No. 14 of 2025

REPUBLIC OF MAURITIUS

EIGHTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

(UNREVISED)

FIRST SESSION

TUESDAY 13 MAY 2025

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THE CABINET

(Formed by Dr. the Hon. Navinchandra Ramgoolam)

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

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

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MAURITIUS

Eighth National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 14 of 2025

Sitting of Tuesday 13 May 2025

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

The National Anthem was played

(Madam Speaker in the Chair)

PAPERS LAID

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

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

(a) Virement Warrant – Quarter 3 (January – March 2025): Nos. 22; 28-67; and 69. (In Original)

(b) Virement (Contingencies) Warrant – Quarter 3 (January – March 2025): Nos. 6-8. (In Original)

(c) Virement Certificate - Quarter 3 (January – March 2025): Vote/Sub-Head (Certificates Nos.): 1-1(3), 1-3(003-008), 1-5(3-8), 1-7(2,3,5,6A,7,8), 1-8(3), 1-9(3), 1-10(4), 1-11(5-8), 1-12(2,3), 1-13(2,3), 1-15(5,6), 1-18(4), 2-1(4), 2-106(2), 2-107(3,4), 2-108(3), 2-109(2,4), 2-2(2,3), 2-3(3), 2-4(3,4), 2-5(2-10),2-6(13,21), 2-7(16), 2-8(14,18), 2-9(11,15,19), 2-10(4,5), 3-1(4-6), 3-2(3,4),3-3(3-6), 4-1(3-5,7-9), 5-1(6-10), 5-2(3), 5-4(4-6), 6-1(4,7,8), 6-103(2,3), 7-1(10-13), 7-2(5), 7-3(4-10), 7-4(3,4), 7-5(3,4), 7-6(4,5), 8-1(11,13,14), 9-1(1), 9-2(4-10,12-14,17), 10-1(4-6), 11-1(2), 11-2(3-5), 13-1(4-8), 13-2(4,6), 13-3(3,4), 13-4(2,3), 13-5(1), 14-1(4,5), 15-1(5-10), 15-2(6-8), 16-1(12-18,18A,19-21), 16-103(3-6), 17-1(3), 18-1(12,14,15), 19-2(10), 20-1(5-8,8a), 20-2(2,3), 21-1(13,14,16-18), 22-1(3-5), 23-1(4), 24-101 – 24 103(6-15), 24-102(2,3), 24-104(4a, 5-8), 25-1(5). (In Original)

(d) The Financial Statements and Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Prime Minister's Relief Fund for the year ended 30 June 2024. (In Original)

(e) The Financial Statements and Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the National COVID-19 Vaccination Programme Fund for the year ended 30 June 2023 and for the period 01 July 2023 to 02 August 2023. (In Original)

(f) The Performance Audit Report on the 'Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 2 (Zero Hunger) Targets 2.3 and 2.4, Enhancing Food Security and Sustainable Agricultural Practices in Mauritius' – Ministry of Agro-Industry, Food Security, Blue Economy & Fisheries. (In Original)

(g) The Performance Audit Report on the 'Preparedness for the Implementation of Climate Change Actions – Sustainable Development Goal 13 Climate Action' – Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change. (In Original)

B. **Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities**

The Central Water Authority (Dry Season) (Amendment) Regulations 2025. (Government Notice No. 43 of 2025)

C. Ministry of Commerce and Consumer Protection

The Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 2025. (Government Notice No. 44 of 2025)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition, the floor is yours!

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

MAURITIAN EXPORTS TO US – 10% TARIFF IMPOSITION – MITIGATING MEASURES

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr G. Lesjongard) *(by Private Notice)* asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the recent imposition of a 10 per cent tariff on Mauritian exports to the United States of America, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the impact thereof on the export sector, indicating the measures being taken to mitigate the effects thereof.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Prime Minister!

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, it will be recalled that President Trump signed an Executive Order entitled "Regulating Imports with A Reciprocal Tariff to Rectify Trade Practices that contribute to Large and Persistent Annual United States Goods Trade Deficits" on 02 April 2025.

The Executive Order imposes a baseline of 10% tariff on all imported goods as from 05 April 2025.

The United States also intended to impose an individualised reciprocal higher tariff proportionate to the level of its trade deficit with each country as from 09 April 2025. Thus, the reciprocal tariff on Mauritian exports would have been 40 per cent.

In this context, a Working Group has been set up at the level of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade to discuss the possible impact of that policy measure and the way forward for Mauritius, in consultations with the relevant public and private stakeholders, including the Mauritius Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Mauritius Export Association, and Business Mauritius.

On 07 April, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade had a meeting, which included high-level representatives from various Ministries as well as public and private sector institutions with a view to charting the way forward and mitigating the fallouts on our economy.

I have also chaired two meetings, together with the Deputy Prime Minister and relevant Ministers and officers.

The following course of action was agreed –

a) Discuss possible avenues with the United States at the bilateral and regional levels;

b) Work with like-minded group of countries, including AGOA eligible countries as well as the African Union mission in Washington D.C with a view to devising a strategy to open up discussions with the United States, and

c) Negotiate a bilateral Trade Agreement with the United States which would provide the necessary predictability to our trading relations.

You will recall, Madam Speaker, that I made a Statement in the National Assembly on the issue.

On 09 April 2025, President Trump announced that he has authorised a 90-day pause and subsequently only a 10 per cent tariff would apply.

I personally wrote a letter to President Trump to engage with the United States at the bilateral level and also to request for the suspension of the imposition of the tariff.

In addition, on 22 April 2025, hon. Ramphul and hon. Ameer Meea jointly wrote to the United States Trade Representative (USTR) proposing a bilateral agreement with a view to forging a stronger and more balanced relationship between the United States and Mauritius.

The USTR has responded positively on 29 April 2025 and meetings will be held shortly between Mauritius and the United States.

I would like to inform the House that a high-level delegation to be led by the Minister of Foreign Affairs will participate in the forthcoming 2025 United States-Africa Business Summit which is organised by the Corporate Council of Africa on 22 to 25 June in Angola.

Madam Speaker, tariffs have been dominating the headlines as the new US administration drives sharp trade policy changes. Tariffs will likely impact economic growth, inflation, trade dynamics, and financial stability. These abrupt policy changes have affected equity, bond and currency markets. They have also led to heightened uncertainty, elevated volatility and severe lack of predictability. It makes policy making very, very challenging.

The IMF, in its April 2025 World Economic Outlook (WEO), has lowered its forecast for global growth by 0.5 percentage point, citing the ongoing trade tensions and their impact on both advanced and emerging countries. The OECD, in its March 2025 Interim Economic

Outlook, forecast global growth slowing to 3.1 per cent this year compared to an estimated growth of 3.3 per cent in December 2024, amid important divergences across economies and regions.

Risks to the global growth outlook are tilted to the downside. According to the IMF, escalating trade tensions, fuelled by tariff announcements and subsequent countermeasures, have significantly increased trade and policy uncertainty. This environment of unpredictability and rising protectionism is expected to hinder both short-term and long-term growth prospects.

Furthermore, tighter global financial conditions if inflation persists or if it regains an upward momentum and heightened economic uncertainty would certainly increase financial stability risks. The potential for further asset price corrections, strains impacting non-bank financial institutions, and turbulence in sovereign bond markets add to these downside pressures, particularly for emerging market economies facing higher financing costs.

Tariffs, which are taxes paid by importers, will likely lead to inflation. Before tariff imposition, global inflation was on a downward trend, although still above central banks' targets in some advanced countries. However, with tariffs, progress on disinflation may stall or even reverse course as higher import prices and supply chain disruptions may lead to higher domestic prices.

In the event that inflationary pressures directly emanating from the imposition of tariffs offset the disinflationary effects of lower output growth and potential trade diversion by China, policymakers could be faced with the challenges of stagflation – that is, a combination of slowing economic growth and higher inflation. For now, the uncertainty linked to tariffs appears to bear higher risks to the growth rather than to the inflation outlook. According to the IMF, global inflation is projected to average 4.3 per cent in 2025, slightly, therefore, higher compared to the January 2025 forecast.

Policy responses to tariffs will vary from country to country depending on their specific circumstances and there is no one size that fits all.

In consultation with all stakeholders, we have conducted a scenario-based assessment of the impact of US tariffs on economic growth, inflation, trade dynamics, and financial stability. The assumptions are as follows –

i) Tariff raises import prices initially;

ii) Tariff could lead to negative trade and output effect globally with knock on effects on Mauritius;

iii) Monetary policy will vary from country to country. UK and the EU lowering interest rates with the US holding rates in the short term;

iv) Commodity prices may fall with decrease in demand, especially for food items and petroleum products, and

v) What will happen to the USD exchange rate against other currencies (in our case the Euro and the Pound Sterling).

With global supply chains facing potential headwinds and our major trading partners taking a hit, our export sector may face challenges during 2025 through lower demand for goods and services.

Accordingly, the real GDP growth projection is now more likely to be in the range of 3.0 to 3.5 per cent for 2025, considering global economic uncertainty and downward revisions to the growth outlook for some of our major trading partners which can potentially dent demand from these countries.

Our scenario-based assessment plays out opposing effects regarding the impact of US tariffs on inflation. First round effects may be a rise in inflation due to higher import prices. However, the contraction of our main trading partners could also compress global inflation as commodity prices take a hit. The net impact of US tariffs on inflation in Mauritius is likely going to be largely scenario-based playing out the opposing effects.

In addition, there are domestically generated inflation that we have to deal with services inflation and wage push inflation.

Headline inflation stood at 2.5 per cent in March 2025 – its lowest value, Madam Speaker, since June 2021. However, core inflation, which strips off price movements of food items and movements in administered and energy prices, has remained stubbornly sticky, upheld by higher prices of services and the increase in wages.

We project headline inflation to close this year at around 3.5 per cent, marginally lower than the previous projection of 3.7 per cent.

However, our scenario-based assessment shows that risks remain tilted on the upside as trading partner inflation rates could increase due to the imposition of tariffs and a fragmentation of global supply chains which could raise global commodity prices, again

pushing up import prices. Furthermore, the stickiness in services inflation due to higher nominal wages could tilt the risks to the inflation outlook further to the upside. We do not forecast any threat to financial stability.

Madam Speaker, we are comforted that on 12 May, the United States and China, the two largest economies in the world, are deescalating the tariff and trade tensions, including a 90-day suspension with a significant roll back of tariffs and non-tariff barriers as both nations engage in negotiations to ease tension and foster a more cooperative economic and trade relationship. The financial market has reacted very positively to this new development with significant gains in stock prices across the United States, Europe, and Asia, signalling an investor optimism about the potential for better trade and economic relationship between the two and positive knock-on effects on the global economy.

Madam Speaker, as announced in the Government Programme, we are coming up with a new economic model that will transform our economy to build resilience to external shocks through diversification and economic reforms. These include –

a) Diversification of trade to build resilience and mitigating risks;

b) Regional integration with African countries by acceleration cross border trade and investment;

c) Transforming our economy to better withstand external shocks through economic reforms that will unlock new opportunities;

d) Invest in food security and energy self-reliance with clean energy;

e) Embrace technology and innovation to add more economic clusters top our economic base, and finally

f) Raise productivity and efficiency and export.

Madam Speaker: Thank you, hon. Prime Minister.

Your supplementary? Do you have a supplementary question?

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

Madam Speaker, time is of the essence and although the US and China are trying to ease the situation now, there will be difficult times ahead. May I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he will inform the House where matters stand with regard to negotiations concerning

the reauthorisation of the AGOA, following the visit of the Committee on Ways and Means of the United States Congress last year? Can we have some information on that?

The Prime Minister: There is no change in the AGOA at the moment. We are still at the same point.

Mr Lesjongard: Can the hon. Prime Minister inform the House whether there have been any meetings or negotiations between the Mauritian government and the US authorities concerning the imposition of the 10% tariff on our exports to the US?

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Prime Minister!

The Prime Minister: No. This is what I said in my answer, Madam Speaker. If you remember, I said they have agreed to bilateral talks, and this is meant to be in June at some point.

Madam Speaker: Okay.

Mr Lesjongard: I put that question because my next question is related to that, Madam Speaker. The hon. Prime Minister had stated some time back that he would talk directly to the US President regarding this situation. Will he inform the House whether he has already spoken to President Trump and the outcome thereof and whether there has been any phone conversation?

The Prime Minister: As I said, Madam Speaker, I wrote to President Trump on 10 April of this year, particularly on the question of tariff. This is what we proposed. We have to wait and see when we get the appointment.

Mr Lesjongard: Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister to inform the House how the imposition of this new tariff on trade will influence the negotiations for the reauthorisation of AGOA and whether this has already been discussed at the level of Government?

The Prime Minister: This is something that we will discuss. Obviously, it was 40%, and then, it was reduced to 10%. Now, we have to wait for the bilateral talks. Also, I think I mentioned there was a working group that will look at all this, and there are going to be meetings with the United States Trade Department.

Mr Lesjongard: The hon. Prime Minister stated in his reply that a meeting was held between government officials. He chaired the meeting, I understand, and the Deputy Prime Minister was present. May I ask him whether he has already met with the representatives of

the private sector to discuss the mitigating strategies to better manage the increase in tariff? Has this meeting been done?

The Prime Minister: The Minister for Industry and the Minister of Foreign Affairs have done so. We have to look at the propositions on the table first. I am not going to jump and say this is going to happen, and therefore, we will do this. We will have to wait for the bilateral negotiations.

Madam Speaker: Are you happy?

Mr Lesjongard: Yes!

Madam Speaker: Because, as you know, it keeps moving.

Mr Lesjongard: Yes, of course, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: It keeps moving every day more or less. Yes!

Mr Lesjongard: The hon. Prime Minister made reference to the possibility of a drop in revenue for foreign exchange. Can he inform the House whether we have an estimate of the impending drop?

The Prime Minister: We have looked at all the various scenarios, Madam Speaker. But I think I said earlier that the USTR has responded positively to the demand for meetings on 29 April of this year. These meetings will be held shortly between Mauritius and the United States. I would rather wait to see what are the propositions on the table, what are the things that we can mitigate, and then we will move forward.

Madam Speaker: Sure. Yes!

Mr Lesjongard: In terms of employment, can I ask the hon. Prime Minister if he can inform the House, with regard to the increase in tariff, whether any study has been carried out to assess the impact on the employment sector in the country? Will there be a loss of jobs?

The Prime Minister: As I have said, yes, of course. We have to look at all the scenarios. But as I have said, we are not going to panic and say this is going to happen. We have to wait for the bilateral talks and also the talks with the USTR, which, as I said, responded positively to our demand. The meetings will be held shortly.

Madam Speaker: Yes!

Mr Lesjongard: Now, with regard to the prevailing situation concerning trade with the US, will the hon. Prime Minister inform the House if we have started exploring new markets to export our products?

Madam Speaker: Okay, that's a different question!

The Prime Minister: It is a different question. But what I can tell him is that mainly, the only sector which is really at risk is textiles and apparel. This is what is really at risk.

Mr Lesjongard: We know this is going to happen; in case the different sectors are impacted – they are already being impacted now, Madam Speaker – if there is a further increase, is Government envisaging to support the sectors affected in their ongoing operations, Madam Speaker?

The Prime Minister: I would rather wait, Madam Speaker, to see what are the outcomes of the discussions before I start jumping the gun and say this is going to happen.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: *Chut*! Let him have the floor!

Mr Lesjongard: Madam Speaker, we know that a 10% increase in tariff is detrimental to our economy. Can I ask and urge Government to consider urgently negotiating with the US authorities for a zero tariff, Madam Speaker? Because 90 days will be over.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition, I think at three times the hon. Prime Minister has said that the meeting is going to be in June, if I am not mistaken. I don't see what he can say more on that issue. But you can ask another question!

Mr Lesjongard: Time is of the essence, Madam Speaker. This is very important.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: I am sorry?

Mr Lesjongard: I said time is of the essence.

Madam Speaker: Of course!

Mr Lesjongard: We are already being impacted.

Madam Speaker: Yes!

Mr Lesjongard: Can I ask whether Government is considering to set up a joint public-private committee to promote dialogue and advocacy in the interest of the business community in order to leverage on our exports' potential and competitiveness? I am asking if they will set up a joint public-private committee because that committee does not exist now.

The Prime Minister: No, it does! The hon. Minister of Industry has had meetings with them along with the Minister of Foreign Affairs and others. We are looking at it. We are not just waiting and seeing what is going to happen.

An hon. Member: *Li ti panse pou met li ladan* !

Madam Speaker: Okay. Are you done? Good!

Now, we move to questions addressed to the hon. Prime Minister.

Hon. Members, the Table has been advised that PQ B/466 will be replied by the hon. Minister of Agro-Industry, Food Security, Blue Economy and Fisheries in due course, perhaps at the end of PQs if we can reach there.

Hon. Second Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac!

MIC – AGRICULTURAL LANDS – CONSTITUENCY NO. 13 – PROPOSED LEASE

(No. B/462) Mr R. Jhummun (Second Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to agricultural lands owned by the Mauritius Investment Corporation Ltd., in Constituency No. 13, Rivière des Anguilles and Souillac, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to –

(a) the extent and location thereof in each case, and

(b) whether they will be leased and/or put at the disposal of farmers, prospective farmers and SMEs of the region, indicating the procedure to be followed therefor.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, as regards part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Bank of Mauritius that the Mauritius Investment Corporation Ltd (MIC) has acquired from Omnicane three plots of land of a total of 172 acres in Constituency No. 13 – Rivière des Anguilles and Souillac, which was the constituency of the previous Minister of Finance.

