would be the driving forces to move up the ladder of industrial progress.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as soon as I assumed office, I have met with business associations, be it Business Mauritius, the MCCI, MEXA, SME Federations and as well as other industry operators to discuss ways and means to address bottlenecks impending on smooth operation of enterprises and to chart out a common vision that would be propitious for the sector to unlock its full potential for sustainable growth. In the same vein, my Ministry is organising *les Assises de l'industrie 2025* on the 13 February 2025, that is, next week, where all stakeholders – we will not choose who is with the MMM or the Labour Party, we will invite all stakeholders – forming part of the industrial ecosystem who would have the opportunity to brainstorm and submit constructive proposals for the future sustainable development of the manufacturing sector. This will also be an occasion to renew constructive dialogue with the private sector which has been somehow marginalised under the previous political regime which came forward with controversial economic decision without proper consultation.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is a fact that Mauritius has lost grounds in some of its traditional export markets, particularly in Europe. In view of fierce competition from low cost producing countries, there is an urgent need to rebalance our exports destination in an attempt to cushion against market setbacks that could occur in the future.

As at now, we have signed free trade agreements with China, India, UAE and continental Africa which offers the possibilities to tap a huge market of billions of people. Unfortunately, the previous government laid little emphasis on export promotions that is so vital to portray our visibility of these markets.

Indeed, the Government Programme has highlighted the necessity to carry out more targeted marketing and promotion campaigns in an endeavour to make a meaningful breakthrough in these emerging and new markets while at the same time consolidating our foothold in traditional exports.

It is reckoned that the EDB as our investment and export promotion institution has not devoted sufficient resources to promote the manufacturing sector as an engine of growth. This is evidenced by the very few targeted investment and export promotion activities carried out over the past years for the manufacturing sector. I note with satisfaction that the Government Programme provides for a fundamental review of the role and functions of the EDB to focus on boosting productive investment and export promotion across all sectors of the economy.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is a fact that for EDB, for the last ten years, the focus was on real estate; the focus was on financial services and *résultat des courses* – export has declined, manufacturing has declined, as I said – I have already given the figures. So, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to successfully carry out our mission to give renew dynamism to the manufacturing sector, I will be having discussions with the Ministry of Finance in regard to the role of export and investment promotion for the manufacturing sector through the establishment of a separate agency purposely oriented towards this objective.

In my view, my vision for this Ministry is that we need to come back to the model of former media. We need to come back to Mauritius Export Development Investment Authority like used to be in the 1980's and 90s which was fully under the aegis of the Ministry of Industry and was the driving force for the successful industrial process of the country that took place in the 80s, 90s and on which we are leveraging today to move forward.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me move on to the SME sector because time is going on quickly. I will now comment on the SME sector which also falls under the...

The Deputy Speaker: You have got some minutes.

Mr Ameer Meea: ...under my ministerial portfolio. It is reckoned that the SMEs constitute also the backbone of our economy, contributing around 47% of total employment, 34% to gross domestic value and 6% to export. SMEs operate in almost all sectors of the economy, ranging from manufacturing, tourism, construction, retail trade, agriculture, fisheries, transports, among others. Since I assumed office, I have been able to make a proper assessment of the SME sector and it is very unfortunate to note that the sector has been left on its own without any strategic direction and proper consideration in respect of the assistance required from Government to enable our entrepreneurs to overcome challenges successfully.

In the first instance, the SME Act of 2017 will be amended to introduce new provisions that enhance access to finance, simplify administrative procedures and create a more enabling environment for entrepreneurship. These amendments will focus on improving governance, facilitating digital transformation and strengthening support mechanism for SMEs and startups. At the same time, a host of initiatives will be introduced in an endeavour to boost the overall competitiveness of SMEs. This will include, *inter alia*, access to affordable credit, tax incentives for startups and a tailored support mechanism to assist enterprises into exports market.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me come to cooperative sector. The cooperative sector was also left behind during the reign of the MSM Government whereby many cooperative societies ceased operations. Indeed, I had the opportunity to meet some representatives of cooperative societies and many of them have voiced out their concerns regarding unhealthy situation prevailing in the sector that has brought about a stagnation in this development. I firmly believe it is time to review the foundations upon which the cooperative movement is evolving today, particularly in regard to financial management, good governance, transparency and digital integration, taking into consideration the success stories of India, France and Malaysia. I wish to mention that presently, we have 1,410 active cooperative societies, regrouping around 87,500 members. The sector generates an annual turnover of Rs4.8 billion and it represents in more than 25 socioeconomic activities.

And I should emphasise that Government remains committed to giving a new impetus to the cooperative movement as evidenced by the host of measures enunciated in the Government Programme. One of the key measures pertains to the review of existing Cooperative Act of 2016 to align it with international best practices established by the Financial Action Task Force. This exercise will serve to protect cooperative credit unions against money laundering, terrorist financing practices. Additionally, Government will introduce an innovative package of incentives to strengthen the capabilities and competitiveness of cooperative societies.

To conclude, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Government Programme also advocates the adoption of a Fair-Trade Certification as a means to encourage cooperatives to adhere to the concept of fair prices and decent working conditions. As at now, there are some 20 cooperatives in the sugarcane plantation activity that are already fair trade certified and other societies will be encouraged to embark on this way. On the whole, Government has a new

vision. Government has a new vision for the industry, SME and cooperative sectors. We will go the extra mile to bring the feel-good factor to comfort and motivate the business community so that they participate fully in the economic progress of the country.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may we all work together to build a brighter, more inclusive and prosperous future for all.

I am done, thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. Minister. Hon. Ms Collet!