The extent and location of each plot of land are as follows –

- 38.4 acres at Riche Bois;
- 61.0 acres at Britannia, and
- 72.6 acres at Tyack.

A management contract was entered between the MIC and Omnicane for the latter to plant and harvest sugarcane, to process into cane sugar and other co-products, as well as in the management of sugarcane fields, that is, in between harvesting and during harvesting against a small fee paid to the MIC.

Madam Speaker, concerning part (b) of the question, I wish to inform the House that in view of the ramifications regarding the portfolio of the MIC, the Bank of Mauritius is currently examining different options for the restructuring of the MIC, including the optimal use of land assets acquired under very dubious conditions for more than Rs10 billion from Medine Sugar Estate and Omnicane.

Furthermore, looking at the price paid for the plots of land purchased by the MIC in various locations, this will be submitted to the Government Valuer for the latter to ascertain whether it was value for money.

Madam Speaker: Mr Jhummun!

Mr Jhummun: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Too many things happening at the same time! Please!

Mr Jhummun: *Etant un vrai démocrate,* I know that the hon. Prime Minister will inform the House about the information contained in the management contract; whether it has been done in such a way that it favours the MIC or it is one-sided, favouring only the companies? Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Prime Minister!

The Prime Minister: We will certainly look into that, including the valuation of the plots of lands.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Third Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue!

CIVIL STATUS SUB-OFFICE, TERRE ROUGE – DEPLORABLE STATE – REMEDIAL MEASURES

(No. B/463) Mr L. Caserne (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the Civil Status Office situated at Le Hochet, Terre Rouge, he will state if his Office is in presence of any representation from the inhabitants of the region as to the deplorable state of the building and, if so, indicate the urgent remedial measures being envisaged thereon.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I am informed that there have been several verbal and written complaints regarding the deplorable state of the Terre Rouge Civil Status sub-office situated at Le Hochet.

The Safety and Health Section of the Ministry of Public Service and Administrative Reforms has also highlighted the poor state of the building and had made specific recommendations to improve the working environment thereof. The hon. Member himself made a surprise visit, I believe, and he saw for himself.

The Civil Status Division had on several occasions requested the lessor to undertake the necessary renovations. Unfortunately, no action was taken by the lessor. Consequently, two tender exercises were launched by the Civil Status Division in 2018 and 2021, respectively, to identify alternative premises that comply with safety and health standards and are strategically located near key facilities such as the police station, post office, bus stop, etc., to ensure accessibility to the public. However, both exercises were unsuccessful.

Subsequently, the Civil Status Division has conducted several site visits in the region to identify a suitable location for the sub-office. An office space located within the Terre Rouge Village Council Multi-Purpose Complex has now been found to be suitable for that purpose. An agreement has been reached with the Pamplemousses District Council for the allocation of the office space and the Council is now renovating the building.

It is expected that the sub-office will be able to move to the new premises by August of this year.

Madam Speaker: Yes. You are happy?

Mr Caserne: Yes.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Second Member for Rivière des Anguilles and Souillac, again!

MR N. B. – FORMER DIRECTOR GENERAL ICAC & FCC – 2019 LONDON MISSION – BOARD'S APPROVAL

(No. B/464) Mr R. Jhummun (Second Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to Mr N.B., former Director General of the Independent Commission against Corruption (ICAC) and the Financial Crimes Commission, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to whether the approval of the Board of the ICAC was sought and obtained prior to his travel to London in 2019 to attend the Privy Council hearing in the MedPoint case, indicating the cost incurred therefor.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Financial Crimes Commission that Mr Navin Beekarry, former Director General of the Independent Commission Against Corruption, proceeded to London on three occasions in connection with the hearing of the Privy Council for the MedPoint case. In 2018, Mr Beekarry proceeded twice to London from 28 September to 07 October and from 21 to 28 November. As for 2019, he travelled to London from the 12 to 20 January.

These missions were approved by the Board of the then ICAC, which Board was chaired by Mr Beekarry himself. So, in accordance with section 19(3)(b) of the repealed Prevention of Corruption Act, he did not recuse himself, I must say, and when the decision on his mission was being discussed and subsequently approved by the Board, he was present there. This is a blatant case of conflict of interest.

What was equally contemptible was his presence at the Privy Council despite the fact that the Privy Council, through correspondence dated 13 December 2018, Lord Kerr directed that ICAC's application to make oral submission be refused. He was not given permission. In spite of that, he proceeded on mission to London, accompanied by Mr Roopchand, Acting Chief Legal Adviser and Mr Sohawon, Attorney at Law.

Madam Speaker, what should also be recalled is that Mr Navin Beekarry changed his original stand, which was in favour of prosecution in the MedPoint case. He changed his opinion a few days before the sitting of the Privy Council.

The total costs, Madam Speaker, of the missions undertaken by Mr Beekarry, Mr Roopchand and Mr Sohawon for the hearing of the Privy Council in connection with the MedPoint case amounted to Rs1,373,990.02 – for a mission that the Privy Council said that they will not be able to do oral submissions.

Madam Speaker: Okay, now it is hon. Second Member for Grand'Baie and Poudre d'Or!

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BOARD – HEAD OFFICE BUILDING – LEASE AGREEMENT

(No. B/465) Mr N. Beejan (Second Member for Grand'Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the Economic Development Board, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom information as to when was the Head Office thereof shifted to Ebene, indicating the –

(a) name of the owner of the building housing same;

(b) amount of rent paid therefor to date, and

(c) conditions of the lease agreement and table copy thereof.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. Member for asking this question.

This is yet – every week we see this – another example of cronies of the previous government benefitting from contracts awarded by public bodies.

I am informed by the Economic Development Board (EDB) that its head office shifted to the 7 Exchange Square Building in Ebene in December 2022. Now, a tender exercise was launched in October 2018 even before the building was constructed. The tender exercise was started as if they knew the building would be there. All the other bidders in the tender exercise were found to be non-responsive and only PSH Investment Ltd was qualified and awarded the contract.

As regards part (a) of the question, the EDB signed a lease agreement with PSH Investment Ltd, which is the owner of the building, on 09 August 2019 for 5,000 square metres of office space and 130 parking slots. As per the lease agreement signed, the building was to be delivered in December 2020 and rent payable from February 2021, but the office space was actually delivered in October 2022, that is, a delay of almost 2 years.

On 30 May 2024, the EDB signed a second lease agreement with PSH Investment Ltd for an additional office space of 170 square metres at the ground floor of the same building and also for 2 additional parking slots.

Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Corporate and Business Registration Department that PSH Investment Ltd is fully owned by NG Holdings Ltd and the sole shareholder of NG Holdings Ltd is Mr Vinash Gopee.

Concerning part (b) of the question, the EDB started paying rent for the office building as from December 2022 when it started occupying the building.

The total amount of rent paid by EDB from December 2022 to date is Rs104.9 million. In addition, an amount of Rs7.2 million has been paid for syndic fees.

Regarding part (c) of the question, the House may wish to note that the main conditions of the lease agreements are as follows –

(i) the minimum lease period for the first lease agreement is 10 years and for the second lease agreement, it is 8 years and 6 months;

(ii) the monthly rental is Rs625, exclusive of VAT, per square metre for the first lease agreement and Rs1,147 per square meter for the second lease agreement. In other words, the prices have jumped;

(iii) as from December 2027, the rental must be reviewed every 2 years based on the increase in the Consumer Price Index;

(iv) up to November 2027, the contract may be terminated by giving 4 months' notice, but the EDB must pay the rental from the date of cancellation up to the expiry of the initial lease period; and

(v) after November 2027, the contract may be terminated by giving 4 months' notice and the EDB will then not be required to pay any further rental.

I am tabling a copy of the two lease agreements.

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

WAKASHIO SHIPWRECK – INSURANCE COMPENSATION

(No. B/466) Mr C. Baboolall (First Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the Wakashio shipwreck, he will state the amount of insurance compensation paid to Government to date, indicating the quantum thereof paid, if any, to the persons and/or entities who had sustained loss or damage as a consequence thereof.

(Withdrawn)

MRA – *CONTRIBUTION SOCIALE GÉNÉRALISÉE* – FUNDS COLLECTED

(No. B/467) Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the *Contribution Sociale Généralisée*, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Revenue Authority, information as to the amount of funds collected yearly since its introduction to date, giving a breakdown thereof and indicating the –

(a) quantum thereof already spent, if any and for what purpose, and

(b) remaining balance thereof to date.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, the *Contribution Sociale Généralisée (CSG)* was introduced in September 2020 and the contributions to the National Pensions Fund were accordingly abolished.

The CSG was introduced by way of regulations and subsequently, the Social Contribution and Social Benefits Act was enacted in 2021 to provide for the levy of CSG and payment of the benefits.

The rates of CSG contribution in respect of an employee earning up to Rs50,000 in a month are 1.5% and 3% of basic salary for the employee and his employer, respectively. As regards an employee earning above Rs50,000 a month, the rates of contribution are 3% and 6%.

I am informed by the Mauritius Revenue Authority that since September 2020 to the end of April 2025, a total amount of Rs44.6 billion has been collected as CSG contributions and remitted to the Consolidated Fund.

The yearly breakdown is as follows –

(a) Rs5.25 billion in financial year 2020/2021;

(b) Rs8.35 billion in financial year 2021/2022;

(c) Rs9.51 billion in financial year 2022/2023;

(d) Rs10.9 billion in financial year 2023/2024, and

(e) Rs10.6 billion in the current financial year, as at April 2025.

With regard to part (a) of the question, a number of benefits are being paid for various schemes and measures under the Social Contribution and Social Benefits Act. For the period 2021 to end of April 2025, a total amount of Rs34 billion has been spent under these schemes and measures.

In addition, a total amount of Rs10.7 billion has been paid for allowance to public sector employees as well as meeting government contributions to the *CSG*.

Madam Speaker, as far as part (b) of the question is concerned, from a budgeting point of view, there is no remaining balance as at end April 2025.

Let me remind the House of the reply to PQ B/1248 on 24 October 2023, the previous Minister of Finance said, and I quote –

« Il ne reste donc rien par rapport aux contributions de la CSG. »

At that very time itself, they had already depleted all the funds from the *CSG*.

Madam Speaker, I am tabling a breakdown of funds collected and spent as at the end of April 2025.

It must be noted that the previous government had engaged in the provision of a series of allowances from funds coming from the *CSG*, especially during the months preceding the last elections in a clear attempt to lure the voters.

This is yet another example of how the *CSG* funds had been dilapidated by the previous regime in their desperation to try to win the elections.

An hon. Member: *Voler*!

Madam Speaker: Yes, Mr Beechook!

Mr Beechook: Madam Speaker, we all know that the *CSG* system is what has destroyed the French social security system. Given the fact that Mauritius has an ageing population, has there been any study to understand till which date the current system is a sustainable one?

The Prime Minister: Even before a study is carried out, we know it is going to be disastrous because, as you say, we have an ageing population. We are looking at all this in the context of the budget.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Lobine, is that okay?

The Fourth Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue, hon. A. Duval!

SAFE CITY CAMERAS – DATA PROTECTION ACT PURVIEW

(No. B/468) Mr A. Duval (Fourth Member for Port-Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the Safe City cameras, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to whether consideration will be given for the operation thereof to be placed under the purview of the Data Protection Act and, if so, when and, if not, why not.

The Prime Minister: I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that the Safe City Project came into operation on 19 August 2019, and is operating under the provisions of the Data Protection Act, which is in line with the European Union General Data Protection Regulation requirements.

Prior to the implementation of the Safe City project, a certificate was issued, under Section 44(4) of the Data Protection Act, exempting the Mauritius Police Force from the application of certain sections of the Data Protection Act, in the interest of national and public security. These Sections pertain, among others, to the collection, access and communication of personal data.

On 10 November 2020, the Mauritius Police Force has been registered as a Data Controller by the Data Protection Office. On August 2023, the Registration certificate has been renewed up to July 2026.

Madam Speaker: Yes!

Mr A. Duval: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, can the hon. Prime Minister confirm that under the exceptions which apply to the Safe City Project, no sanctions can be taken by the Data Protection Office for contraventions being done at the level of Mauritius Police Force, if there are any?

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, the right of privacy is guaranteed by our Constitution. This is not an absolute right, but the same Article also provides for exceptions in the interest of public safety and security. So, the Constitution already gives the right of privacy, which is guaranteed.

Mr A. Duval: Madam Speaker, can I …

Madam Speaker: No! No! If I may. I think the question was that the Data Protection Commissioner could not prosecute. Is that your question?

Mr A. Duval: Yes, Madam Speaker!

Madam Speaker: Your question was that the Data Protection Commissioner cannot prosecute. I would…

Mr A. Duval: If I may have another question.

Madam Speaker: Okay! Go with another question!

Mr A. Duval: Madam Speaker, the hon. Prime Minister will agree that a project like the Safe City Cameras, operating in a legal vacuum, involves huge risks with regard to the safeguard of personal data and risk of abuses. The hon. Prime Minister has himself complained in the past of safe city cameras being positioned in front of his office – which have now been removed – specifically for espionage, and not for the legitimate detection of crime. This is the reason why there is a need for a specific legislation.

Madam Speaker: No, no! Question! Question! Rephrase it!

Mr A. Duval: Will the hon. Prime Minister agree that there is a need for a specific legislation which provides for accountability and for sanctions and prosecutions of offenders of the controllers and the users? We have seen in the past how …

(Interruptions)

… we have seen in the past the risk of abuses…

Madam Speaker: Don’t make statements!

Mr A. Duval: So, will he not agree…

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Every time I tell you to put a question. Put a question, not a statement!

The Deputy Prime Minister: Stop helping him!

The Prime Minister: Let me remind the hon. Member – you joined government – the Safe City Cameras came into operation on 19 August 2019! I didn't hear you say anything then!

(Interruptions)

Mr A. Duval: We did not …

The Prime Minister: You didn't?

Mr A. Duval: I…

The Prime Minister: Still, you accepted the post! You became the Deputy Speaker!

(Interruptions)

But, in any case, …

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Wait for the answer!

The Prime Minister: … I said it very clearly in the House that there is no espionage being done now!

(Interruptions)

Mr A. Duval: Madam Speaker, if I may.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Prime Minister: *Pena mem nanien pou espione ar twa*!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Okay, your last supplementary question! But question, not statement!

Mr A. Duval: Madam Speaker, in May 2019, there was a Private Notice Question specifically on the need to have a specific legislation as the Safe City Cameras operate outside the purview of the Data Protection Act because of the Certificate of Exemption. Therefore, the Data Protection Commissioner cannot take any sanctions. There is only a Code of Conduct…

The Prime Minister: That is not an issue!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Again, you are …

(Interruptions)

Mr A. Duval: So, this issue was raised as far back in 2019.

The Deputy Prime Minister: *Al lekol primer do*!

Ms Anquetil: *Il n'y a pas de question* !

(Interruptions)

Mr A. Duval: So, it is not right to say it has not…

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. A. Duval, I asked you specifically not to make a statement. It's a second statement that you are making!

Mr A. Duval: Alright! I will put the question!

Madam Speaker: Yes!

(Interruptions)

Mr A. Duval: Does the Prime Minister not think anymore …

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: *Ey assize*!

(Interruptions)

Mr A. Duval: … that there is a risk of espionage and misuse of data collected by the Safe City Cameras?

(Interruptions)

Does he not think that anymore?

Madam Speaker: Hon. Prime Minister!

The Prime Minister: The hon. Member's father first had asked the PNQ in May 2019 when he was in the Opposition, but he joined the government afterwards. He did not do anything then! Then, everything was okay! Everything was fine!

(Interruptions)

You didn't?

(Interruptions)

Mr Jhummun: *Par limpost*!

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: Didn't you sit in the Chair?

Mr Jhummun: *Pass par limpost* !

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: Nothing happened then! Then everything was okay!

(Interruptions)

Now, you are asking me the question when I have stopped the espionage…

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Let the hon. Prime Minister speak, please!

The Prime Minister: … of individuals in this country!

Madam Speaker: That was the last question! That was your last question!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Third Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien!

VIPSU OFFICERS – PROMOTION – PERIOD 2015-2024

(No. B/469) Mr C. Lukeeram (Third Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the Very Important Persons Security Unit officers, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from

the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number thereof promoted from January 2015 to November 2024, indicating the criteria used therefor.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that promotion in the Mauritius Police Force, including the Very Important Persons Security Unit (VIPSU), is governed by Regulations 14 and 19 of the Disciplined Forces Service Commission Regulations 1997. In line with these regulations, Police Standing Order No. 16 provides that promotion within the Police Force is to be carried out as follows –

1) by way of competitive examination by the Disciplined Forces Service Commission;

2) upon successful completion of approved courses;

3) as specialist within a specialised unit, and

4) on a seniority basis.

Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that, due to the specialised nature of their duties and responsibilities, certain units of the Police Force, such as the VIPSU, Special Mobile Force Engineering Squadron, National Coast Guard, Police Helicopter Squadron, National Security Service, Central Armoury, Police Dog Unit, among others, are categorised as specialised units. Promotion within these units is supposed to be done on the basis of experience, qualifications, merit, and seniority.

But this was not the case! We have seen how people who had been promoted by my government – VIPSU personnel – their promotions were removed after so many years. This is unprecedented! Unprecedented! Removed and they were brought back to their original post. Two of them had to go to court and they won their case. Now they are going to be reinstated.

As for the numbers, from January 2015 to November 2024, 543 Police Officers posted at the VIPSU have been promoted to higher ranks as follows –

(a) 444 Police Officers of different ranks have been promoted as specialists. It is to be highlighted that 225 of them were promoted, believe it or not, in 2024 itself;

(b) 11 Police Constables have been promoted to the rank of Police Sergeant after having successfully passed the competitive examination, and

(c) 22 Police Corporals and 66 Police Constables, reckoning at least 20 years of service in the Police Force, promoted to the rank of Police Sergeant.

But as I have said, Madam Speaker, all this was done as if they chose who will be promoted and who will be degraded. This is how it was done.

Madam Speaker: Yes. Once more, hon. Second Member for Rivière des Anguilles and Souillac!

AIRPORT HOLDINGS LTD – STAFF RECRUITMENT – PERIOD 2023-2024

(No. B/470) Mr R. Jhummun (Second Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to Airport Holdings Ltd. and its subsidiaries, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the number of workers recruited thereat over the period 2023 to 2024, indicating the mode of recruitment used therefor.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Officer-in-Charge of Airport Holdings Ltd that for the period January 2023 to December 2024, 810 persons have been recruited at different positions. 810! 754 of them have been recruited through advertising and the remaining 56 just by head hunting. In other words, you come, you do not come.

I am tabling the information requested for by the hon. Member.

Madam Speaker, I want to bring to the attention of the House that when we look at the recruitment at the level of the Mauritius Duty Free Paradise, 115 people were recruited, believe it or not, on 02 September 2024; in other words, only a few weeks prior to the dissolution of Parliament. In this specific case, those recruited were on probation for a period of only six months, which is again unusual, whereas the Collective Agreement between the Union and the Management stipulates that new entry grade posts shall be for a period of one year, not six months.

This is yet another example, Madam Speaker, of malpractice under the previous Government. As if they could do anything - forget the regulations - because the country belonged to them.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Jhummun!

Mr Jhummun: Thank you. Can the hon. Prime Minister provide information as to whether those who have been recruited lately will they be left unpunished or will actions be taken against them?

The Prime Minister: All this is being looked at.

Madam Speaker: Happy?

Mr Jhummun: Yes.

Madam Speaker: Yes. Now, I have hon. Rookny, Third Member for Pamplemousses and Triolet!

PORT LOUIS PORT – QUAY CRANES OPERATION – PORT EFFICIENCY & COMPETITIVENESS

(No. B/471) Mr K. Rookny (Third Member for Pamplemousses & Triolet) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the Port of Port Louis, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Ports Authority, information as to the –

(a) number of quay cranes currently;
  (i) operational, and
  (ii) non-operational thereat, indicating in each case since when
(b) maximum number of vessels that can be accommodated or docked simultaneously, and
(c) measures being envisaged to enhance the efficiency and competitiveness thereof.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Managing Director of the Cargo Handling Corporation Ltd that presently, there are five quay cranes at the Mauritius Container Terminal and they are now fully operational. Previously, they were not; now they are.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am also informed that the quay at the Mauritius Container Terminal, which is operated by the Cargo Handling Corporation Ltd, is 800 metres long and as such, two large container vessels of a capacity of up to 16,000 twenty-foot equivalent units or a combination of three small container feeder vessels can be accommodated at any one time. The Multi-Purpose Terminal, on the other hand, has four quays to handle inter-island cargo, pure car carriers, livestock carriers, bulk coal, maize and soya bean meal vessels as well as container vessels as and when required. Each of them can accommodate one cargo vessel at a time.

Madam Speaker, modernisation and transformation of the Port Louis Harbour into an efficient port is a priority of this Government. To that effect, in line with the Government Programme 2025-2029, Government recognises that a modern and efficient seaport will be of critical importance to boost the competitiveness of our economy as a destination for foreign investment. There will therefore be a total revamping of the port and other infrastructure to support maritime economic activities.

At the heart of this transformation is effective management. To that end, a new Managing Director of the Cargo Handling Corporation Ltd was appointed on 12 December 2024 and since then, the port situation has witnessed substantial improvement.

The level of absenteeism has dropped from 30% to 10% and daily sick leaves from 120 to just 10; which means the management is doing the job properly. There is discipline. There is no ship waiting time, which was previously six days, thus ensuring quicker turnaround now. Weekly container moves have increased from 7,500 to 11,000. Bulk vessels are now being serviced within 3.5 to 4.5 days as compared to six to seven days. As a testament to this progress, the Mediterranean Shipping Company has launched in March of this year, a direct Beira (Mozambique) route. This has significantly enhanced connectivity, reducing transit time for containers to five to six days, compared to 40 days, Madam Speaker.

As regards part (c) of the question, I am informed that measures are being taken by both the Mauritius Ports Authority and the Cargo Handling Corporation Ltd to enhance efficiency and competitiveness of the Port. These include the implementation of a Business Plan of the Cargo Handling Corporation Ltd which has been approved by its Board on 02 May of this year. This Plan aims to modernise operations, expand capacity, and strengthen competitiveness of the Cargo Handling Corporation Ltd.

To that effect, the Cargo Handling Corporation Ltd is planning to invest over the next five years, an amount of Rs5.3 billion in the acquisition of state-of-the-art equipment, implementation of green initiatives, capacity building and digitalisation of operations.

As an interim measure, procedures have been initiated by the Cargo Handling Corporation Ltd for the leasing of two mobile harbour cranes to address the demand of additional transhipment volumes from shipping lines.

In addition, as recommended in the Port Master Plan, the Mauritius Ports Authority will proceed with the expansion of the container yard at the Mauritius Container Terminal over an

area of about five hectares. This project will increase the storage capacity of the Terminal and would thus improve operational efficiency.

Madam Speaker: I have got only one minute left. Are you okay? Unfortunately, we will not have time for the next question.

Mr François: Next time.

Madam Speaker: Yes.

Okay. Please bear with me. The Table has been advised that the following PQs have been withdrawn B/473, B/476, B/479 and B/481.

Now, we have questions addressed to hon. Ministers.

The hon. Second Member for Grand'Baie and Poudre d'Or, hon. Beejan!

2024 WRIT OF ELECTIONS – PUBLIC OFFICERS APPOINTMENT/PROMOTION

(No. B/482) Mr N. Beejan (Second Member for Grand'Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of Public Service and Administrative Reforms whether, in regard to the appointment/promotion of public officers carried out following the issue of the writ of elections on 04 October 2024, he will state if consideration will be given for the revocation of same.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Minister of Public Service!

Mr Pentiah: Madam Speaker, may I please first and foremost thank the hon. Member for his question.

Madam Speaker, in my reply to PQ B/9 dated 04 February of this year, I informed the House amongst other things, that no recruitment exercise had been carried out by the Public Service Commission, the Disciplined Forces Service Commission and Local Government Service Commission after the issue of the writ of elections dated 04 October 2024.

The more so, Madam Speaker, the Public Service Commission had, on 08 October 2024, issued two circulars notifying responsible officers of all Ministries to stay action on appointment to be made under delegated powers and on issue of public advertisement for filling of vacancies until further notice. On the same date, that is, 08 October 2024, a circular was also issued by the Secretary of the Cabinet of the time and Head of Civil Service, drawing the attention of the supervising officers of Ministries and departments to the code of conduct which had been elaborated by the Electoral Supervisory Commission (ESC) for the

2024 National Assembly elections. Supervising officers were, accordingly, also advised to stand guided by the provision of the Code of Ethics for public officers.

Madam Speaker, I have also informed the House that following the appointment exercises carried out from July to September 2024, 281 officers had joined the public sector after the issue of writ of elections, and drew attention to the fact that such a situation occurred in a matter of days prior to 04 October and beyond 04 October 2024.

It is to be noted, Madam Speaker, that PQ B/9 concerned recruitment in the public sector whereas today, the hon. Member's PQ, is also addressing the issue of promotion. I am informed that letters of offer of appointment and promotion were issued during the election period as follows, Madam Speaker –

(i) on the date of writ of elections, i.e., 04 October: 63 cases,

(ii) after the date of issue of writ of elections: 181 cases, including 173 cases of promotion in the Police Department approved by DFSC since 23 September 2024.

Madam Speaker, in line with circulars from the PSC and the Secretary of the Cabinet – the Head of the Civil Service, actions have been restrained regarding the issue of offers of appointment and of promotion until further notice. In view of the complexity of the matter and the wide range implications, further consultations need to be held with the relevant parties concerned, and advice is awaited on this issue from the Office of the Attorney General before a final decision is taken on this matter.

I thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Thank you.

The Third Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue, hon. Caserne!

BOULINGRIN TUNNEL, LONG MOUNTAIN – WATER ACCUMULATION – REMEDIAL MEASURES

(No. B/483) Mr L. Caserne (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure whether, in regard to the Boulingrin tunnel at Long Mountain, along the Terre Rouge Verdun Motorway, he will state if he has been made aware of water accumulation thereat during and after heavy rainfall thereby rendering same inaccessible for pedestrians and, if so, indicate –

(a) the urgent remedial measures being envisaged therefor, including the construction of drains, and

(b) if consideration will be given for the construction of a new access road to serve the region.

Mr Gunness: Madam Speaker, I am informed by Road Development Authority that in the context of the construction of Terre Rouge-Verdun-Trianon Link Road in December 2013, an existing access road linking the village of Boulingrin to Long Mountain was cut off as it was crossing the alignment of the Terre Rouge-Verdun Link Road.

Under the circumstances, with a view to maintaining access, the underpass or tunnel at Boulingrin was constructed to cater for passage of local agricultural workers and landowners.

I am further informed that in view of the topography of the site where the underpass is located and due to mud from passing heavy vehicles, there is recurrent water and mud accumulation thereat. Regular maintenance works such as cleaning of drains, vegetation controls are accordingly carried out by the RDA, whenever the need arises.

With a view to resolving the issue of water accumulation, a site visit was carried out on 08 April 2024 at the underpass by officers of RDA, the NDU, the Land Drainage Authority, and the District Council of Pamplemousses. The LDA was accordingly requested to carry out an assessment of the catchment area and propose measures to mitigate and resolve the issue of water accumulation thereat.

Madam Speaker, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the LDA that several measures have been recommended to address the matter, including the reinstatement of the cross drains connecting the track road drains to feeder Muemur and fitting with metal gratings to prevent water ponding. Other proposed remedial measures are being discussed with the RDA regarding their feasibility.

In addition, I am informed by the LDA that the District Council of Pamplemousses undertook cleaning of vegetation around the underpass and the existing storm water drain in February 2025. A follow-up cleaning is scheduled in two weeks as part of its ongoing in-house maintenance.

As regards part (b) of the question, I am informed that the region of Boulingrin is already connected to the Montagne Longue-Crève Coeur (B19) Road through an existing road. As such, there is no need to provide an alternative road for the region of Boulingrin. However, given that the existing road which connects Boulingrin to the B19 Road is a non-

classified road and is narrow, consideration may be given to the widening of the road by the District Council of Pamplemousses.

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

CONSTITUENCY NO. 6 – WATER ISSUES – MEASURES

(No. B/484) Mr R. Etwareea (Third Member for Grand'Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the water problems being faced by the inhabitants of Constituency No. 6, Grand Bay and Poudre D'or, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Water Authority, information as to the –

(a) number of broken water pipes and repairs works undertaken thereat since December 2024 to date, and

(b) measures being envisaged to address same.

Mr Assirvaden: Madame la présidente, je suis informé par la *Central Water Authority* qu'elle a enregistré un total de 1,470 plaintes liées à des conduites d'eau cassées et à des fuites au cours de la période du 1er décembre 2024 à ce jour dans les régions de Grand Baie et de Poudre d'Or.

Je suis également informé qu'un total de 1,150 travaux de réparation ont été effectués au cours de la même période du 1er décembre 2024 par une équipe interne de la CWA et par des entrepreneurs. À la demande de mon ministère, la CWA a déployé des moyens logistiques supplémentaires et a renforcé ses équipes opérationnelles.

Ainsi, Madame la présidente, le nombre d'équipes opérant dans la zone nord est passé de trois à quatre depuis février 2025. Tous les opérateurs et ouvriers qui effectuaient auparavant des travaux de remplacement des tuyaux en interne ont été transférés à l'équipe de réparations et d'interventions. Ils ont reçu du matériel supplémentaire. En moyenne, cette nouvelle structure/nouvelle équipe peut effectuer 216 réparations par mois contre 168 auparavant.

Le problème récurrent des ruptures de tuyaux et des fuites dans la région, Madame la présidente, est en grande partie due à la présence de canalisations anciennes et défectueux, notamment dans les secteurs de Pointe aux Canonniers, Grand Baie, Goodlands, Petit Raffray, Vale, Roche Terre et Grand Gaube.

Je suis informé que la CWA a identifié 35 km de tuyaux de canalisation défectueux dans les localités susmentionnées qui doivent être remplacés afin d'améliorer l'approvisionnement en eau et la pression.

Madam Speaker: Is that alright?

(Interruptions)

The hon. Third Member for Pamplemousses and Triolet!

I understand B/485 is going to be replied by the hon. Minister of Labour.

MAVEN MGT LTD & VALDUS CO. LTD – OWNERSHIP DISCLOSURE & SALARY REVIEW CONTROVERSY

(**No. B/485) Mr K. Rookny (Third Member for Pamplemousses & Triolet)** asked the Minister of Financial Services and Economic Planning whether, in regard to Maven Management Ltd. and VALDUS Co Ltd., she will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Financial Services Commission, information as to whether –

(a) the beneficial ownership of Mr G.C. therein was disclosed upon the application of a management licence and, if not, indicate the actions taken thereon, and

(b) she has been made aware of any case of alleged favouritism in the realignment of salaries of certain employees at the Commission by the salary commissioner VALDUS Co Ltd. and, if so, indicate if any investigation has been or will be initiated thereinto.

The Minister of Labour & Industrial Relations (Mr R. Uteem): Thank you, Madam Speaker. With regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Financial Services Commission that on 19 June 2023 when the application for a managed corporate service provider license for Maven Management Ltd was submitted to the FSC, it was disclosed that Mr G.C. would own hundred percent beneficial ownership of Maven Management Ltd.

However, I am also informed that in the same application, it was mentioned that Mr G.C. was Head of HR and Managing Director of VALDUS Co Ltd. Now, the House must note that the same VALDUS Co Ltd. had obtained a contract for the review of the salary and terms and conditions of employment as well as the review of organisational structure, including man plan for the FSC in June 2022 and in December 2022, respectively. The report was approved by the Board of the FSC on 22 June 2023.

Madam Speaker, the fact that staffs of the FSC were asked and called upon to determine an application for a licence by the very same person who was reviewing their salary structure raises serious issues of good governance and conflict of interest. The fact that Mr G.C. was doing the salary review and ended up having a management licence within weeks of making the application raises again doubt as to whether this was given as a reward for the report that he has submitted.

Madam Speaker, as regards part (b) of the question, I am informed by the FSC that after the staff of the FSC signed the option form to agree to be governed by the report, several staffs made representations that the report favoured certain positions. In the light of the representation received, Valdus Ltd – the consultant – was required to submit an Errors Omission and Anomaly Report and same was submitted in April 2024. However, I am informed that this report has not yet been circulated to the staff. The report is yet to be considered by the Board of the FSC.

Madam Speaker: Yes, Mr Rookny!

Mr Rookny: Madam Speaker, can the hon. Minister inform the House whether, a former employee of Valdus Ltd was recruited on contract by the Commission just a few months before the review exercise and the status of the same person was changed to a permanent position just a few weeks before general elections started?

Mr Uteem: Madam Speaker, according to the information communicated to me by the FSC, indeed there is one Mr K.G. who was a part-time employee of Valdus, the consultant. He was recruited by the FSC a few weeks before the contract was awarded to Valdus, again raising doubts about the independence of Valdus.

Madam Speaker: Yes.

Mr Rookny: Madam Speaker, in light of these incestuous relationships that we are seeing prevailing at the FSC, could the Minister advise the House whether, his Ministry will recommend to the Cabinet a complete upheaval of the FSC?

Madam Speaker: Are you in a position…

Mr Uteem: The hon. Member will note that I am not the substantive Minister but I will convey the message to the substantive Minister.

Madam Speaker: Yes, exactly! That’s it! Thank you, Minister. Okay? He will convey.

Alright, now we have the hon. Second Member for Savanne and Black River, Mr Jugurnauth!

HOME GARDENING – TRAINING PROGRAMMES/AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS

(No. B/486) Mr S. Jugurnauth (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Agro-Industry, Food Security, Blue Economy and Fisheries whether, in regard to home gardening, he will state if consideration will be given for the introduction of targeted training programmes or awareness campaigns to promote same among the public.

Dr. Boolell: I thank my hon. friend. I will table the reply, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: We did not hear.

An hon. Member: The reply will be tabled.

Madam Speaker: Okay, he will table it. Thank you very much. Therefore, I now have the hon. Second Member for Rodrigues, Mr François!

RODRIGUES – QUATRE VENTS-DANS DARISSE, PISTACHE & BAIE TOPAZE – DRAIN PROJECTS UPDATE

(No. B/487) Mr F. François (Second Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure whether, in regard to drains projects in Constituency No. 21, Rodrigues, particularly at Quatre Vents-Dans Darisse, Pistache and Baie Topaze, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Development Unit and the Land Drainage Authority, information in each case as to where matters stand.

Madam Speaker: At long last!