(9.34 p.m.)

Ms M. R. Collet (First Member for Rodrigues): Merci, M. le président. D'abord, je tiens à vous féliciter pour votre investiture, ainsi que celle du Premier ministre, ministre de Rodrigues, de son vice-Premier ministre et de l'*Attorney General*, et bien sûr je n'oublie pas tous les autres membres de cette auguste Assemblée, incluant les députés correctionnels.

Alors, depuis le 11 novembre 2024, un nouveau chapitre de l'histoire de la République s'écrit, et le peuple attends avec impatience l'exécution d'un programme gouvernemental pour les cinq ans à venir, et il nous faut ne laisser personne derrière.

Alors, M. le président, nous travaillons aujourd'hui pour que chaque action gouvernementale favorise l'épanouissement et le bonheur quoi que subjectif de notre peuple. Et moi, comme députée de Rodrigues, ma mission première est de défendre les intérêts du peuple de Rodrigues, une île qui nous savons tous, contribue beaucoup dans le *blue economy* de la république. Je salue, bien sûr, le travail déjà commencé par mes prédécesseurs parlementaires et mon Leader, l'honorable François, et le programme gouvernemental à l'ordre du jour à plusieurs axes qui rejoint la vision de l'Organisation du Peuple de Rodrigues, l'OPR, et les axes de nos plusieurs manifestes électoraux, et je dirais même que c'est vice-versa.

De ce fait, M. le président, au nom de l'OPR, j'ambitionne à sécuriser l'engagement du gouvernement central pour les projets nécessaires à l'avancement de Rodrigues comme 21^{ème} circonscription. Je voudrais mettre l'accent sur la diplomatie parlementaire, la transparence et la responsabilité dans mon appuis à ce programme 2025-2029. Au nom de mon peuple, je souhaite un vrai développement durable du secteur de l'eau, sa production,

son traitement et une distribution équitable, car l'eau, c'est la vie et mon peuple a soif. Mon peuple doit vivre et non survivre seulement.

Au nom du peuple de Rodrigues, M. le président, je dis *stop* aux files d'attentes pour accéder aux services publics. *Lake kontwar* NLTA, *lake kontwar* MRA, *lake kontwar pou gagn biye* avion pour les vols domestiques, *lake pou debark containers* des aliments pour les animaux, *lake pou gagn* baille agricole, commercial, résidentiel, *lake pou benefisie enn bon lakaz*, *lake pou gagn travay alternatif* dans le secteur de la pêche à l'ourite. Excusez-moi, M. le président, pour mes *unparliamentary words*, mais la vérité est bonne à dire. Rétablissons la confiance et la dignité du peuple de Rodrigues. Alors mon rêve, M. le président, est de voir chaque citoyen activer sa capacité, où chacun s'assume et se respecte, chacun cultive l'excellence. Chacun a sa place.

J'écoute mon peuple qui a des aspirations, des attentes et une participation active aux prises de décisions le concernant, particulièrement celles qui impactent son avenir. J'en appelle à l'unité et à la solidarité au sein de cette Assemblée. Pour honorer notre hymne national, travaillons ensemble *as one people, as one nation, in peace, justice and liberty* pour notre peuple.

Je salue le programme gouvernemental 2025-2029 qui, me semble-t-il, est axé surtout sur la protection du peuple et la restauration de la situation économique. Bien sûr, cela inclut toute une révision de notre fiscalité. Nous devons, M. le président, travailler ensemble pour combattre la pauvreté, le chômage, la discrimination qui est tout le temps négative, les fléaux sociaux, la criminalité, la corruption. Nous devons aussi promouvoir l'investissement pour la prospérité de nos îles et développer des prestations sociales adaptées aux réalités de nos îles respectives.

M. le président, Rodrigues a des ambitions économiques, notamment avec l'agrandissement de l'aéroport et un deuxième câble optique pour développer le secteur de la communication, du commerce électronique et de l'innovation dans le système de l'éducation et des services publics tel le *e-Health*. L'heure est à la technologie et l'innovation pour l'île Rodrigues. Et il est crucial d'avoir aussi un plan sérieux d'aménagement du territoire tout en respectant les droits et les libertés de chaque individu et de notre environnement.

Nos îles ne sont pas du tout épargnées des crises mondiales : changements climatiques, crises sanitaires, crises alimentaires. Avec ce programme gouvernemental, il est temps de préparer notre peuple à faire face à ces crises.

En tant que représentante de Rodrigues, et surtout de la jeunesse Rodriguaise, je réitère mon engagement à défendre les intérêts de la jeunesse de Rodrigues, protéger Rodrigues pour la génération à venir à travers les interventions sur les lois et les mesures qui impacteront directement l'île Rodrigues. Et je souhaite que ce gouvernement protège la culture de nos îles afin que l'histoire retienne que cette huitième Assemblée nationale laisse un héritage digne de ce nom pour les générations futures.

Merci beaucoup, M. le président.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Hon. Quirin!

(9.41 p.m.)

Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière): Merci, M. le président. Permettez-moi, tout d'abord, de remercier les électrices et les électeurs de ma circonscription, Beau-Bassin-Petite Rivière, de m'avoir fait confiance pour un quatrième mandat consécutif. Je continuerai à les servir avec la même sincérité et la même assiduité, comme ce fut le cas durant ces quinze dernières années.