Mr Gunness: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the National Development Unit that the bids for the projects drain works at Quatre Vents-Dans Darisse, raising of ford at Baie Topaze and box culvert upstream and raising of ford at Pistache in Rodrigues were invited on 3 March 2025 with the closing date of 16 April 2025. The three drain projects estimated to cost around Rs174 million are currently at evaluation stage at the level of the Central Procurement Board.

I am further informed that works are expected to start during the next financial year.

Madam Speaker: Yes, that was Mr François. Are you okay?

The hon. Second Member for Savanne and Black River, Mr Jugurnauth!

SAVANNE DISTRICT COUNCIL – MONT BLANC VILLAGE – JURISDICTION – MEASURES

(No. B/488) Mr S. Jugurnauth (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to the village of Mont Blanc, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the District Council of Savanne, information as to the village council under whose jurisdiction it administratively falls, indicating the corrective measures being envisaged in relation thereto, if any.

Mr Woochit: Madam Speaker, I am advised that the Mont Blanc is a village under the administrative jurisdiction of the District Council of Savanne with approximately 110 inhabitants. According to the outline planning scheme for the Grand Port-Savanne District Council area, Mont Blanc is situated outside the defined settlement boundary of Chamouny and is located 1.5 km from that boundary. As a result, residents are currently prohibited from undertaking any development projects since such development is only permitted within officially designated settlement boundaries.

Following repeated representations from the local residents, the District Council of Savanne formally requested the Town and Country Planning Board to include Mont Blanc within the settlement boundary. The Board which is responsible for preparing outline planning schemes, has extended the operative period of the Savanne District Council's outline planning scheme to December 2027 to allow for a comprehensive review.

Madam Speaker, the Town and Country Planning Board has informed my Ministry that the rural outline planning schemes were approved in 2006 and revised in 2011 with their validity extended on several occasions, now up to December 2027. These schemes are based on the National Development Strategy (NDS) which was adopted in 2005. In July 2019, a consultancy contract was awarded to review the NDS. Once the revised NDS Vision 2040 is approved, all urban and rural planning schemes will be updated accordingly. Data collection and mapping exercise already began this year in January 2025. Modifications to any scheme, including Mont Blanc request will be considered during this full review process and not on an *ad hoc* basis.

The specific request to designate Mont Blanc as a minor settlement will be assessed during this comprehensive review. As stipulated by the Town and Country Planning Act, any modification to any outline planning scheme requires the formal approval of the President of the Republic. Mont Blanc has been continuously inhabited since 1894 and is served by public

transport, electricity and water supply. The District Council of Savanne also provides essential services, including street lighting and refuse collection.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: I am sorry, Minister. There are so many changes. I am trying to follow, alright? Is everybody happy? Any supplementary question?

Okay, so now we proceed with Mr Venkatasami, Third Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka and this will be replied by hon. Minister of Local Government. Is that right?

QUARTIER MILITAIRE – ST MARTIN DAM LEISURE PARK – PROJECT DETAILS

(No. B/489) Mr P. Venkatasami (Third Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure whether, in regard to the St Martin Dam Leisure Park Project in Quartier Militaire, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the District Council of Moka, information as to where matters stand, indicating –

(a) the scope of works and cost thereof;

(b) if there is any cost overrun and delays for the completion thereof and, if so, give details thereof, and

(c) if a quantity surveyor has been appointed therefor and, if so, the name of the incumbent.

Madam Speaker: Yes!

The Minister of Local Government (Mr R. Woochit): Madam Speaker, with your permission, I will reply to this question as it concerns my Ministry. As regards part (a) of the question, I am informed that the St Martin Dam Leisure Park Project at Quartier Militaire was approved during the Financial Year 2017-2018. The proposed development which spread over a 12 acres plot of land is indeed a good initiative for the region. However, this implementation has been marked by poor planning, doubtful procurement practices and a fragmented execution strategy under the previous administrations.

Instead of adopting a streamline and transparent design and build model which would have allowed for better coordination, faster delivery and improved cost control, the former administration chose to split the project into multiple components. These were allocated to various contractors through a patchwork of procurement methods, including request for sealed quotations, restricted bidding, direct procurement and open advertised bidding. This

fragmented approach made project management more difficult and raised serious concerns about favouritism and lack of transparency. The scope of works as submitted by the District Council of Moka includes the following components –

- A 2,000 square feet reception building with toilet block, cloakroom and cafeteria;
- A 17,000 square feet multipurpose hall with reception area, dining space, kitchen facilities and separate hall for conferences and other events;
- Three natural ponds surrounded by concrete walkways;
- One acre esplanade with children's corner and graded seating area;
- A 750-metre health track;
- An outdoor gym;
- An endemic garden with walkways;
- Three bridges;
- A road network, and
- Two parking spaces with capacity for approximately 250 vehicles.

Madam Speaker, with regard to part (b) of the question on cost overrun and delays, the project was initially estimated at Rs45 million. However, the cost has now escalated to Rs77.5 million. Additionally, the District Council of Moka has indicated a need for a further Rs8.5 million to complete the road surfacing within the park.

This considerable cost overrun, the lengthy delay, and despite the project started 8 years ago are largely due to the repeated modifications and the inclusion of new components by the previous administration. These additions were not part of the original approved scope of work and had led to unnecessary expenditure and delay the completion of the project. Such practices are evidence of inadequate planning and poor project oversight by the previous government, resulting in the misuse of public funds and significant delays in providing essential community infrastructure.

To address this situation, I have instructed the District Council of Moka to ensure that the project is fully completed not later than 15 August 2025.

In regard to part (c) of the question, concerning the appointment of a Quantity Surveyor, I wish to inform the House that the District Council of Moka did not appoint one for this project. Instead, the Public Infrastructure Department of the Council has been responsible for both the design and supervision of works.

Madam Speaker, I wish to reassure the hon. Third Member of Quartier Militaire and Moka that the St Martin Dam Leisure Park will be completed by the revised deadline, that is, on 15 August 2025. My ministry is closely monitoring the final phase of implementation to ensure that the project is delivered without any further delays. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, I should have informed you that PQ B/525 will also be replied by the hon. Minister of Local Government later.

Now, we will carry on with hon. First Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue!

LE MORNE BRABANT MOUNTAIN/HERITAGE SITES – VANDALISM ACTS – PREVENTIVE MEASURES

(No. B/490) Ms A. Savabaddy (First Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Arts and Culture whether, in regard to the circulation of offending images of sacred places and world heritage sites in the media, he will state if he has been made aware of same and, if so, indicate the measures being envisaged in relation thereto.

Mr Gondeea: Madam Speaker, on 06 February 2025, I was informed by the Le Morne Heritage Trust Fund, a parastatal body under the aegis of my Ministry, of two highlights, disturbing incidents –

(i) the circulation of a video showing an individual dancing on a Mauritian song containing foul and offensive language on the grounds of the Trou Chenilles Open Air Museum, located at the foot of Le Morne Brabant Mountain – a world heritage cultural landscape site, and

(ii) the appearance of a large graffiti on the rock of Le Morne Brabant Mountain with inscription, such as ‘Jennifer’, ‘J’, ‘J.F.S’ and ‘25.01.25’.

Madam Speaker, I am informed that the matter was reported to the Police on 07 February 2025 and an entry was duly recorded in the Occurrence Book at La Gaulette Police Station by an officer of Le Morne Heritage Trust Fund. I am further informed that investigations are going on.

Upon being informed, I gave immediate instruction for the removal of the graffiti. Despite the dangerous topography of the mountain and adverse weather conditions which were prevailing at that time, the operation was completed on 19 February 2025 by a guide

from Le Morne Village, with the assistance of a heritage guide from Le Morne Heritage Trust Fund. The first attempt on 08 February removed 90% of the markings and the second succeeded fully.

Madam Speaker, unfortunately, this was not an isolated occurrence. On 12 March 2025, a video circulated on TikTok showing two individuals sitting on the cross at the summit of Le Morne Brabant Mountain, presumably consuming alcohol. The video provoked national indignation, and the individuals concerned issued a public apology on 14 March 2025.

Madam Speaker, what is of equal concern and regret is the failure of the previous government and the former Board of the Le Morne Heritage Trust Fund to have ever established a formal protocol or proactive framework to prevent or swiftly address such acts.

After years of relentless efforts and advocacy under the administration of the then hon. Prime Minister, Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, Le Morne was proudly inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2008.

Yet, despite this historic achievement, the regime that came to power in 2014, unfortunately, displayed a shocking level of neglect. For nearly a decade, they failed to implement even the most basic protective measures. No signage, no surveillance, no preventive strategy and not even a contingency plan to address acts of desecration or vandalism. Such negligence reflects a profound disregard for the preservation of one of our nation’s most sacred heritage site.

Madam Speaker, upon taking cognizance of this incident, my Ministry convened an emergency meeting with Le Morne Heritage Trust Fund and launched a comprehensive set of measure, namely –

(i) installation of prominent signage at key points across Le Morne cultural landscape to inform visitors of the sacredness of the site and prohibit disrespectful actions;
(ii) further develop education and awareness among local communities, schools and tourists to cultivate a sense of reverence and historical consciousness;
(iii) enhance surveillance and law enforcement cooperation with relevant authorities;
(iv) development of a formal contingency and incident response protocol to be administered by the Le Morne Heritage Trust Fund.

Madam Speaker, I am pleased to inform the House that bids for signage panels have already been launched and installation will start shortly. The other measures are well underway. Furthermore, unlike my predecessors, I am taking steps to initiate a review of the Le Morne Heritage Trust Fund Act and relevant laws, with the assistance of the Attorney General's Office, to introduce explicit provisions and appropriate sanctions against desecration, vandalism or acts causing moral damage to sacred and heritage sites.

Presently, the only applicable legal provision remains section 17 of the National Heritage Fund Act 2003, which narrowly addresses unlawful damage or defacement. This legal vacuum concerning moral desecration will no longer be tolerated.

Madam Speaker, my ministry remains steadfast in its mission to preserve the sanctity and dignity of Le Morne and all other heritage sites across Mauritius. We shall act with both firmness and foresight – something that regrettably has been missing for far too long. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Thank you. We have only three minutes left.

Hon. Third Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière!

MINISTRY OF YOUTH & SPORTS – ADVISERS (APPOINTMENT & BENEFITS)

(No. B/491) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the Advisors attached to the Ministry, he will state in each case the –

(a) name and date of appointment thereof, and
(b) terms and conditions of their respective contract, including the remunerations and benefits drawn.

Mr Nagalingum: Madam Speaker, with your permission, in light of the number of Advisers attached to my Ministry, which include 15 Advisers/Coaches, I am tabling all the requested information.

Madam Speaker: Thank you. Yes, one supplementary!

Mr Quirin: Merci, Madame la présidente. Peut-on savoir parmi les conseillers de l'honorable ministre des Sports, s'il y en a parmi qui cumulent une deuxième fonction tombant sous un autre organisme de son ministère ? Si oui, lequel, et ses responsabilités, et bien sûr, ses salaires et autres avantages ?

Madam Speaker: Are you able to answer that?

Mr Nagalingum: Madam Speaker, I am not aware of what the hon. Member is saying. I will check and report to the House.

Madam Speaker: Of course! You can come back with another question once you see the paper tabled.

Mr Quirin: J'espère, Madame la présidente, que j'aurai la réponse.

Madam Speaker: Of course! L'espoir fait vivre!

(Interruptions)

Mr Quirin: Ah non, je ne suis pas un imbécile ! Je ne suis pas un imbécile !

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: I think we can go for lunch now! Thank you!

At 12.59 p.m., the Sitting was suspended.

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

The Deputy Speaker: Please be seated!

Yes, hon. First Member for La Caverne and Phoenix!

MAURICE STRATÉGIE – EMPLOYEES & CONSULTANTS – SALARIES & BENEFITS

(No. B/492) Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Financial Services and Economic Planning whether, in regard to Maurice Stratégie, she will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom for the fiscal year 2024-2025 information as to the –

(a) total monthly expenditure incurred on the salaries and benefits of the employees and consultants thereof, and

(b) qualification and salary and benefits drawn by the Executive Director thereof.

Mr Uteem: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall answer this question in the absence of the substantive Minister.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Mr Uteem: In reply to PQ B/304 on 08 April 2025, the substantive Minister informed the House that Maurice Stratégie employed 28 officers since its creation. Following the departure of two officers on 25 April and 02 of May, Maurice Stratégie now currently employs 26 employees.

As regard part (a) of the question, the total monthly expenditure incurred on the salaries and other benefits to the employees for the month of April 2025 stood at Rs2,576,314. It is to be noted, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that Maurice Stratégie has not hired the services of any consultant.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed by Maurice Stratégie that the Executive Director holds a BSc (Hons) in Economics and Finance from the University of Mauritius and a MSc Economics and Development Economics from the University of Nottingham in England.

The Executive Director has been appointed on a contractual basis for a period of three years with effect from 09 September 2024. He earns a monthly salary of Rs312,000 and draws the following benefits –

a) car allowance of Rs20,000;
b) travelling allowance of Rs20,000, and
c) mobile phone allowance of Rs2,000.

The Deputy Speaker: Supplementary!

Mr Lobine: Yes, can the hon. Minister inform this House with regard to this Executive Director and Maurice Stratégie, is it still a feasible strategy to have Maurice Stratégie in as much as it should have been an independent think tank for government in as much as no such report or documents have been produced and we are not aware of what they have been doing for all these months?

Mr Uteem: As regard the first part of the question, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, you would agree that I am not the substantive Minister and it is for the substantive Minister to decide whether this Maurice Stratégie has still *a raison-d'être.*

With regard to the second part of the question, I am informed that Maurice Stratégie has submitted 17 Reports and Research Papers since its creation.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay, thank you.

The hon. Second Member for Flacq and Bon Accueil!

LOCAL AUTHORITIES – 2024 RECRUITMENT – BUDGETARY PROVISION & FINANCIAL IMPACT

(No. B/493) Mr R. Beechook (Second Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil) asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to officers recruited by local authorities in 2024, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the total number thereof, indicating –

(a) if these recruitments were accounted for in the budget, and

(b) the financial impact thereof on the respective local authority.

Mr Woochit: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to present a clear explanation of the recent recruitment activities within the local authorities highlighting the serious mismanagement and malpractice performed by the former Chairperson of the Local Government Service Commission (LGSC) and the previous regime.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in response to part (a) of the question between 01 January and 03 October 2024, a total of 1,765 appointments were effected within local authorities. Out of these 1,765 appointments, it is shocking and surprising to note that 599 posts mainly are Refuse Collectors, Handy Workers and General Workers which were created without budgetary provision, resulting in an expenditure of approximately Rs10 million monthly.

Furthermore, it is scandalous that out of the 1,765 appointments effected last year, 998 appointments were made during the period between 03 of September and 03 of October 2024, barely a month before the general elections. This figure represents 56.5% of the total appointments and this is viewed as a serious concern.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is also important to highlight that out of these 1,765 appointments made, 1,731 were authorised solely by the former Chairperson of the LGSC, thus entirely bypassing the statutory requirement for collective decision making by the full Commission. This unilateral action is a flagrant breach of the Local Government Service Commission Regulations 1984 and represents a gross abuse of authority.

On 10 December 2024, the LGSC sought legal advice from the Attorney-General’s Office to determine whether the appointments made by the former Chairperson were legally in order. The Attorney General’s Office replied that all appointments and/or promotions

effected unilaterally by the Chairperson are legally tinted with nullity. Disturbingly, no legal advice was sought until December 2024 despite the irregular practices started as far back as January 2022.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, despite this, the Local Government Service Commission could not act earlier due to the absence of a fully constituted board. It is to be noted that the commission was reconstituted only on 28 March 2025.

I am apprised that out of the 1,765 appointments, the Attorney General's Office recommended that the employment of 1,368 candidates who are employed on a day-to-day basis and 95 candidates who are employed on a month-to-month basis should be terminated. However, the decision to act upon this advice regarding these unlawful appointments' rests solely with the Local Government Service Commission, that is, the LGSC which is an independent and autonomous body.

Additionally, the malpractices of the former Chairperson have been formally reported to the Financial Crimes Commission (FCC). The FCC is now assessing the broader implications and institutional breaches of this mass recruitment exercise. We are awaiting the report of the FCC which will guide further administrative and legal actions.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to be honest, it is the ordinary citizens who are paying the price for the irresponsibility of the previous regime. Resources meant for essential services, such as waste collections, street lighting and committee services, were diverted to fund politically motivated and unlawful appointments.

This Government will not tolerate such abuses. We are committed to restoring integrity and accountability in all recruitment processes. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: B/494! Hon. Dr. Ms Thannoo is not in the House. So, I take it that there will be a written answer for this question as the question has not been withdrawn.

Now, I call B/495! Hon. Second Member for Savanne and Black River!

BOIS D'OISEAUX & AVENUE BOULODROM, BLACK RIVER – DRAIN PROJECTS

(No. B/495) Mr S. Jugurnauth (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure whether, in regard to the recent site visit effected by the representatives of the Land Drainage Authority (LDA) at Bois d'Oiseaux and Avenue Boulodrom in Black River, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the LDA,

information to where matters stand regarding the drain projects being envisaged thereat, indicating the expected timeline for the implementation thereof.

Mr Gunness: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the region of Boulodrom, Black River has been declared as a high-risk flood-prone area by the Land Drainage Authority. The LDA has recommended that the project flood mitigating measure at Boulodrom, Black River be implemented by the Drain Infrastructure Construction Ltd at Bois d'Oiseaux and Avenue Boulodrom, with a view to mitigating flooding in that region. The detailed design has already been finalised and approved by the LDA.