M. le président, vu le temps limité qui m'est alloué, j'ai choisi d'axer mon intervention, essentiellement, sur le problème de la drogue à Maurice, ces conséquences et les solutions qu'on pourrait retenir dans un premier temps. On dit souvent que la santé d'un pays se mesure à la santé de sa population. Notre société vit, aujourd'hui, un calvaire avec les différentes drogues qui sont en train de ravager notre jeunesse et de détruire des milliers de cellules familiales. Ce n'est point un hasard si le mot 'drogue' figure douze fois dans le discours programme du gouvernement de l'Alliance du Changement.

M. le président, une scène de désolation s'étend sur tous les coins et recoins du pays. Les nouvelles substances psychoactives ou drogues synthétiques, plus faciles à se procurer et moins chères que les autres types de drogues, transforment les nombreux consommateurs en zombies.

Selon une enquête menée en 2024 par Afrobarometer, les Mauriciens considèrent la prolifération des drogues et ses dégâts comme le deuxième problème le plus urgent après le coût de la vie. Au rythme où les choses ont évolué depuis, en si peu de temps, je ne serai pas étonné que ce problème soit devenu la préoccupation majeure des Mauriciens. De son côté, M. le président, l'Observatoire national des drogues a noté en 2021 que le nombre d'hospitalisations liées aux drogues dans les établissements publics s'élevait à 900 et concernait principalement les jeunes âgés entre 20 et 34 ans. Quatre ans après, ce nombre a probablement doublé. Les drogues mises en cause dans la majorité des cas sont l'héroïne et les nouvelles substances psychoactives, *simik*, dans le langage populaire. Le plus inquiétant, M. le président, ces cas sont répandus dans tout le pays et ont une incidence similaire dans les villes comme dans les villages, et cela, à travers toutes les couches sociales.

M. le président, le trafic de drogue est l'occasion pour certains de se faire de l'argent facile et je ne parle pas de centaines de milliers de roupies, mais de plusieurs centaines de millions. Rendez-vous compte, l'ADSU a saisi, pour la période s'étendant de juillet 2023 à juin 2024, une quantité de drogues d'une valeur de R 1,461,597,904. Pourtant, les travailleurs sociaux et ceux qui sont sur le terrain sont unanimes, la quantité de drogues en circulation dépasse largement le nombre de drogues saisies et peut fournir l'île pendant des années. Ce business criminel fonctionne telle une économie parallèle.

M. le président, cela a encouragé l'émergence de gang organisés, au sein duquel opèrent des gros bras, des récidivistes notoires, et même des mineurs qui sont malheureusement utilisés pour écouler la marchandise ou pour donner l'alerte lorsque arrivent les policiers. Des quartiers sont pris d'assaut et les drogues sont vendues comme des petits pains. Il semble que tout le monde sait où s'en procurer, sauf la police !

Je fais cependant confiance au nouveau commissaire de police pour redynamiser ses troupes afin que la population puisse à nouveau avoir confiance en la force policière. Il est primordial, M. le président, que plus de policiers soient déployés dans les unités antidrogues dans les différents postes de police et que des descentes et des patrouilles régulières soient effectuées pour contrer le trafic et agir aussi comme une arme de dissuasion.

La prolifération de la drogue est liée à la situation de *law and order* dans le pays. La consommation de drogue engendre la violence. Les agressions se font fréquentes dans les maisons et dans les rues. Les cas de vols sont en hausse. Je peux comprendre que face à cette

montée de violence, les forces de l'ordre sont souvent dépassées. Il est grand temps, M. le président, d'employer la manière forte s'il le faut, voire d'avoir recours à des patrouilles armées dans certains quartiers pour justement éviter que certaines parties de notre île soient transformées en favelas ou quartiers chauds de Colombie. Quid même de faire appel à nos soldats de la *SMF* en renfort s'il s'avère qu'il y a un manque d'effectif au niveau de la force régulière ou dans les unités antidrogues.

M. le président, pas plus tard que mardi dernier, j'avais adressé une question au Premier ministre sur le nombre d'accidents survenus lorsque les conducteurs étaient sous l'influence de la drogue. Les statistiques pour 2023-2024 indiquent que 1,073 automobilistes ont été verbalisés pour conduite sous influence. Les réseaux sociaux sont pollués ces derniers temps de vidéos montrant des automobilistes sous l'influence de drogues, figés et incapables de réagir. Ils représentent un grand danger sur nos routes, d'où ma suggestion au Premier ministre, mardi dernier, pour que les chauffeurs de transports publics soient régulièrement testés pour voir s'ils ont consommé une quelconque substance illicite.

M. le président, la consommation de drogue entraîne de nombreux problèmes de santé, tel que les maladies infectieuses dont le VIH et les hépatites, les troubles mentaux, les overdoses et, bien sûr et malheureusement, les décès. Le trafic de drogue alimente la criminalité notamment les vols, la violence et la corruption. La toxicomanie fragilise les familles, entraîne l'exclusion sociale et nuit au développement économique du pays.

M. le président, la présence de drogue dans les établissements scolaires est également un sujet qui interpelle. Nous voyons l'émergence de jeunes dealers alors que d'autres trouvent des astuces pour introduire ces produits illicites en classe. Dans ce sens, l'appel des ONG pour que la porte des écoles leur soit ouverte pour mener des campagnes de prévention ne doit pas tomber dans l'oreille d'un sourd, leur aide serait plus que salutaire.

D'autre part, je salue l'annonce faite à la Chambre mardi dernier par le Premier ministre à l'effet qu'une agence nationale contre la drogue verra le jour bientôt. Dans ce contexte, il est nécessaire d'écouter la voix des nombreux travailleurs sociaux qui sont connectés à la réalité du terrain. Nous avons besoin d'avoir des idées nouvelles, de nouvelles propositions venant de personnes qui consacrent toute leur énergie à comprendre et à combattre la problématique de la drogue.

M. le président, nous ne sommes plus dans la période 90 à 2000. En 2025, les types de drogues, les profils des consommateurs et les techniques de vente ont évolué. Donc, les ressources matérielles, humaines et financières pour les combattre doivent être au niveau requis dans ce nouvel air. Justement, M. le président, en parlant d'air nouvel, nous sommes à l'époque des générations Z et Alpha.

À Maurice, les études démontrent que les plus gros consommateurs de cannabis se trouvent dans la tranche d'âge de 15 à 30 ans. Ouvrons les yeux, ne soyons pas hypocrite et disons les choses comme elles sont. La marijuana est populaire parmi les jeunes qui en consomment à domicile, dans la rue, dans les fêtes, dans les concerts en autre. Malheureusement, les drogues synthétiques, tout autant populaire dans cette tranche d'âge mais beaucoup plus nocives pour la santé physique et mentale. Surtout qu'une étude de l'UNODC a récemment classé Maurice à la première place en matière de consommation de drogue synthétique en Afrique et septième sur 193 pays de l'UNODC, une réputation qui ne fait honneur au pays.

M. le président, vu la situation chaotique de la drogue à Maurice et la montée en flèche de la drogue de synthèse, une des solutions proposées par les travailleurs sociaux pour freiner sa prolifération et la dépénalisation du cannabis. Vu le constat d'échec d'une politique de répression, certains pays ont adopté une approche plus souple en tolérant la consommation personnelle en petite quantité mais en épargnant pas les trafiquants. Les peines pour ceux qui dépassent la limite autoriser sont moins lourdes, allant d'une amende à des travaux d'intérêt général.

En 2024, M. le président, 44 pays dans le monde ont dépénalisé l'utilisation du cannabis. M. le président, je crois qu'il est temps de laisser les travailleurs sociaux, les ONGS et surtout la population mauricienne décider s'il faut dépénaliser le cannabis ou pas. Je lance donc un appel au gouvernement pour un débat national suivi d'un referendum, si besoin est, sur le sujet.

Je vais conclure, M. le président, mon intervention, en affirmant que le problème de la drogue est l'affaire de tout le monde. L'heure est venue de passer à l'action. Déclarons une guerre sans merci aux trafiquants de drogues et trouvons ensemble des solutions pour soulager la souffrance de ces milliers de familles qui sont victimes du narcotraffic. *Anou netway nou pei !* Protégeons notre jeunesse et nos enfants !

Je vous remercie.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. Member.

Hon. Minister Ramful!

(9.53 p.m.)

The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade (Mr D. Ramful): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, before I embark on our international relations strategy, allow me to share with the House and also the public at large because they are the tax payers on how the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was being run under the MSM Government. Of course, when the Audit Report will be coming out in a few weeks' time, certainly you will be apprised on how public money was being wasted but allow me for the time being, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, *de vous donner un avant-goût*.

In 2022, when the High Commissioner of Maputo assumed duty, quotations were launched for renting of a fully furnished house. However, the High Commissioner refused to move in any of the apartments that were on offer: the offers were between 3,000 to 5,000 USD monthly, supposedly on security ground. Despite the fact that the accommodations were found in regions previously occupied by the former Ambassador. Instead, he preferred to stay in a hotel for 11 months and I wonder how a hotel could be more secured than an ambassador's residence and thereafter, he agreed to move in an accommodation at a monthly rate of 7,000 USD monthly. You know in the meantime, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, he pocketed Rs2.5 m., taxpayers' money as rent which he had allegedly paid during his stay at the hotel for 11 months without even giving any breakdown of the expenses that he had allegedly incurred.

En 2021, again the MSM regime, a decision was taken to sell a government owned property in Washington as it was in a dilapidated state and was unoccupied. The proceeds were to be used for the acquisition of a new premises to accommodate the new Ambassador. Up until now, *on est en 2025*, the property has not been sold. In the meantime, Rs10 m. taxpayers' money were spent for the maintenance of the apartment, the value of the property in the meantime had decreased by 30%. During that period, ...

Ms Anquetil: *Maja karo !*

Mr Ramful: ...we paid Rs1,723,000 as insurance premiums for an unoccupied property and we had incurred a total expenditure of Rs18 m. for rental of an alternative accommodation for the Ambassador between September 2021 to June 2024.

Ms Anquetil: Abus!

Mr Ramful : *Je n'ai pas encore terminé.* En 2017,...

An hon. Member: Mahen Jhugroo!

Mr Ramful: They are all MSM ...

An hon. Member: Cronies!

Mr Ramful: *chatwas.*

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: *Boir disan lepep!*

Mr Ramful: In 2017, the residence of the First Secretary in Paris – again owned by government, they are all government properties – *en 2017*, that property was vacated for renovation works. Up until now, eight years after, no renovation works have been carried out instead an alternate accommodation was rented and the payment for the rental amount to Rs8.9 m.

En 2019, the High Commissioner's residence in London, again a government owned property, was vacated because of renovation works. Up until now no renovation work has been carried out.

Again, a rented apartment was taken to house the High Commissioner who renewed the annual lease despite the fact that in September 2023, an alternate government-owned apartment was available in Wimbledon. He preferred to stay in the rented apartment at a monthly rental of Rs511,000 *par mois*. The total rent for his stay amounted to Rs24.2 million of taxpayers' money. In the meantime, the apartment in London and Wimbledon, government-owned property remained unoccupied, and we paid for those unoccupied apartments, council tax to the tune of Rs1.5 million. *Bann fantom ti pe res ladan, nou ti pe pay tax pou bann fantom.*

In 2022...