Mr Deputy, Speaker, Sir, the project is estimated to cost some Rs232 m. I am informed by the DICL that the draft bidding document for the construction works has already been prepared and same would be launched once funding is made available.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the project is expected to start during the course of the next financial year subject to availability of funds.

The Deputy Speaker: Next question! Hon. Second Member for Belle Rose and Quatre Bornes!

BEAU SEJOUR COMMUNITY CENTRE – RENOVATION WORKS

(No. B/496) Ms S. Anquetil (Second Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the Beau Sejour Community Centre, she will state if any renovation project thereof, including its yard, is being envisaged and, if so, give details thereof and, if not, why not.

Ms Navarre-Marie: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have been made aware of the deplorable state of the Beau Sejour Community Centre. I wish to thank the hon. Member for the pictures forwarded to me on same.

I am informed that procedures for renovation works at Beau Sejour Community Centre have been initiated by the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund. The works, *inter alia*, comprise replacement of tiles in the hall and kitchen. Cabinets have also been fixed in the kitchen. I am apprised by the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund that lights have been installed in the shelter found in the yard of the community centre.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that most infrastructures falling under the purview of the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare, be it community

centres, social welfare centres or women empowerment centres, have remained idle since the last 10 years, depriving the community of these facilities.

I am glad to inform the House that theses infrastructures are being made operational since this Government took office. The Camp La Boue Women Empowerment Centre is now operational since 08 March this year. Furthermore, the Richelieu Women Empowerment Centre is in operation since 22 March 2025. The reopening of the Triolet Women Empowerment Centre is being envisaged. Other infrastructures falling under the purview of the ministry will be made operational subject to the availability of funds.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, hon. Member!

Ms Anquetil : Je vous remercie, M. le président. Au nom des habitants de Résidence Beau Sejour, je tiens à exprimer ma gratitude à la ministre pour cette rénovation.

La ministre pourrait-elle indiquer à la Chambre si cette rénovation implique la fermeture complète du centre et, si oui, si son ministère prévoit des solutions alternatives pour garder les habitants en activité ? Merci.

Ms Navarre-Marie : Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, à ce stade, ces informations ne sont pas disponibles.

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

RENAL TRANSPLANT – PROCEDURES

(No. B/497) Dr. Ms R. Daureeawo (Third Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to renal transplant procedures, he will state –

(a) if same are being carried out in partnership with foreign teams or solely by local specialists, and

(b) the facilities and assistance provided to patients requiring same urgently.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, chronic kidney disease is a significant health burden affecting around 200,000 Mauritian patients. Presently, there are around 1,550 patients on dialysis, comprising around 1,500 patients in Mauritius and 50 patients in Rodrigues.

Among these dialysis patients, those who are clinically eligible and who have donors are given access to renal transplantation which not only result in better quality of life, but also ensures cost-savings over the long run.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that after an eight months gap with a number of issues pertaining to functioning of equipment and availability of consumables, my ministry has restarted the renal transplant programme and two patients were operated in April 2025 by a team of surgeons from MIOT Hospital, Chennai.

My ministry has also simultaneously established a number of partnerships with renal transplant surgeons comprising the Mauritian diaspora experts and non-Mauritians working in United Kingdom and India to impart the necessary training to our health professionals as well as conduct renal transplant cases in Mauritius. These include Professor Nizam Mamode, who has previously been assisting the renal transplant programme and Professor Derek Manas amongst others.

My ministry is now arranging for a different team to come to Mauritius every four to eight weeks to carry out three to four transplant cases over a period of one week. The forthcoming team which is expected from MIOT Hospital Chennai in June 2025, will carry out three cases of renal transplantation.

With regard to part (b) of the question that for urgent cases of renal transplant, protocols are increased at hospitals level for the work-up patients and donors. The procedures involve urine and blood testing as well as radiological and cardiac investigations prior to the surgical interventions.

In addition, the Renal Transplant Immunology Laboratory at Victoria Hospital, with the assistance of a team from Guy’s Hospital, United Kingdon, has been upgraded to the latest standards. The nuclear medicine department is now also fully functional to carry out advanced renal function test on the donor.

I am further informed that for non-urgent cases, kidney transplant surgery from living donors in an elective procedure and needs full evaluation of both the donor and the recipient. Moreover, full work-up and follow-up of donors and recipients are done by medical and nursing staff of my ministry through the Central Health Laboratory, Metrology Units and Dialysis Units. Therefore, patients are listed in order of priority for the next visiting foreign team to carry out the renal transplantation.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, hon. Member!

Dr. Ms Daureeawo: Thank you. Are there any campaigns being carried out by the ministry to raise public awareness with a view to boosting organ registration/donation?

Mr Bachoo: The Non-Communicable Diseases (NCD) Department has undertaken the work and they are doing it.

The Deputy Speaker: With regard to PQ B/498 and B/499, in view of the absence of hon. Dr. Ms Thannoo, I take it that they will be processed as written answers.

So, now we go to B/500. Hon. Quirin!

NEW CANCER HOSPITAL – PROSTATE CANCER – PATIENTS & SPECIALISTS

(No. B/500) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Honourable Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to prostate cancer, he will state the –

(a) number of patients thereof who are currently on treatment at each regional hospital and at the New Cancer Hospital, respectively, indicating the number of urologists and oncologists posted thereat, and

(b) number of deaths registered as a result thereof since the year 2000 to date.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that all prostate cancer patients in Mauritius are referred to the New Cancer Centre for treatment. The number of patients with prostate cancer registered in the department of oncology at the New Cancer Centre from 2020 to date is 714.

I am further informed that there are currently 12 medical oncologists and one haematological oncologist that is, doctor who deals with blood cancers for example; leukaemia posted at the New Cancer Centre. The latter also attends regional hospitals to conduct follow up on patients who have completed their treatment on blood cancers. I am also informed that there are around 10 experienced and trained general surgeons with urology skills posted in all regional hospitals and New Cancer Centre for the surgical management of prostate cancer.

Concerning part (b) of the question, as all other non-communicable diseases, the burden of cancer, particularly prostate cancer have increased over the years. The mortality incidence ratio of prostate cancer has decreased over time, indicating that less patients are dying of the disease compared to the new cases being diagnosed. This is due to a better cancer care management including early diagnosis and fast and modern therapeutic services.

Accordingly, for the period 2000 and 2024, 1731 deaths have been registered in relation to prostate cancer. I wish to inform the House that yesterday, I met a group on oncological surgeon from Max Super Hospital and I will also be receiving a group of surgeons from Birla Hospital on Thursday morning regarding their willingness to assist in oncology surgery training and bilateral collaboration between India and Mauritius as well as in the proposed setting up of a urology department in Jawaharlal Nehru Hospital.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that my Ministry will leave no stone unturned in our fight against prostate cancer. My Ministry has implemented targeted health sensitisation campaigns to address modifiable risk factors of prostate cancer focusing on diet, smoking, obesity and physical activity.

In addition, public education initiatives are also being held with a view to promoting a balanced diet rich in fruits and vegetables so as discouraging excessive consumption of red and processed meats. Furthermore, community-based programmes are also ongoing to encourage regular physical activity through wellness clubs and local fitness initiatives and to combat obesity through nutritional counselling in primary health centres and routine body mass index monitoring.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, hon. Quirin!

Mr Quirin: M. le président, peut-on savoir quels sont les traitements actuellement qui sont recommandés par rapport concernant les patients qui sont atteints d'un cancer de la prostate dans les hôpitaux régionaux et aussi au New Cancer Centre ?

Mr Bachoo: I have just mentioned, normally whenever we get such cases, we recommend the patients to the New Cancer Centre and I can assure the hon. Member that we are trying to bring in additional equipment in order to serve those patients and the regional hospitals are also looking after prostate cancer but cases which have arrived at an advanced stage, these are looked into at the National Cancer Centre.

Mr Quirin: M. le président, une autre question. Vu le nombre croissant de cas détectés de cancer de la prostate à un stade avancé – le ministre ne pense-t-il pas – il en a parlé dans sa réponse de campagne, de communication mais ce que je veux dire moi ce sont des campagnes à intervalles réguliers pour sensibiliser, conscientiser principalement les hommes à partir d'une tranche d'âge de 45 à 50 ans à effectuer le test PSA. Beaucoup ne sont pas au courant, beaucoup ne savent pas qu'à partir d'un certain âge, il faut effectuer le test PSA pour savoir si on est atteint de la maladie ou quel est le degré de cancer de la prostate.

Mr Bachoo: That is the reason why we have given a new turn to the NCD Unit which has undertaken that work. I know it is not an easy job but we have started it already and I can assure the hon. Member that we are going to expand our activity to sensitise the entire population on the danger of having such a disease.

The Deputy Speaker: Next question.

Mr Quirin: M. le président….

The Deputy Speaker: The question has already been answered.

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

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES – EMPLOYMENT – AUDIT EXERCISE

(No. B/501) Dr. Ms R. Daureeawo (Third Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac) asked the Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity whether, in regard to the employment of persons with disabilities, he will state if his Ministry has carried out an audit exercise to ascertain compliance by companies with their legal obligation to have at least three percent of their workforce with persons with disabilities and, if so, indicate the –

(a) outcome thereof, and

(b) actions, if any, being envisaged against defaulters.

Mr Subron: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me first thank the hon. Member for this timely question.

I am informed that no audit exercise has been conducted to ascertain compliance by companies to have at least 3% of their workforce with persons with disabilities as provided under section 13 of the Training and Employment of Disabled Persons Act 1996 amended 2012 for the last ten years. The training and employment of Disabled Persons Board which is a parastatal body, operating under the purview of my Ministry, has for main objective to provide training and ensure the employment of persons with disabilities.

According to records available, there are only 527 persons with disabilities who are registered with the board looking for an employment or training. Moreover, only a few companies that is, 900 are registered with the board.

Moreover, the housing and population census, conducted by Statistics Mauritius in 2022, revealed that only 6009 persons with disabilities were currently part of the workforce.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have been informed that the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act which was passed last year in the National Assembly proposes a new modified employment quota system.

However, I would like to inform the House that I have received numerous representations concerning certain provisions of the Act including provision on employment. In this context, after advice from the Attorney General's Office, my Ministry has chosen to proceed with some amendments of the legislation including, on the employment of persons with disabilities before promulgation of the law.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in parallel, my Ministry is also seeking to undertake a comprehensive disability pensions and benefits reforms to align with the international standard in order to shift from a purely medical model to a more social model approach to disability. This includes the restructuring of the current disability assessment panel so that disability evaluation accounts for both functional limitations and social barriers. With this new reform, there will be a multipurpose one-stop assessment.

As part of this broader reform, my Ministry is also working on integrating the aspect of employability into the assessment process of persons with disabilities. Consideration will be given to empowering persons with disabilities to pursue a better quality of life through meaningful employment.

Furthermore, my Ministry is also envisaging to carry out matching exercises to ensure that skills and potential of the persons with disabilities are aligned with suitable opportunities in the labour market and to partly subsidise their employment. As a result, employers will be expected to actively recruit and include persons with disabilities in the work force and failure to do so, may entail heavy penalties.

This qualitative measure also takes into consideration the relative scarcity of labour in Mauritius. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to underline that the above-mentioned reforms are being envisaged in the Budget Proposal 2025-2026. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, hon. Dr. Ms Daureeawo!

Dr. Ms Daureeawo: Is the hon. Minister considering an audit exercise to ascertain compliance or non-compliance by companies?

Mr Subron: Because of the reform, we will proceed with the reform and then evaluate compliance to the new legal framework.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, hon. First Member for Montagne Blanche and Grand River South East.

BEL AIR, NEW MINI-TRAFFIC CENTRE – AMENITIES

(No. B/502) Mr C. Baboolall (First Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE) asked the Minister of Local Government whether in regard to the new mini-Traffic Centre at Bel Air, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the District Council of Flacq, information as to the –

(a) scope of works and estimated cost thereof;

(b) expected completion date thereof, and

(c) bus routes the traffic centre will serve.

Mr Woochit: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to provide the House with the following details/information regarding the mini-market, mini-traffic centre at Bel Air. The project comprises the construction of a modern mini-traffic centre equipped the following facilities –

(i) A passenger terminal with waiting areas, ticketing booths and washroom;

(ii) Five covered and lit bus stations;

(iii) Bus platforms;

(iv) Parking base for bus and taxi;

(v) Pedestrian access routes, and

Assorted infrastructure, including lighting signage, drainage system, landscaping and a secured perimeter fencing and CCTV monitoring camera.

The project was awarded to Keep Clean Ltd for a total contract value of Rs68 million, including VAT, after an open national bidding exercise concluded in November 2024.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, concerning part (b) of the question, the site was handed over to the contactor on 09 April 2025 and the construction works started on 24 April 2025. The contractual duration is 360 days with expected completion date being 19 April 2026. A 365-day detectability period will follow project completion. The works are being supervised by a technical team from the Ministry of National Infrastructure.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, concerning part (c) of the question, the mini-traffic centre is designed to support the following bus routes through its five designated the stations –

(i) Bel Air-Flacq to SAJ Hospital;

(ii) Bel Air-Central Flacq to Port Louis;

(iii) Bel Air-Mahebourg;

(iv) Bel Air-Quartier Militaire to Rose Hill,

(v) Bel Air to Curepipe.

Thank you.

Mr Baboolall: In relation to bus routes, can the hon. Minister look into it as Trou d'Eau Douce is on the outskirt and no transport is available there?

Mr Woochit: This project caters for five bus stations. So, for this additional one, we should liaise with the Ministry of Land Transport.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière!

JEUX INTER COLLÈGES – 2025 ORGANISATION

(No. B/503) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the Jeux Inter Collèges, he will state –

(a) the dates for the holding of the competitions thereof for 2025;

(b) the sports disciplines and venues selected therefor;

(c) if there is any change in the formula for the competitions, and

(d) if the Mauritius Secondary Schools Sports Association and Physical Education Teachers have been consulted and involved in the organisation thereof.

Mr Nagalingum: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as I stated during my intervention on the Government Programme on 28 February 2025, the inter-college sports competition, more commonly known as *Jeux Inter Collèges*, were more than just a sport competition. They serve as platform for discovering young talents, fostering camaraderie and instilling a deep sense of pride and belonging among our youth. Therefore, the revival of the inter-college sports competition is high on the agenda of my ministry.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, I wish to inform the House that the preliminary of the *Jeux Inter Collèges* for the seven regions, namely –

(i) Port Louis;

(ii) Beau Bassin/Rose Hill;

(iii) Belle Rose/Quatre Bornes;

(iv) Vacoas/Phoenix;

(v) Black River;

(vi) Curepipe;

(vii) Grand Port/Savanne;

(viii) Moka/Flacq, and

(ix) Pamplemousses/ Rivière du Rempart have successfully started on 06 May 2025 and will run until 17 June 2025.

The finals are scheduled from 14 to 18 July 2025. I am informed that some 160 secondary schools, including states, private and feepaying schools have registered for the *Jeux Inter Collèges*. Some 8,500 students are involved in both individual and team competition. Officials of National Sport Federation and coaches of my ministry are providing technical assistance for the smooth running of the *Jeux Inter Collèges*.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that the 2025 Edition of the *Jeux Inter Collèges* will include the following sport discipline –

(i) Football;

(ii) Volleyball;

(iii) Badminton

(iv) Table Tennis, and

(v) Athletics.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the preliminaries are being held at various venues, including stadiums, sport complexes and secondary schools. Subsequently, the final for the football and athletics will be held at the Cote d'Or National Sports Complex. While the finals for badminton, table tennis and volleyball will be held at the National Badminton Centre, the National Table Tennis Centre and the Pandit Sahadeo Gymnasium, respectively.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as regards part (c) of the question, for this year edition, participation is open to both boys and girls in different age groups ranging from 14 to 20

years old and this age group will be reviewed to include, if needed, younger categories in more sports discipline as from next year. Each participant is allowed to participate in two sports discipline of the competition, including one individual and one team in order to encourage more students to participate.

For athletics, the first three athletes per event, per category and per region will qualify for the finals as opposed to only two and a previous edition, thereby increasing opportunities for more students to represent their college in the final. Athletes from Rodrigues will also be invited to participate in the athletic final following their own preliminaries.

For badminton and table tennis, the first two participants per category, per region are qualified for the finals. For football and volleyball, the winning team per category, per region is qualified for the final.

An overall champion of *Jeux Inter Collèges* will be declared based on the cumulative points obtained by each college in the five sports discipline during the finals. I wish to highlight that this formula has been introduced after consultation with all stakeholders.

Mr Quirin: M. le président, l'honorable ministre peut-il expliquer à la Chambre et je base sur une lettre qui a été adressé par le président de la MSSSA au Premier ministre lui-même, pourquoi, en effet, la MSSSA, comme le certifie la lettre, n'a pas été impliqué comme il se doit dans l'organisation de ces compétitions se voyant même, comme je viens de le dire, obligé d'envoyer une lettre au Premier ministre exprimant leur mécontentement pour dénoncer la façon d'agir du ministère des Sports. C'est la lettre qui le dit. Je n'invente rien ! Et celui de l'Éducation. Peut-on savoir pourquoi ?

Mr Nagalingum: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as I stated in my reply, given that the Board of the National Council for Sports in schools and universities was not yet constituted, my ministry provided technical support towards the organisation of the competition. I had a press conference on 08 January 2025 whereat the Mauritius Secondary Schools Sports Association was present.

Furthermore, I am informed that representatives of the Mauritius Secondary Schools Sports Association were present during meeting held on 15 January and 27 January 2025 at the seat of my ministry. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, at the request of the Mauritius Secondary Schools Sports Association, I have met with the representatives, including the President, on 05 May 2025. We have agreed that the Mauritius Secondary Schools Sports Association will collaborate with the National Council for Sports in schools and universities.

Mr Quirin: M. le président, une dernière question. Je vais, quand même, pour les besoins de la question, déposer…

The Deputy Speaker: No! This letter was addressed to the hon. Prime Minister. I cannot see how you received a copy of it and how…

Mr Quirin: Oh, Mr Vice-President, please!

The Deputy Speaker: It is a letter between the MSSSA and the hon. Prime Minister. It is probably between these two parties!

Mr Quirin: You are yourself a politician!

The Deputy Speaker: Yes! This is why I am saying this. Because I am a lawyer!

Mr Quirin: You know well!

The Deputy Speaker: This letter is addressed personally to the hon. Prime Minister.

Mr Quirin: I find this very improper!

The Deputy Speaker: It is a personal letter to the hon. Prime Minister!

Mr Quirin: Anyway ! L'autre question que…

The Deputy Speaker: Do you have another question?

Mr Quirin: Voilà ! Donc, j'ai compris la réponse de l'honorable ministre. Il a parlé de certaines catégories, mais il y a une catégorie que les *PE Teachers* considèrent qui aurait dû aussi faire partie de ces jeux, c'est la catégorie U14, c'est-à-dire, les enfants, les jeunes de 12 et 13 ans. Et, peut-on savoir pourquoi cette catégorie n'a pas été inclue dans ces jeux ?

Mr Nagalingum: I mentioned in my reply, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that next year, we are going to see how we are going to include those which are not included now. We have all consulted with the stakeholders and the answer is very clear!

The Deputy Speaker: Okay, the next question.

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

CHILDREN – ONLINE EXPLOITATION, HARM & ABUSE – MEASURES

(No. B/504) Dr. Ms R. Daureeawo (Third Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac) asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the

protection of children from online exploitation, harm and abuse, she will state the measures, programmes or mechanisms, if any, put in place therefor, indicating –

(a) how the Ministry proposes to empower families on the negative impact of the digital environment, and

(b) the complaints mechanism, if any, put in place therefor.

Ms Navarre-Marie: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are all fully aware of the potential danger and threat targeting our children with regard to online exploitation, harm and abuse. Protection of children is my primary concern and hence, I have given instructions that this matter be dealt with utmost seriousness at the level of my Ministry.

I wish to inform the House that there have been quite a number of cases which have been referred to my Ministry and to me personally. Subsequently, relevant files have been compiled for follow-up, among which, a full-fledged document on a case of sharing of indecent photos and videos of women and girls on an application called Telegram. These cases have been referred for in-depth investigations to the police with whom my Ministry works in close collaboration to tackle cases of abuse against children of the Republic.

I wish to point out that on Thursday 10 April 2025, my colleagues, the Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation; Minister of Tertiary Education, Science and Research; Minister of Education and Human Resource and myself, launched a draft report for public consultations. The report focuses on enhancing children online safety in the social media era with a view to improving the protection of children and young people in the digital space. Parents, educators, young people, NGOs and civil society were invited to participate in the consultation process and share their input and recommendations.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as regards part (a) of the question, as Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare, I am well aware of the negative impact of the digital environment on families. In order to address this situation, my Ministry is currently finalising a national policy paper on the family, in which there is a component on ICT use. I also wish to inform the House that with a view to raising understanding on the underlying threats and consequences of the misuse of social media and to empower families on the negative impact of the digital environment, my Ministry, in collaboration with the Cybercrime Unit, the Central Criminal Investigation Department and the Trafficking in Person of the Mauritius Police Force, will be conducting a two-days' workshop on 5 and 6 June 2025 where the main

focus will be on teenagers, cybercrime and family wellbeing. It is also envisaged to carry out ongoing campaigns on adolescence and cybercrime at community level.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (b) of the question, my Ministry has in place a hotline: 113, which is operational to provide 24-hour free services for the report of any form of violence against children. Alternatively, I am also informed that there is a dedicated online reporting system in place for the report of online abusers called Mauritian Cybercrime Online Reporting System (MAUCORS+), which is under the purview of the Ministry of IT, Communication and Innovation. The system is managed by the Computer Emergency Response Team of Mauritius (CERT-MU). It is a centralised system which connects the CERT-MU, the Cybercrime Unit of the Mauritius Police Force, the Data Protection Office and the Information and Communication Technologies Authority (ICTA).

I believe that online threats and dangers facing children are not only a national issue but also an international one. This requires a multipronged approach and the possibility of amending and strengthening relevant legislation is being explored. In this respect, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will invite hon. Members to submit any suggestion that will further reinforce the protection of our children online.

Thank you.

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

TELECOMMUNICATIONS ANTENNA TOWERS – HEALTH IMPACT – COMPLAINTS & EMF SURVEY

(No. B/505) Mr R. Etwareea (Third Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation whether, in regard to telecommunications antenna towers around the country, he will state if his Ministry is in presence of any complaint of the impact thereof on the health of the inhabitants living in the vicinity thereof, indicating if consideration will be given to conducting a survey of the impact thereof on public health.

Dr. Ramtohul: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Information and Communication Technologies Authority that since January 2023, 10 complaints have been received with respect to base stations of mobile operators, including five pertaining specifically to health issues.

In order to provide a good quality of service, base stations which constitute the infrastructure that actually enables mobile phones to connect wirelessly to the networks, need to be placed where people live, that is, in the vicinity of houses. So, antennas or base stations are therefore found in those areas where people live and at times, located on the roofs of houses. However, radio base stations produce some exposure to radio frequency, electromagnetic field (EMF) but according to the World Health Organisation, there is no current evidence, no empirical evidence to confirm the existence of any health issues from exposure to low level EMF.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the ICTA usually performs EMF surveys and measurements when a complaint is received with respect to health hazards resulting from radio frequency emissions of base stations. The measurement is carried out at the premises of the complainant to determine whether the level of EMF exposure is within the permissible limits. Here, the ICTA applies International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection Framework, that limits the extent of exposure. The ICTA, in its evaluation process, applied these guidelines and the ITU recommendations as well.

Furthermore, since 2012, the ICTA has also adopted an onsite measurement protocol to evaluate installations that are in place. And out of the five complaints that pertained to the health issues – it is good that I point out for the House that to comply to the EMF standard, one complaint pertained to a location where the tower was not even erected and one tower, though erected, was not yet operational.

With regard to the fifth one – and this one is where the question actually emanates from and I thank the hon. Member for this question – a measurement was carried out in August 2023 and that test revealed that the operator was not compliant with the provisions of the EMF safety standard. The ICTA therefore requested the operator to take remedial actions which took place few months later. Therefore, in October 2023, further to another EMF survey and the measurement that was done at the same site, the radio frequency was then found to be within the permissible limits.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I also wish to inform the House that with the view of ensuring that operators comply with relevant international standards with regard to erection of base stations, as far back as 2011, the ICTA issued to the telecommunication operators, guidelines which were termed ‘Deployment of Radio Communication Infrastructure, Technical and Administrative Standard for EMF Safety’. And that was for the purpose of ensuring that

people are not exposed to unnecessary waves. The result of these evaluations is compared with safety standards that are recognised by the World Health Organisation. As at today, the said guidelines are still in force and 1,116 base stations have been verified. The ICTA is equipped with appropriate measuring equipment and with a view to improving its evaluation capabilities, the ICTA will be investing in further equipment.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I, therefore, take it that the survey mentioned by the hon. Minister is already being carried out.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member!

Dr. Ramtohul: By the hon. Member! Thank you.

Mr Etwareea: Thank you, hon. Minister, for this answer. Will the Minister consider or the ICTA consider to positively publish the surveys carried so far?

Dr. Ramtohul: Thank you, hon. Member, for the supplementary question. The ICTA is managed by an independent board. However, I will take the suggestion to the Board. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, hon. Member, do you have a question?

Mr Beejan: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister inform the House whether tests could be carried out at planned, regular intervals to ensure the safety and health of the inhabitants, especially as you have mentioned, they are exposed to EMF (Electromagnetic field)? Thank you.

Dr. Ramtohul: Thank you for this supplementary question, hon. Member. As I mentioned, the ICTA is managed by an independent board. However, because it is an issue that pertains to public safety, I will take the message to the Chairperson of the Board.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Next question! Hon. First Member for La Caverne and Phoenix!

MESNIL-CASTEL – OLD FOOTPATH & DRAINS – REPLACEMENT

(No. B/506) Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure whether, in regard to the replacement of old and broken slabs along classified roads from Castel to Mesnil, he will state if works have already started therefor and, if so, indicate the –

(a) name of the contractor selected therefor;

(b) detailed scope of works and cost thereof, and

(c) expected completion date thereof.

Mr Gunness: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Road Development Authority that the footpath and drains along the road at Mesnil and Castel, which were constructed in the 1980s, are presently in a precarious state. To remedy the situation, the RDA is proceeding with the rehabilitation of the footpath along the affected stretches.

As regards part (a) of the question, I am informed that works have been entrusted to General Construction Limited under the RDA's Framework Agreement for Road Maintenance and Minor Works (2023-2026).

In regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that the scope of work comprises the following –

(i) demolition of old footpath and casting of new footpath and drain slabs along approximately 250 meters at localised stretches on the left-hand side of the A10 Road, from Engen Petrol Station at Mesnil towards Castel Petrol Station,

(ii) demolition of old footpath and casting of new footpath and drain slabs on the right-hand side of the A10 Road from the junction Allée Brillant Road, B74 towards Hazareesing Road, over a stretch of approximately 300 meters;

(iii) cleaning of drains;

(iv) repair to drain abatement walls, and

(v) provision of concrete curbs, gullies and metal gratings.

The works are being implemented under two separate work orders for the sum of Rs3.6 m. and Rs4.3 m., inclusive of VAT for the respective works along the left-hand side and right-hand side.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, regarding part (c) of the question, I am informed that for works on the left-hand side, the progress is about 25% and the works will be completed by June 2025. As regards works on the right-hand side, same have been scheduled to start by end of May 2025 so as to minimise disruption to traffic and pedestrians given the ongoing works along the other side of the road. The works are expected to be completed by July 2025.

The Deputy Speaker: Next question! Hon. First Member for La Caverne and Phoenix!

MUNICIPAL COUNCIL OF VACOAS-PHOENIX – FINANCIAL SITUATION

(No. B/507) Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to the Municipal Council of Vacoas Phoenix, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom information as to the current financial situation thereof, indicating –

(a) if the budget deficit has exceeded Rs 100 million;
(b) if the pension fund for the employees thereof is also in the deficit and if, so, indicate the quantum thereof, and
(c) the reasons therefor.

Mr Woochit: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House regarding the factual financial situation of the Municipal Council of Vacoas-Phoenix, with specific reference to the current budget deficit, the status of the pension fund for council employees and the underlying reasons for these deficits.

With regard to part (a) of the question, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, for the Financial Year 2024-2025, the Municipal Council of Vacoas-Phoenix submitted an estimated expenditure of Rs598.6 m. to the Ministry of Finance. The budget estimate was based on the following three financial components –

(i) an expected internal revenue of Rs84.5 m.;
(ii) anticipated efficiency gain of Rs65 m., and last
(iii) requested grant-in-aid of Rs449 m. from the Ministry of Finance.

While the full grant-in-aid was approved by the Ministry of Finance, it is regrettable to note that the projected efficiency gain, as estimated by the ministry, did not materialised. Furthermore, the actual internal revenue collected by the council amounted to Rs75.7 m., regarding a 7% decrease compared to the previous year. This shortfall is mainly due to the overestimated revenue forecast by the Ministry of Finance.

Following the mid-term budget review conducted by my ministry, as it is for all local authorities, it was confirmed that total actual expenditure has now increased to Rs664 m., representing an increase of 18% compared to the previous financial year. Consequently, a revised budget deficit now stands at Rs139.2 m.

The main factors contributing to this budget deficit include –

- the payment of the 14th month salary, as legally required;

- salary increase due to the implementation of revised wage relativity structure and national minimum wage policy;
- a general increase in the cost of goods and services due to inflation, and last
- the unbudgeted recruitment of 63 additional workers in September-October 2024, comprising 17 General Workers, 16 Handy Workers, and 30 Refuse Collectors.

It is to be noted that while the Ministry of Finance granted clearance for these recruitments in December 2024, no additional financial support was provided. The council was instructed to absorb the resulting expenditure through the anticipated efficiency gain which, as stated, failed to materialise.

Concerning part (b) of the question, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in addition to the budget deficit, the pension fund for the employees of the Municipal Council, administered by SICOM Ltd, is also facing a significant deficit.

In accordance with Section 5 of the Statutory Bodies Pension Funds Act, SICOM Ltd carries out actuarial valuation for the council's pension fund at intervals not exceeding 5 years. The latest valuation, as of 31 December 2022 and submitted to the council on 11 August 2023, identified a deficit of Rs348.3 m. SICOM Ltd has informed that the main reasons for this deficit in the pension fund are –

(i) revised financial assumptions to better reflect anticipated economic and demographic trends;
(ii) lower investment returns than expected;
(iii) increase in salary and pension costs over the reviewed period, and
(iv) the failure to implement earlier recommendations for timely cash injections into the fund has significantly contributed to the worsening of the deficit.

To address that shortfall, SICOM Ltd has recommended that the council should increase the pension contribution rate to 24.05% and to undertake one of the following structured cash injection plan, either –

(a) five annual instalments of Rs81.6 m. or;
(b) seven annual instalments of Rs61.3 m. or,
(c) ten annual instalments of Rs46.2 m.

In alignment with these recommendations, the council has effectively increased its contribution rate to 24.05% as from November 2023. Furthermore, a formal request was

addressed to the Ministry of Finance on 12 October 2023, seeking the support for the necessary cash injection. Regrettably, no response has been received to date.

Now, regarding part (c) of the question, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this situation is not isolated to the Municipal Council of Vacoas-Phoenix only. Similar pension fund deficit and financial constraints are being experienced across all the 12 Municipal and District Councils.

These structural financial challenges are the direct result of poor planning and mismanagement by the previous government which diverted significant national resources, amounting to several billions of rupees to the Mauritius Investment Corporation (MIC) while failing to allocate sufficient funds to local authorities and their statutory obligations.

As a result, local authorities have been placed in a financial benevolent position and are increasingly unable to fulfil their core mandate of delivering essential public services to the citizens.

The Deputy Speaker: Next question, again in the absence of hon. Dr. Ms Thannoo, the question will be processed as a written answer.

So, the hon. Third Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien!

MAHEBOURG – HARRY LATOUR STADIUM – RENOVATION WORKS – CONTRACT DETAILS

(No. B/509) Mr C. Lukeeram (Third Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the renovation works being carried out at the Harry Latour Stadium at Mahebourg, he will state where matters stand, indicating the terms and conditions of the contract awarded therefor.

Mr Nagalingum: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed that presently no contract has been awarded for renovation works at the Harry Latour Stadium. However, the staff of the Mauritius Sports Council are actually undertaking minor works such as, the fabrication of three metal gates.

The Council is also considering upgrading the fencing at the Stadium and some other works are going to take place at the next financial year.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, the Table has been advised that the following PQs have been withdrawn – B/511, B/516, B/519 and B/524.

So, the next question, hon. Fourth Member for Rodrigues

METRO EXPRESS LTD – LIGHT RAIL VEHICLES – WET FLOORS – SAFETY MEASURES

(No. B/510) Mr J. Edouard (Fourth Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Land Transport whether, in regard to the safety measures on board the trains, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Metro Express Ltd., information as to the measures put in place to prevent injury to passengers from slipping on wet floors.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Metro Express Ltd. that the Light Rail Vehicles (LRVs) have been designed as per international norms and standards with respect to on-board security and safety. All LRVs are fitted with anti-slip rubber flooring which complies to the European standard DIN 51130, classifying anti-slip properties of floor coverings in wet conditions.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am further informed that since the start of its operation, Metro Express Ltd. has not received any complaints nor any incidents have been reported with respect to slipping on wet floors on board the LRVs. Nevertheless, as part of its daily safety and security protocols, several measures have been put in place by MEL to enhance the safety of passengers on-board of the LRVs such as regular announcements for passengers to be cautious when it is raining and to hold on to the handrail and frequent mopping of all the LRVs at Terminal Station during rainfalls.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in addition, any spillage on/or wet floor condition on board the LRVs, are properly cleaned and dried by the cleaning service provider and regular cleaning is carried out throughout the operating hours as and when required to maintain the safe and secure environment for passengers.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, one question!

Mr Edouard: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have myself witnessed a case where a young woman slipped on the wet floor last Wednesday and I would like to ask the hon. Minister if he will consider to look at places where there is no shelter. It was raining last Wednesday and at places where there is no shelter, people get in with their wet umbrellas, so the floor was wet all through and several persons slipped. I do not know if it is really anti-skid but people slipped and one woman was injured and had to go to the hospital.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Was it inside the train or outside?

Mr Edouard: Inside!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Because what I am told here is that LRVs are anti-skid but then like I said, it was not reported.

So, the MEL people may not necessarily be aware of it but I will ask them to look into, because what I have here, it is anti-skid according to European standard DIN 51130 which is not supposed to occur because it is rubber based. So, I am a bit confused.

The Deputy Speaker: You will look into the matter?

Mr Osman Mahomed: Yes!