An hon. Member: *Ankor la?*

Mr Ramful: *Tro buku. Lalis-la long.* This one is worse.

In 2022, Government had spent Rs238 million for the construction of a new building in Addis Ababa in Ethiopia to accommodate the Chancery, the home-based staff and the

Ambassador. The Ambassador refused to move in that new building, *R 238 million*, he refused to move in that building. The floor assigned to him remained unoccupied since June 2022, and in the meantime, Government had to pay an additional sum of Rs8.4 million to accommodate the Ambassador in a rented accommodation. This is how public money was being wasted under the MSM regime, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Busgeet – chatwa again!

Not only that, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, but they were also creating jobs for the boys. They were spending public money to please their acolytes, their *agents*. They created five additional posts for Ambassadors in January 2024, and these Ambassadors were specifically tasked to head the directorates at my Ministry here in Mauritius. Five Minister-Counsellors, two of whom were posted abroad, one in Paris and one in Washington, were appointed to fill these five posts of Ambassadors.

As at the end of 2024, two of these newly appointed Ambassadors were still. They were supposed to be here in Mauritius to head the directorates, but they were still posted in Paris and in Washington and have not been called back to head the directorates at my Ministry. So, we had – you can only have this in a Banana Republic – in our two missions abroad in Paris and the other in Washington, they were headed by two Ambassadors each and so only under an MSM-government can you have that. Two Ambassadors without any demarcation in one mission with a career diplomat working under a political appointee, and this is against protocol.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the list of abuses of public funds is very long, and I can go on and on. Unauthorised... Unfortunately, time is of the essence.

An hon. Member: *Koze, koze. Pena problem!*

Mr Ramful: Unauthorised use of official diplomatic vehicles; abuses on leave entitlement; logbooks do not tally with the odometer of the official cars.

This was how unfortunately, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Ministry was being run, and do you know why? Because we had a part-time Minister, part of the time he was in the office and part of the time, he was in a stag parties at Grand Bassin. This is why the Ministry was being run in such manner. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as for as this government's international relation strategies are concerned, our vision is to make of Mauritius, an indispensable investment destination, leveraging its strategic location at the crossroads of Africa, Asia and Europe.

More importantly, we need to rethink our Africa strategy. Over the next decade –I was reading an article in the Economist last week – over the next decade, Africa’s shares of the world’s population is expected to reach 21%. As the rest of the world ages, Africa will become a crucial source of labour with more than half of the young people entering the global workforce in 2023 will be affected. It is one of the fastest growing consumer markets in the world, 1.7 billion consumer market with consumer expenditures of about *2.1 milliard USD* in the next decade.

This is a great opportunity for us to capitalise on our free trade agreement and to break barriers by enhancing regional integration through SADC, COMESA and the African continental free trade agreement and in fact, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we must applaud our hon. Prime Minister and our hon. Deputy Prime Minister, two men of vision and it is with pride that as an African nation, we can say that our hon. Prime Minister’s first official overseas visit after getting re-elected will be at the Summit of the African Union.

Unfortunately, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the previous government has failed in its African strategy. In fact, what we witnessed under the previous government was not an African strategy; it was an African tragedy. This is what we had witnessed under the previous government. You will remember *en 2014*, the Labour Government had set up the Mauritius Africa Fund Ltd. with the aim of promoting Mauritian investments into Africa. We committed Rs500 million for investment in Africa. However, a few months after, there was a change in government and they placed people lacking experience, incompetent people as they always do – the MSM.

So, they placed someone who lacks experience. And, apparently, they had opened six Special Purpose Vehicles. Madagascar Investment Holding Ltd, Madagascar SPV, Côte d’Ivoire Investment Holding Ltd., Côte d’Ivoire SPV, Senegal SPV phase 2, Ghana SPV – very good. They injected approximately Rs200 million of public funds through equity finance to finance projects in these countries where they had set up those SPVs. The operational expenses for those SPVs amounted to 88, nearly Rs100 million.

In July 2024, all of our SPVs were wound up except for the ones in Madagascar. All of them were wound up. There has been not a single investment through the SPVs despite having injected millions of public’s money in those SPVs. This was the unfortunate fate of our African strategy under the MSM government.

So, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, allow me, before I end to thank the people of my constituency for having, once again, given me and my two colleagues, hon. Lukeeram and hon. Apollon their trust and support. I also wish to thank the hon. Prime Minister for having given me the ministerial responsibility for Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade. I hope to deliver to his expectation and to the expectations of the people.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Damry!

(10.10 p.m.)

The Junior Minister of Finance (Mr D. Damry): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Government means business. I will not be as entertaining as my predecessor and I will instead have a very serious conversation on macroeconomics stability and economic growth.

Padanomics aided and abetted by the previous Prime Minister betrayed the nation. Firstly, they dilapidated the entire fiscal space. Secondly, they manipulated economic data with sheer impunity. This betrayal has been nothing short of criminal negligence if not economic crime. We have taken remedial actions since Government has taken office and the remedial actions are focused on four sectors –

- (i) fiscal consolidation;
- (ii) economic reforms;
- (iii) restructuring of parastatals, and
- (iv) economic growth agenda.

On fiscal consolidation, we have to reduce public debt from 83.4% and fiscal deficit from 8.6% to sustainable level. We also have to bring down food inflation that soared to 33%. What can I say about State owned enterprises? The previous government plundered their finances and they have left contingent liabilities that are adding tremendous pressure on national public debt. Luckily, we have the economic leadership of the hon. Prime Minister and we have a very credible economic team.