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Mr Edouard: And at places where there is no shelter like Place d'Armes, people wait in the rain.

Mr Osman Mahomed: We will look into. Thank you.

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

HILLCREST AVENUE, QUATRE BORNES – GREENING & EMBELLISHMENT – TMRSU RECOMMENDATIONS

(No. B/511) Ms S. Anquetil (Second Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change whether, in regard to the greening and embellishment of Hillcrest Avenue, Sodnac in Quatre Bornes, he will state if the views and/or recommendations of the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit were sought prior to embarking thereon and, if so, give details thereof, indicating the actions taken thereon, if any.

(Withdrawn)

PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE WORKS – MOTORWAY M1 LA VIGIE – ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

(No. B/512) Mr R. Etwareea (Third Member for Grand'Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure whether, in regard to public infrastructure works carried out over the past five years, he will state the number of cases where the requirement

of Environmental Impact Assessments was overlooked, including during the construction of the flyover on Motorway M1 at La Vigie, indicating –

(a) the actions being envisaged to avoid the recurrence thereof, and

(b) if he proposes to engage and consult the civil society prior to engaging in such works.

Mr Gunness: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Road Development Authority that in the context of the construction of new roads, an exemption, as provided under sections 18 and 28 and part (b) and part (c) of the Fifth Schedule of the Environment Protection Act 2002 is usually solicited as the project satisfies the two criteria set out under the Act, namely that the project is required in the national interest and for the economic development of Mauritius.

Accordingly, the RDA proceeds as follows –

a) a preliminary identification for environmental implication is carried out during the concept stage;
b) during project development, the scope of work is sent to the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change for advice or request for exemption;
c) if no EIA is required, an Environmental Protection Management Plan is still prepared by contractor at construction stage;
d) if an EIA is required, the RDA applies for an exemption under the EPA, if so required the EIA is prepared and submitted to the Director of Environment for the due process;
e) the RDA seeks the necessary authorisations from the relevant authorities prior to implementation and complies with the list of conditions imposed, and
f) management and monitoring plans are submitted to the Director of Environment.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the RDA that from 2019 to 2024, it has implemented some 38 major road projects. According to the RDA, 30 projects did not warrant an EIA in line with the Fifth Schedule of the Environment Protection Act 2002 and eight projects were EIA exempted by the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change. These projects are –

1. Cap Malheureux Bypass;

2. Construction of A1-A3 Link Road;
3. Reconstruction of Jumbo Phoenix Roundabout;
4. Construction of Verdun Bypass;
5. La Vigie-La Brasserie-Beaux Songes Link Road;
6. A1-M1 Bridge;
7. Flood mitigation measures at Anse Jonchée, and
8. Lastly interchange construction and improvements along M3-A14 corridor at Ebene.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, regarding the construction of the flyover on Motorway M1 at La Vigie which forms part of the broader La Vigie-La Brasserie-Beaux Songes Link Road Project, an EIA exempt undertaking was obtained from the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change on 10 July 2018.

Following a new government policy aimed at replacing roundabouts on motorways by flyovers to improve traffic flow, the proposed roundabout at La Vigie was substituted with a flyover. According to the RDA, this modification in design did not necessitate a new EIA exemption and the existing exempt undertaking was applicable. Nonetheless, an EIA report was prepared by the contractor and submitted to the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change only on 10 April 2025 for review.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change that in view of the fact that the construction of the flyover at La Vigie required clearing of part of a forest, an EIA was in fact required as stipulated under item 10 – ‘Conversion of forest land to any other land use’ under the Sixth Schedule, part (b) of the Environment Act 2024.

Similar discrepancies have also been reported by the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change in respect of other projects such as construction of the Flic-en-Flac Bypass.

In view of the conflicting reports and the seriousness of the matter, I have personally requested the RDA to unreservedly consult the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change prior to undertaking any major road project. Any exemption, if applicable, should be obtained prior to the commencement of works in line with the provisions of the law.

On the other hand, if any EIA is warranted, the RDA shall do the needful as director by the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to reassure the House that under this Government, our pursuit for a modern and state-of-the-art road infrastructure will not be at the cost of the environment.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Next question! Hon. Third Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien!

TAXI OPERATORS WELFARE FUND – CONTRIBUTION, FUNDS & EXPENSES – MEDICAL SCHEME

(No. B/513) Mr C. Lukeeram (Third Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Land Transport whether, in regard to the Taxi Operators Welfare Fund, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to –

(a) the amount of funds collected and expenses incurred therefrom since its implementation to date;

(b) if consideration will be given to amending the relevant legislation to render contribution thereto optional, and

(c) if a proper medical scheme has been designed for taxi operators registered thereunder.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Taxi Operators Welfare Fund was established on 11 June 2021 by an Act of Parliament following several requests made by the taxi operators for such a Fund which could promote the advancement and welfare of taxi operators and their families, I am informed.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am further informed that as at date, out of the 7,249 taxi operators 6,125 have already registered with the Fund and the amount collected stands at Rs47,551,000. I must point out that although the Fund came into operation in June 2021, payment of contributions was made effective only as from March 2022. The expenses incurred as at date by the Fund since its implementation amount to Rs6,238,208.32.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as to part (b) of the question –

> "Every holder of a taxi licence, other than the holder of a taxi licence who employs a full-time taxi driver to operate his taxi, and a full-time taxi driver shall, on commencement of this Act, be deemed to be registered with the Fund as a taxi operator"

and make a monthly contribution of Rs300 to the Fund in accordance with section 11 and section 12 of the Taxi Operators Welfare Fund Act.

According to section 26 of the Taxi Operators Welfare Fund (TOWF) Act the NLTA shall not renew a public service vehicle licence in case a taxi operator fails to pay the one-off entrance fee of Rs200 or the annual contribution to the TOWF as the case maybe.

As regards to part (b) of the question, I must point out that the proposal put forward by the hon. Member may have various implications which need to be carefully examined. At this point in time, no amendment is being envisaged in this respect.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as to part (c) of the question, I am informed that a Medical Grant Programme has been designed to provide financial assistance for medical expenses. The taxi operator would need to have a valid public service licence and present a medical certificate from a national hospital or a registered clinic certifying that the taxi operator will be unfit for duty for at least two weeks. In addition, the taxi operator would need to be compliant with the Fund and should not have benefited from the same scheme within five years.

Furthermore, I am informed that the taxi operator is eligible to a daily subsistence of Rs389 up to a limit of Rs12,075 per month for a maximum of three months to cater for medical expenses. As at date, 74 taxi operators have benefitted from the medical grant programme to the tune of Rs1,793,409.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, next question! Hon. Third Member for Grand' Baie and Poudre d'Or!

WORK SECTOR – BRAIN DRAIN – MEASURES

(**No. B/514) Mr R. Etwareea (Third Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or)** asked the Minister of Labour and Industrial Relations whether, in regard to the lack of professional, skilled and unskilled workers in the Mauritian economy, he will state the

number thereof having left the country over the past five years, indicating the measures being proposed to address the issue of brain drain currently affecting the country.

Mr Uteem: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed that there is no database or record being kept at the level of my Ministry regarding workers who left or who are leaving the country.

Brain drain is usually driven by economic factors such a better job prospects, higher wages and the desire for a better standard of living. However, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the world is now a global village and with the ease of movement of people, there is a fierce competition for talents. So, instead of brain drain there is rather an exchange of skills across countries through both inward and outward migration. While Mauritians move abroad for better prospects, we are likewise benefitting from the services of skilled professional and unskilled foreign workers who are contributing to the development of the country. It should be acknowledged that the movement of workers can be beneficial through remittance offering currency and enhanced skills and global experience when the worker returns to the home country.

However, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have the duty to ensure that our citizens do find suitable, productive employment locally and do not feel compelled or pressurised to leave the country to fend for their families. In this perspective, it is important to have a concerted effort by all stakeholders including the Ministry of Education and Human Resources, the Ministry of Tertiary Education and my Ministry.

As far as my Ministry is concerned, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the following measures are being implemented to promote employment in the country and retain local talents –

1. reskilling and training programmes for the unemployed in collaboration with educational and training institutions as well as the business community to facilitate the employment of youth, women and to address the needs of the labour market;
2. the job preferences of unemployed youths are being assessed so that the necessary employability enhancement programme may be offered to them to meet their aspirations;
3. we are reviewing the legislations to ensure the best interest of workers and promote fairness and equal opportunities, and

4. we are working on the improvement of the salary structure and provisions for better working conditions.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. Next question. Hon. Second Member for Grand' Baie and Poudre d'Or!

MAURITIUS POST LTD – FINANCIAL LOSS – CONTRIBUTING FACTORS & SOLUTIONS

(No. B/515) Mr N. Beejan (Second Member for Grand'Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation whether, in regard to the reported financial loss at the Mauritius Post Ltd., he will state the measures being envisaged to redress same, indicating the factors having contributed to this situation.

Dr. Ramtohul: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Member for the question. I am informed by the Mauritius Post Ltd. that as at 30 June 2024, accumulated losses stood at Rs1.5 billion and pension deficit at almost Rs2.6 billion. Moreover, the latest internal audit report has indicated that more than 60 post offices are making losses.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in regard to the measures being envisaged to redress it financial situation, the Ministry of Finance had on 03 March 2025 requested that Mauritius Post Ltd. submits a turn-around plan. The said plan has been approved on 21 April 2025 by the current Board of directors of Mauritius Post Ltd. Same is now at discussion stage with the Ministry of Finance.

Since the turn-around plan is under is discussions, it would not be appropriate that I disclose the content thereof. However, I can mention key pillars of the plan –

- It targets review of the business model, *inter alia* leveraging digital technology;
- Generating new revenue streams for growth;
- HR restructuring plan with fairness in posting at heart, and
- Cost efficiency in operations.

It should be noted that the MSM administration used posting of post office as a sword of Damocles on the heads of people. Otherwise, there would be punitive transfer and same was executed in many cases.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will now, with your permission, quickly give details of the factors that have contributed to the downfall of Mauritius Post Ltd –

- Staff cost represents 83.29% of the total coast of Mauritius Post Ltd and there has been, notwithstanding its financial loss since 2020, 236 additional recruitments made. This was done without any business plan review which implies that 25% workforce was added without even understanding whether the current workforce was adequate or not to deliver services.
- There is also severe competition, obviously from other companies and there has been an ascendance of emails over letters. But the Mauritius Post Ltd did not adapt itself to the disruption in the industry.
- Further, there have been malpractices that have accelerated the degeneration of the financial situation of Mauritius Post Ltd.

A case in point is a loss of Rs600,000 – a theft of Rs600,000 – by a subcontractor name Proguard and that money has not yet been recovered. The same company, as mentioned, bagged an abusive contract of Rs1.2 million per month even when services are not delivered – that was actually mentioned. So, there have been abuses in terms of the tendering process and nugatory expenditure.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, while all this was happening the ex-Minister was still busy identifying new spots for new post offices to be established, again, without an assessment of the current level of the number of post offices and their services. So, this led to dissatisfaction of customers and employees. A full revamping of the situation, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is therefore imperative and I am sure the new Board, as appointed, will do the needful. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. You have one supplementary? Yes.

Mr Beejan: Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether proper tendering practices have been followed as per public sector procurement guidelines or those approved by the Board, with respect to telecommunication services that Mauritius Post Ltd. uses.

Dr. Ramtohul: Thank you, hon. Member for this supplementary question. There have been cases where the practices are a little bit grey in the sense that when once a tender is approved, there have been changes even in the supplier or there has been a split of the contract after allocation of the contract and this has been done by the finance department. Therefore, the Board, once appointed, will look into this matter and actions will be taken where they need to be taken. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. With regard to PQ B/517, hon. Duval is not in the House so, we will have it as a written answer.

Next question. Hon. Second Member for Belle Rose and Quatre Bornes!

MTPA – INTERNATIONALE TOURISMUS-BÖRSE BERLIN – COST

(No. B/516) Mr R. Beechook (Second Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil) asked the Minister of Tourism whether, in regard to tourism promotion, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority, information as to the cost incurred for the Mauritius stand at the Internationale Tourismus-Börse Berlin travel trade show for each of the year since 2019 to 2024 and since January 2025 to date.

(Withdrawn)

JEEWOONARAIN LANE, PALMA, QUATRE BORNES – KINDERGARTEN – SAFETY MEASURES

(No. B/518) Ms S. Anquetil (Second Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to the kindergarten located along the roadside at Jeewoonarain Lane, Palma at Quatre Bornes, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council of Quatre Bornes, information as to whether consideration will be given for the installation of fencing and the provision of lighting facilities thereat for the safety of the users thereof.

Mr Woochit: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to the question on fencing and lighting facilities at Jeewoonarain children playground, I wish to inform the House as follows –

- The existing chain linked fencing was dismantled in November 2024 due to severe rusting.
- The Municipal Council of Quatre Bornes has approved the replacement with a more secured fencing fence.
- Installation works including new poles and repainting of the boundary wall are already ongoing and are expected to be completed by the end of May or early next month 2025.

As for lighting, no prior provision had been made. However, following a formal request from my Ministry, the Council is considering the installation of two lighting points after the approval at its next meeting. These lighting works are also planned to be completed by early

June 2025. The total estimated cost for fencing, wall repainting and lighting is approximately Rs160,000. My Ministry is closely monitoring the project to ensure timely completion.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, hon. Ms Anquetil!

Ms Anquetil: *Je vous remercie, M. le président.* Would the hon. Minister inform the House what immediate safety measures have been taken while fencing and lighting works are pending and which contractor has been assigned to carry out these works? Thank you.

Mr Woochit: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to ensure children safety during the fencing and lighting works, the Municipal Council welfare department conducts regular site inspections to maintain the safety and cleanliness. The maintenance works are being carried out by the Council in-house and no external contractor has been appointed.

The Deputy Speaker: Last one.

Ms Anquetil: Last one. Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Would the hon. Minister inform the House when was the Jeewoonarain children playground inaugurated and why were lighting facilities not installed at that time to ensure the safety of the children using the space. Thank you.

Mr Woochit: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Jeewoonarain children playground was inaugurated in 2016 and at that time no lighting facilities were installed and for nine years no action was taken to address this safety concern. This shows a lack of planning and attention to safety standards by the previous government.

In contrast, my Ministry has now formerly requested the installation of lighting and the Municipal Council is actively considering adding two lighting points to ensure the safety and security of the children and the family using that playground.

The Deputy Speaker: I am sure the Council will look into it as a priority. The next question hon. Third Member for Pamplemousses and Triolet!

NORTHERN COASTAL REGIONS – COASTAL EROSION – STUDY, FINDINGS & ACTIONS

(No. B/519) Mr K. Rookny (Third Member for Pamplemousses & Triolet) asked the Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change whether, in regard to coastal erosion in the northern coastal regions, he will state if any study has been carried out thereon and, if so, indicate the –

(a) findings thereof, and

(b) actions being taken or envisaged to address and/or mitigate same and the expected time frame for the implementation thereof.

(Withdrawn)

GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE ALLIANCE FLAGSHIP INITIATIVE – EU GRANT – CLIMATE-SMART AGRULTURAL PROJECTS

(No. B/520) Mr K. Rookny (Third Member for Pamplemousses & Triolet) asked the Minister of Agro-Industry, Food Security, Blue Economy and Fisheries whether, in regard to the grant of over Rs 50 million from the European Union under the Global Climate Change Alliance Flagship Initiative for climate smart agriculture projects, he will state the –

(a) actions and initiatives being undertaken by the relevant stakeholders thereunder, and

(b) the status of each of the project being implemented thereunder, indicating –

(i) the outcomes and results achieved to date, and

(ii) if a monitoring and evaluation mechanism has been put in place to assess the impact and effectiveness thereof.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will seek your indulgence and that of the House because the reply is rather lengthy.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the European Union has under its Global Climate Change Alliance Plus (GCCA+) Flagship initiative entitled ‘Supporting Climate Smart Agriculture’ funded EUR 2.4 million, approximately Rs 120 million for the period 2016-2020 to support climate smart agriculture in Mauritius.

The projects aimed at increasing the resilience of smallholders to climate change by improving their capacity towards developing and sustaining climate smart agriculture practices. The project was broken down into four grant contract actions to be implemented by different institutions, namely –

(a) The University of Mauritius for the transformation of Belle Mare into a Climate-Smart Agriculture village for climate resilience, food security, and poverty alleviation of its farmers. The project basically used a research approach to transform Belle Mare coastal area with high production of onion, tomato and other cash crops on sandy soil into a Climate-Smart Agriculture village with

innovative techniques of irrigation to be adopted to address water shortage at the cost of EUR 301,695;

(b) The Mauritius Chamber of Agriculture for the transition towards agroecological climate-resilient food cropping systems in Mauritius, a research-based project, which involves networking of vegetable growers, diagnosis of current cropping systems, innovation tracking, theoretical formalisation of agroecological systems, implementation of redesigned systems and assessment and knowledge dissemination at a cost of EUR 393,410;

(c) The Commission of Social Security (Rodrigues Regional Assembly) for the adaptation of smallholder farmers to climate change in Rodrigues with the setting up of an integrated organic chilli farm at Montagne du Sable and a lime and honey farm at Anse Ali at the cost of EUR 1,000,000. The goals of this project in Rodrigues were, *inter-alia*, to train 43 beneficiaries on sustainable agricultural and management practices under Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA) guidelines, rehabilitate 10 hectares of land at Montagne du Sable and 3.25 hectares at Anse Ali through terracing, ploughing, and fencing.