Moody's reaffirmed the BAA3 ratings. However, it came with a very severe caution of negative outlook. Here, I would like to take the House to June 2017 in South Africa. Same situation, but South Africa did not succeed in its fiscal consolidation and reform agenda. In March 2020, its sovereign ratings were downgraded to junk.

Having said that, this Government will not let this happen. You know why? Because, guess what? What were the ratings in 2014? BAA1. What was public debt in 2014? Below

60%. This Government is also going back to performance-based budgeting instead of line budgeting in an attempt to put KPIs to all sectors. So, this means more work for this Government. What happened at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as described by hon. Minister Ramful, is under performance-based budgeting. It cannot happen again.

I like to take inspiration from Singapore. So, let us look at the reserve policies of Singapore. As you all know, reserves are managed by central banks all over the world. However, in Singapore's budget, there is special item, a special line called The National Investment Return Contribution. What does it mean? So, Singapore manages its reserves through three means –

1. the central bank, the monetary authority of Singapore;
2. something called the General Investment Corporation of Singapore, and
3. Temasek.

Hon. Members, Singapore's reserve contributions are marked to 3.5% of its GDP and 20% of its annual budget. Maybe we can take some inspiration from there.

Let me now come to parastatals. As my colleague, hon. Ameer Meea said, we need to restructure, for instance, the EDB. The mission of the EDB under the previous government was to go on overseas missions. They could not attract foreign investment. If they attracted foreign investment, it was solely focused on real estate. You take the MRA Customs. So, the World bank has a report on performance in terms of port logistics. The MRA Customs ranks 90 out of some 130 countries. So, I think we need to give KPIs to parastatals. Maybe we should give a KPI to MRA Customs to at least come in the 50%.

Same goes for EDB. Diversify your investor base. Bring FDI in sectors where the productivity of capital is much higher. I would like to say one more thing about the EDB. The EDB had a very important mission in the economy of Mauritius. It was to ensure that the Ease of Doing Business ranking of Mauritius remained first, which was the ranking we left in 2014. First in Africa! You know where it is today? Well, the Ease of Doing Business Report does not exist. It is the B-Ready Report and we are 4th or 5th. So, we have to once again give the mandate to the EDB so that we become number one in Africa again.

These are the sort of things that we engaging in. You do not increase revenue merely through tax as one hon. Member said earlier. You also increase revenue through economic growth. We have a growth agenda and our growth agenda is focused on new sectors: productivity, innovation and investment, not consumption. Consumption economy is like

sugar. The more sugar you consume, diabetes. It is the same for an economy. It is very simple. Productivity delivers growth and consumption delivers debt.

So, let us take the digital economy. I will just talk on one aspect. Firstly, what is the digital economy? If you look at the past ten years and you ask anyone in this House or in the private sector to define the digital economy, you will not have it. But if you go to Singapore, you go to the UK, you go to any services economy in the world, the digital economy contributes at least 16-17% of GDP. So, let me clarify for the sake of the House. The digital economy comprises two value adds. One value add is from the ICT, traditional ICT economy which is about 6% currently in Mauritius. The second value add comes from the digitalisation of other services such as healthcare, education, transport, financial services to Fintech. Where are we?

The previous government did nothing to stimulate growth, but this Government will do it because we have the competency to do it, we have the exposure to do it and we have the experience to do it. I would touch on one thing, International Policies. You know, we talked about the Mauritius-Africa Strategy and I think we were all shocked to learn that Mauritius was suspended from the SADC. So, what kind of Mauritius-Africa Strategy is that?

We looked at the DTA with India, Mauritius' DTA used to rank number 1 in terms of advantages for investments going into India. Today, we are at number 4 or 5, despite the historical traditional ties that Mauritius shares with India – Netherlands is number one; UAE is ahead of us.

Economic policy, I would like to share a personal story. I was in Silicon Valley a few years ago and I bumped into a guy. Well, we were in a conference and we started speaking in English and he told me: *'tou korek?'.* So, I said, yeah *'tou korek'*, Mauritian yeah, Silicon Valley! It was a place called BLOCK71 in Silicon Valley and what is BLOCK71?

So, you have the Singapore government that has an economic, like we have High Commissions, so they have an Economic Incubator & Accelerator in Singapore and they choose companies, they facilitate startups from Singapore to go to Silicon Valley and try to succeed. And, this guy, maybe some of you know him, he sold his company to E-Bay for a lot of millions. Mauritian goes to Singapore, sells his company in Silicon Valley. Why could he not do it from Mauritius? Why?

So, you know, economic diplomacy has changed; diplomacy, international relations are a very important part of the economy. Firstly, with due respect, you need to have the

exposure of what's going on in the economy today, and this is a huge drawback of the previous government. They had no clue, absolutely no clue of what was going on in the global economy. Take the blue economy, where are we? Take India, our closest cultural and economic partner today. India has 7,500 square km of maritime territory; Mauritius has 2000 square km of maritime territory; it's not that far. India's blue economy contributes 4% to the GDP of India. What does the Mauritian blue economy contribute to our GDP?

Ms Anquetil: *Zéro!*

Mr Damry: Another failure, but friends, it is not all doom and gloom; this Government has the team and we have a singularity of mission and purpose to implement this Government Programme. Because it is about the singularity of mission and purpose, I would like to end with, you know, I am from Business School and when you talk about mission in a business school, they always share a story with you. So, I will share the story with you. Hopefully, it can inspire us, here.

So, you had President John Kennedy, he went to the premises of NASA when they were preparing to launch Apollo 11. He was walking down the corridor and he asked the janitor: "Hello, good morning. How are you? What are you doing here?" The Janitor replied: "President, I am helping to land a man on the moon.". That's what the janitor said.

So, let's make a twist with destiny here. Let's all try to be a bridge to the future and implement the Government Programme. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Dr. Aumeer!

(10.22 p.m.)

Dr. F. Aumeer (Third Member Port-Louis South & Port-Louis Central): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. To debate 114 minutes of the Government Programme in 10 minutes demands a feat. I will just hit on a few aspects.

I would just like to make a broad comment on what the hon. Member of the Opposition, hon. Adrien Duval – unfortunately, he is not here – when he related the landslide victory during the election, on what he believes, was because of the *Moustass Leaks*. I do think he was living in Alice in Wonderland because he had not seen the enthusiasm, the massive turnout, the energy and the people who were coming towards us with their overwhelming support, be it at Plaine Magnien, be it in Flacq, be it in Triolet, in Plaine Verte, in Rose hill. We had one idea; the writings were on the wall, people were fed up with that government

because of nepotism, breakdown of law and order, scourge of drugs, increase in rising cost, murder of one's self agent amongst so many things and the violation of democracy.

Mr Guinness: *BLD!*

Dr. Aumeer: *BLD!*

The state of the economy, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is a disastrous and perilous state of affairs as depicted by the hon. Prime Minister only a couple of weeks ago. Despite the usual *kase-ranze* of figures that they had tried to justify, we all heard how he himself, the Member of the Opposition, the hon. Adrien Duval, is trying to work out whether there would be an answer from his former pal, the Minister of Finance, to justify the figures. But unfortunately, he is still waiting.

The litmus test for what he said about the *Moustass Leaks*, the immediate dismantling of massive surveillance by the hon. Prime Minister once he took his seat in the Government. Had it not been the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, himself, taking measures immediately after the election, Mauritius would have found itself downgraded by Moody's which initially in 2014, we were a Baa1; we now, luckily, stayed at Baa3 because of our transparency of figures which is honest and a reliable picture of the irresponsible legacy of the outgoing government. But, more so, because we are reinforcing good governance, restoring trust and credibility in our financial institutions.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, strengthening our democracy comes in line with a new era in the landscape of democracy. With the setting up of an Electoral College for the president-elect, the local government will be surely set within time frame and ensuring that all the constitutional reforms that we are aiming to have will represent the will and desire of the population of this country who voted for such a massive change.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the fight against drug and corruption must be a relentless setting up of select committees, as mentioned recently, the National Drug Agency; restoring trust in the Police and effective enforcement of law and order. The public is more than eager to see that the Government walks the talk. We do not want to be seen as a nation of zombies as we are seeing currently these days across the country with no specific entities in any community.

The ongoing police enquiries on the beneficiaries of the MIC is a commendable start and there is so much public expectation in regard to those who created that monster that served only the blue-eyed boys of the MSM and his cronies and they should be called to

answer for their deeds. From the Molnupiravir saga, the Silver Bank, Eco Deer Park, the death of Soopramanien Kistnen, the Serenity Gate, the St-Louis Gate, amongst so many others the Government has a pledge towards the people of this country to see to it that those *kinn fote*, those *kinn defons lakes*, those *kinn tap plin* should answer. MauBank and Juda were only, last night, a trailer; the best is to come.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in combatting fraud and corruption, we are also assisting a major step, today itself, where the Financial Crimes Commission Bill was debated for second reading. Those dark days, 13 months ago when the initial Bill was passed, had two main objectives: persecute its political opponents, particularly the Prime Minister, and impeach and limit the powers of the DPP. My friends, a couple of hours ago, those barbaric clauses of the Bill were repealed; we were here when you could not do anything because of the supremacy of numbers they had. Mauritius will breathe once again the independence and transparency of our judicial and legal institutions.

M. le président, je voudrai maintenant commenter sur certaines propositions faites dans le programme gouvernemental en ce qui concerne le ministère de la Santé. Tout d'abord, je salue les initiatives qui mettent l'accent sur l'importance d'avoir des établissements de soins tertiaire grâce à la création d'un hôpital obstétrique-gynécologie et celle de la pédiatrie. Et pourquoi pas durant ce mandat, on aura les soins quaternaires, qui seront géniaux.

Les soins tertiaires exigent une logistique sophistiquée, et une expertise professionnelle très spécifique. En tant que moi-même consultant dans la pratique, le manque de personnel, la pénurie d'infirmières qualifiées, et comme Madame Dr. Jeetun l'avait dit, l'émigration de nos meilleurs éléments, c'est là que nous devons encourager et concentrer, avoir des offres attrayantes et encourager les jeunes sortant de l'école et les titulaires de diplômes universitaires à rejoindre la grande famille des prestataires de soins de santé.

Deuxièmement, fournir un accès transparent à ceux qui veulent chercher une formation spécialisée, qu'il s'agisse des bourses ou d'une formation pratique à part entière dans des centres étrangers. Ces bourses, ces formations de pratique ne doivent pas être seulement réservés aux petits copains comme cela a été dans le passé, mais doit être sur mérite. La mise en place de deux centres tertiaires à mon avis, doit avoir des objectifs très claires – réduire le taux de mortalité et de morbidité maternelle et aussi celle de mortalité et morbidité périnatale. Et cela ne peut pas être réalisé seulement avec la création des établissements très sophistiqués

mais il faut avoir et promouvoir les professionnels à tirer des leçons, des tristes histoires, des cas qui ne sont pas parfois signalés et même non-examinés.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, ma proposition de demander une enquête confidentielle et je propose qu'on en fait une enquête confidentielle, sur les décès maternels et des mort-nés. Le Premier ministre qui a fait ses études en Angleterre sait de quoi je parle. *Confidential Enquiry into stillbirth and maternal death should be a three-year programme so that each and every single individual and professional in the medical field be made to know and understand. It is not pointing finger; it is not to be accountable but to learn from the lessons.* Ce gouvernement, à travers cela, pourrait viser à garantir que toutes les femmes enceintes et qui ont récemment accouché reçoivent les meilleurs soins possibles dispensés dans les cadres les plus appropriés et en tenant compte de leurs besoins individuels. A titre d'exemple et c'est regrettable que je le dise, cette jeune femme qui a accouché récemment à Rodrigues et qui est retournée à Maurice et puis, elle est décédée. C'est une révélation.

M. le président, pourquoi dis-je cela ? Nos sœurs et frères à Rodrigues méritent le plus haut niveau de soins de santé. Je suis très préoccupé par une pratique établie, selon lesquelles les gynécologues de l'île Maurice sont envoyés à tour de rôle à Rodrigues sur un *roster* d'un mois. Vous imaginez qu'une femme enceinte qui demande neuf mois de traitements et commence son traitement à partir du deuxième mois, doit voir sept gynécologues différents avant qu'elle accouche ? On n'aurait pas ce qu'on appelle 'des soins spécialisés'. Ce gouvernement est là pour un changement et le changement doit être ressenti au niveau local. On ne peut pas accepter que les sœurs et les futures mamans de Rodrigues ont un tel traitement. Je vous supplie de revoir cette pratique. Bien que nous ayons des soins spécialisés, nous ne pouvons pas accepter cela et je lance un appel pour que cela change.

M. le président, le traitement à l'étranger, il s'agit en effet d'une décision audacieuse selon laquelle la couverture complète des coûts de traitements à l'étranger pour les patients seront totalement fournis et quand ce n'est pas disponible localement, oui nous devons l'approuver contrairement au gouvernement précédent où les soins de santé à l'étranger étaient ciblés. En effet, aujourd'hui, il existe un large éventail d'expertise disponible dans le secteur privé et public à Maurice. Le grand exemple est : quelques jours d'ici, le ministre de la Santé a lui-même procédé au lancement de la chirurgie oncologique à l'hôpital de Solferino.

The Deputy Speaker: I am giving you two additional minutes, please.

Dr. Aumeer: Thank you for that. What I am going to say is very important.

M. le président, nous avons tous été accrochés, et cela c'est important. Nous avons tous ici été accrochés, invités à contribuer, à faire des dons aux patients ou patientes qui doivent se faire soigner à l'étranger. Ce qui est très troublant est que dans de nombreux cas, de tels traitements sont bien disponibles dans les hôpitaux privés et publics mais, ces malheureux patients et parents sont attirés par quelques organisations médicales pour aller à l'étranger, recevoir un énorme devis et commencer à collecter de l'argent. Mon ami, mon collègue de la circonscription, honorable Osman Mahomed était avec moi quand on a essayé de convaincre un patient qu'il ne fallait pas collecter R 700 000, on pouvait le faire dans 24 heures. Et le résultat, il nous a carrément refusé. Dans de nombreux cas que j'ai rencontrés, un tel traitement magique n'a ni seulement passé le test de bonne gouvernance, ce qu'on appelle *good evidence medical practice*, mais malheureusement, plusieurs de ces patients sont retournés à Maurice et sont décédés à moins de trois mois d'intervalle.

M. le président, trop de ces organisations médicales poussent comme des champignons et profitent des personnes fragiles et vulnérables. Je recommande donc au gouvernement à travers le ministre de la Santé, dans un esprit de changement, d'adopter de nouvelles régulations concernant ces entités médicales et des entreprises qui promettent des traitements à l'étranger. Bien que je prône l'importance des centres d'excellence pour les conditions médicales à l'étranger qui ne sont pas totalement traitables à Maurice, je suis parfois perplexe devant la promesse d'un traitement qui ne changera pas d'un *iota* la condition des malheureux.

Pour terminer, je vais vous citer l'exemple de ce gouvernement du Changement à son apogée. Toute l'île Maurice fut choquée quand une jeune femme qui était à la Croisette de Grand Baie a eu ses pieds broyés et vraiment endommagés et il était évident qu'il fallait un traitement rapide, dédié dans un sens spécialisé à l'étranger. Son évacuation médicale fut faite dans un temps record en moins de 26 heures grâce à l'intervention du Premier ministre et son équipe. Mais, l'ironie du sort est ce même Premier ministre qui avait contracté le Covid devait attendre 126 heures avant son évacuation médicale. Voilà ce qu'est le changement, voilà ce qu'est le pont vers l'avenir.

Je dirai à tous ceux qui m'écoutent, surtout ceux qui étaient dans le gouvernement d'avant et qui ont bénéficié des largesses comme l'a raconté le ministre des Affaires étrangères, ces vautours et ces prédateurs des coffres de l'Etat durant ces dix dernières années, le retour et le réveil sera brutal, car le lion est de retour.

Merci.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. I understand hon. Edouard will not address the House today. So, I call upon hon. Ms Babooram.

Ms Babooram: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I beg to move for the adjournment of the debate.

Dr. Boolell rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Debate adjourned accordingly.

ADJOURNMENT

The Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Friday 21 February 2025 at 3.00 p.m.

The Deputy Prime Minister rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to

The Deputy Speaker: The House stands adjourned!

At 10.37 p.m. the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Friday 21 February 2025 at 3.00 p.m.