The project also involved the establishment of plant nurseries, pastures, agroforestry and compost pads at the sites, setting up rainwater harvesting structures, storage tanks and drip irrigation systems and purchase beehives, small ruminants, lime and chilli plantlets for the beneficiaries.

(d) The Irrigation Authority for Improving Resilience of Small Holders to the effect of climate change through the adoption of new irrigation techniques in the driest part of the northern region of Mauritius at the cost of EUR 565,870.40.

The project consists mainly of –

(i) procurement of 4WD double cab vehicles for effective implementation of field activities;

(ii) appointment of a consultant (Expert in climate change with expertise in agriculture) to implement the actions defined under the project. I was told that the services of the Consultant were not enlisted as it was not needed.

(iii) Implementation of resilience irrigation infrastructure on existing three drip irrigation projects and sheltered farming/rain harvesting as a pilot project.

(iv) Capacity building of the Irrigation Authority's technicians and smallholders covering climate change and its impact on agriculture, understanding weather patterns and the impact on farming, climate change adaptations strategies and climate smart agriculture practices, and advantages of disadvantages of the swapping to sheltered farming.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (b) of the question, the University of Mauritius has achieved the following –

(i) Over 300 planters have been sensitised about climate change and climate smart agriculture practices through face-to-face training sessions, in-situ demonstrations and provision of a simple, easy to understand booklet in Creole and English, and video on the CSA practices (climate smart agriculture).

(ii) The project also develops a document entitled 'Creating and Enabling Environment for Climate Smart Agriculture in Mauritius,' which included a training booklet and a video on climate smart agriculture for small vegetable growers.

Now, if the above is implemented at national level, the enabling environment that would thus be created would contribute considerably in encouraging a large number of vegetable planters in the Republic of Mauritius to adopt climate smart agriculture.

Official figures on sales of pesticides and fertilisers to planters obtained from the Mauritius Agriculture and Marketing Corporative Federation from the
start of the project till its completion showed a steady reduction in the number of fertilisers, ranging from degrees of 55% to 100 % for different fertilisers, and synthetic pesticides ranging from 46% to 62% for the different products. An increase by 247% in the amount of bio fertilisers and bio products demanded by the planters from Belle Mare and neighbouring areas, as a direct result of the project. Of course, due to constant monitoring by the European Union also.

Now, with regard to the project implemented by the Chamber of Agriculture, I am informed that Rs7.5 million of various equipment has been provided to producers to help them in this transition. Training and accompanying measures have been provided to 150 trainees with regard to the reduction in pesticide used.

Successful networking of planters was created for various strategies to be adopted such as mulching, beneficial plants, composting, sanitation, push-pull techniques and equipment

like shredders, insect nets and weeders were tested on the monitored farm. Field visits and frequent meetings were organised to promote the exchange of experiences.

The record books of the farmers help to produce useful economic and technical references for sharing experiences. The economic performance of 29 vegetable growers, total and marketed yield, costs of seeds, pesticides, fertilisers, labour wages, fuel costs and sale prices from marketing gardening systems with sustainable practices was evaluated. The main result was a 57 average reduction in total fungicides, herbicides and insecticides input across seven crops, with insecticides decreasing by 78% on cabbage and herbicide being reduced by 90% on pumpkin.

Regarding the project implemented on the Rodrigues Regional Assembly, I am informed that the following has been achieved –

(i) Infrastructure (irrigation, stable, processing house) implementation has been realised in 2022/2023, but some still has to be finalised as drip irrigation. Rain harvesting basins for irrigation have also been installed.

(ii) Furthermore, various outcomes have been obtained: the production of honey and lime trees at Anse Ali started around December 2023, the production of vegetable and sheep started at Montagne du Sable in January 2024.

(iii) The training of beneficiaries in climate smart agriculture practices have been completed.

Now, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in terms of outputs, substantial investment has been made in the realisation of project for two farms where 43 persons from vulnerable households obtained training to produce and acquire income. The main infrastructure includes, amongst others, access roads, fencing, rainwater harvesting structures, storage tanks and some drip irrigation set up. Besides, goat pens have been constructed at Montagne du Sable and 30 beehives have been set up at Anse Ali, including processing equipment.

The Rodrigues Project has promoted several concrete examples of climate smart agriculture practices. These include agroforestry through the planting of trees as windbreaks. The aim is to plant two ha of trees to set up an agroforestry
farm over two ha at Anse Ali, and integrate lime cultivation with forest trees. Other practices include crop diversification, drip irrigation for water-use efficiency and rainwater harvesting together with composting residues and sheep dung for green manure.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, regarding the project implemented by Irrigation Authority, which falls under the purview of the Ministry of Agro-Industry, was co-financed by the European Union which contributed up to 80% of the funding amounting to Euro 568,870, that

is, approximately Rs28 million and the remaining 20%, that is, approximately Rs7 million by the Government.

I am informed by the Irrigation Authority that except for component on sheltered farming, all the other components were successfully implemented. The reason for same was due to unsuccessful procurement exercise on four occasions whereby on each occasion, the price quoted by bidders was far above the cost estimates specified by EU in its contract which could not be changed. This resulted in the Board of the IA deciding that this component be shelved and this amount EUR 146,500 was, of course, not used.

Furthermore, the EU recommended that no consultancy services be sought, given the unique experience of the IA and its technicians. The consultancy was therefore done in-house and the respective funds were reallocated for the purchase of equipment. After the completion of the project in September 2023, an amount of approximately EUR207,000, which includes the amount mentioned earlier for sheltered farming component and EUR60,500 from savings made on the other components was refunded to the EU on September 2024.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, a comprehensive impact assessment analysis was conducted by Irrigation Authority which demonstrated that the EU-funded project yielded a multitude of significant benefits.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as regards part (c) of the question, I am informed that the EU prepared an evaluation report of the consultation with stakeholders. The main purpose of the evaluation is to present the findings, conclusions, lessons learnt and recommendations of external and independent evaluation of the GCCA+ as implemented.

The evaluation report’s main aim is to inform the Government of Mauritius, the project implementing agencies and the EU delegation in Port Louis about the achievements, but also shortcomings from the projects implemented. The IA has implemented a monitoring and evaluation framework as required by EU to assess the impact of this project.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, since January the ministry is placing a high premium on stakeholder engagement. Feedback is actively being solicited and incorporated into impact assessment through regular meetings and consultations with planters and their cooperative societies. This participatory approach ensures that the project accounts are aligned with the needs and priorities of planters. Furthermore, the Ministers have through consultation,…

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Time is over!

Dr. Boolell: …in the light of the next budget…

The Deputy Speaker: Can you please…

(Interruptions)

Dr. Boolell: …the measures are being identified to tackle the concerns of…

The Deputy Speaker: Can you please conclude?

Dr. Boolell: …small planters to address the issue affecting the crops, sugar, livestock production in Mauritius.

I thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you!

(Interruptions)

Thank you, hon. Minister for your long and comprehensive answer! Let me remind you that you have another statement to make in a few minutes.

(Interruptions)

Yes, time is over! The Table has been advised that PQs B/466, B/525 and B/526 have been withdrawn.

Hon. Prime Minister!

MOTION

SUSPENSION OF S.O. 10(2)

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

The Deputy Prime Minister rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Dr. Boolell!

STATEMENT BY MINISTER

ROSE BELLE SUGAR ESTATE – BOARD OF DIRECTORS – FINANCIAL SITUATION

(4.11 p.m.)

The Minister of Agro-Industry, Food Security, Blue Economy and Fisheries (Dr. A. Boolell): Thank you very much, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. With your permission, I wish to make a Statement with regard to the Rose Belle Sugar Estate.

Rose Belle Sugar Estate (RBSE) was set up in 1973 through an Act of Parliament following the acquisition of the estate from Garthwaite & Ors for the sum of Rs18 million. This institution has, since, been actively present in numerous sectors of the economy, namely sugar, food crops, livestock and energy production.

Rose Belle Sugar Estate is today in a situation of financial distress with all the leading indicators in the red. The last 10 years has seen Rose Belle Sugar Estate evolve from an Estate with more than 6,100 arpents under cultivation to approximately 1,200 Arpents in 2024. Other auxiliary clusters such as crops and livestock have become extinct. The revenue stream, inclusive of cash flow, have grown into highly negative pools and thus, creating indebtedness. The last decade has seen a palette of mismanagement, fraudulent practices including defrauding of public funds. The Rose Belle Sugar Estate Board has failed in its fiduciary duty to safeguard, preserve and grow the assets of the company. Illegal and suspicious transactions are present in almost all segments of the business with low accountability.

The Estate is currently generating more than Rs70 million of annual loss with an accumulated debt level estimated at Rs1.2 billion. The operating cash flow is consistently negative and unsustainable when it comes to servicing its operating expenses which stand at approximately Rs177 million annually. Revenue streams have been on a downward trend with various inconsistencies and unjustified expenses.

Rose Belle Sugar Estate is in a dire financial posture and is today insolvent following a decade of fraudulent mismanagement coupled with irresponsible ventures and projects. The attributes of this overwhelming state of affairs can be summarised as follows –

(i) Sugar cultivation in 2014 was in excess of 4,500 arpents whilst in 2024, this extent was reduced to 1,200 arpents. The rest of the land bank is today abandoned and generates only Rs25 million compared to more than Rs100 million in 2014;

(ii) Meanwhile, expenses have suspiciously increased from Rs44 million in 2014 to more than Rs180 million in 2024. This is mostly attributable to increasing staff costs and bonuses at a time when operations and revenue were decreasing at an increasing rate. Staff costs today make up more than 80% of income generated.

This is against good management practices and should have been flagged by auditors;

(iii) Other expenses include, *inter alia*, supplies and services, fertilisers and herbicides where, after a thorough audit, it appears that Rose Belle Sugar Estate had been purchasing supplies for 3,000 arpents when they were cultivating only 1,200 arpents, illustrating clear defrauding of Rose Belle Sugar Estate funds and mismanagement;

(iv) Since 2018, there has been no proper accounts prepared in line with international financial reporting standards. This illustrates a clear breach of fiduciary duties from the previous Board of Directors and failure under the Financial Reporting Act 2004 and Company's Act 2001 respectively;

(v) The insolvency of the Estate should have been flagged a while ago as the current assets of the company clearly underscore its current liabilities, that is, Rs169 million assets versus Rs550 million of liabilities in 2024. Overdrafts have been employed to service current liabilities and topped Rs1.2 billion in 2022. Assets have therefore been sold to avoid bankruptcy;

(vi) Disposal of assets, *inter alia*, land and other equipment, have been made without proper frameworks or feasibility matrices. No benchmarks or evaluation have been employed to dispose land under various projects such as morcellements or joint ventures which crystalised huge losses to the Estate. For instance, one '*toise'* of land at Rose-Belle has been sold in 2023 at Rs13,000 whilst the benchmark of the regional cadastre stands at Rs25,000 to Rs30,000 per *toise*. This represents an opportunity cost of around 70% of the normal revenue curve. This again demonstrates deliberate defrauding of the funds of Rose Belle Sugar Estate;

(vii) Related party transactions, that is, directors and other parties have acquired various assets, directly or indirectly through land reservations. This is against good governance;

(viii) Commercial land leases have been conducted at an understated rate, approximately 80% discount to the market benchmark, and is today full of accumulated arrears. This represents around Rs97 million of undermined income. No legal action has been initiated against the usual suspects. Suspicions of officers of Rose Belle Sugar Estate and tenants acting in concert are factual. Tenants such as 'Vieux Moulin' and 'Plaisance Mall' are in arrears by more than Rs15 million without any action;

(ix) Sale of more than 1,000 arpents, under morcellement and other projects, have been conducted fraudulently;

(x) Salary increases have been effected without clear rationales and framework;

(xi) Rose Belle Sugar Estate has been operating without professional human capital but rather with irresponsible and ill-minded management and Board of Directors;

(xii) Debtors add up to around Rs75 million with an average age of 4 years whilst creditors amount to the tune of Rs15 million;

(xiii) Rose Belle Sugar Estate has lately engaged itself in numerous ventures with Gibraltar Group, which is loss-making and has vested land to the latter at under-par rates, to the detriment of the Estate. They have even sold their head office – land and building – to the same company at negligible prices. These ventures, together with relevant malpractices, have put Rose Belle Sugar Estate in a minority position and eventually without any control of its prime land. An investigation is warranted here;

(xiv) The debts accumulated over the past 10 years are very likely to be classified as non-performing loans by State Bank Mauritius Ltd, given the irregular service path. Their liabilities are close to being classified

as stage 3 defaults, implying imminent seizure proceedings. Again, we are exposed to an irresponsible Board of Directors;

(xv) This same Board of Directors did not produce and validate any accounts for Rose Belle Sugar Estate for at least seven years. This shows bad faith and non-accountability to its shareholders, that is, government mainly;

(xvi) Asset Management practices, including but not limited to land, have been conducted without clear mandates, benchmarks, ring-fencing and targets. This has facilitated corruption and destruction of value purposely, and

(xvii) The morcellement project, Lotissement Rose Belle 60 Arpents, clearly shows highly overstated costs of Rs350 m. versus Rs600 m. of expected income. This is also a succinct indication of costs majoration without adequate tender processes. The cost to income stands at more than 50%, totally out of normal morcellement infrastructure rates and other costs. This is highly suspicious, and again, welcomes an investigation.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the above state of affairs demonstrates that Rose Belle Sugar Estate is on the verge of an economic collapse, infested with mismanagement practices,

fraudulent acts and ill-mindedness that led to defrauding of funds. The asset value of Rose Belle Sugar Estate has fallen by more than 70% in the last 10 years and sets doubts on the long-term sustainability of the going-concern.

A proper forensic audit together with accounts preparation is warranted. I propose to refer the forensic audit to the Financial Crimes Commission.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in view of the scarcity of land available to Government, Rose Belle Sugar Estate is poised to be an important factor in the Ministry's food security stratagem. The latter shall hence be called upon to embark on a replantation scheme to boost cane production, energy generation and the cultivation of food crops. The Ministry is working on a turnaround strategic mandate 2025-2029 to ensure sustainability, efficiency and accountability. A paper will be tabled by the end of May 2025.

Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Hon. Members, Madam Speaker will take the Chair.

At this stage, Madam Speaker took the Chair.

Madam Speaker: Please be seated!

MOTION

STANDING ORDERS COMMITTEE REPORT – S.O. 2 & S.O. 73 REVIEW

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Prime Minister!

(4.23 p.m.)

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I beg to move the motion standing in my name –

"This Assembly resolves that the Report of the Standing Orders Committee, in regard to the amendments to Standing Order 2 and Standing Order 73 of the Standing Orders and Rules of the National Assembly (1995), which was laid on the Table of the National Assembly on 06 May 2025 be approved, and that the amendments contained therein come into operation forthwith."

The Deputy Prime Minister rose and seconded.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Attorney General, welcome!

PUBLIC BILLS

Second Reading

THE CONSTITUTION (AMENDMENT) BILL (NO. X of 2025)

&

THE CRIMINAL CODE (AMENDMENT) BILL (NO. XI of 2025)

Order for Second Reading read.

(4.25 p.m.)

The Attorney General (Mr G. Glover): Thank you. Madam Speaker, I move that the Constitution (Amendment) Bill (No. X of 2025) and the Criminal Code (Amendment) Bill (No. XI of 2025) be read together a second time.

Madam Speaker, the Constitution (Amendment) Bill fulfils the commitment given by the State before the United Nations Committee against Torture. But above all, it upholds the democratic values which this Government wants to restore, strengthen and extend.

The Bill seeks to repeal Section 7(2) of the Constitution, which currently allows punishments found in laws that were in force in 1964 – which punishments may now be considered inhuman or degrading – to remain constitutionally valid.

Madam Speaker, in its Concluding Observations on the fourth periodic report of Mauritius, the United Nations Committee against Torture gave its concern at the lack of express provision in our law prohibiting torture in absolute terms. It recommended that no justification whatsoever should be allowed for acts of torture, in accordance with Article 2(2) of the Convention against Torture. It also drew attention to the need for other laws, including Section 245 of the Criminal Code, to align with this absolute ban.

(Interruptions)

I am trying to replace my hon. friend, Mr Bhagwan here!

(Interruptions)

The Committee further emphasised, in its General Comment No. 2, that State Parties are obliged to take legislative and administrative action to reinforce the prohibition against torture, and to eliminate any legal obstacles to its eradication. Torture is the subject of a non-

derogable prohibition. No State may invoke any circumstance, however exceptional, to justify it.

At the fifth periodic review of Mauritius in April of this year, I, therefore, informed the Committee, on behalf of our Government, that Section 7(2) would be repealed. Today, Madam Speaker, barely a month later, we are giving effect to that promise. Yet another example of the commitment of this Government to leave no stone unturned to reach our ultimate goals!

Madam Speaker, Section 7 of the Constitution is made up of two provisions. It bears necessity, here, to read them out in extensive. Section 7 (1) reads –

> "(1) No person shall be subjected to torture or to inhuman or degrading punishment or other such treatment."

However, Section 7 (2), Madam Speaker, states that –

> "(2) Nothing contained in or done under the authority of any law shall be held to be inconsistent with this section to the extent that the law in question authorises the infliction of any description of punishment that was lawful in Mauritius on 11 March 1964."

Section 7 (2) thus creates a broad exception to the constitutional protection against inhuman treatment. It immunises from challenge any law that was in place before independence, even if that law authorises punishments that are unacceptable by today's standards.

Moreover, that same subsection (2) of Section 7 of the Constitution is often misunderstood as a transitional clause. But its effect is broader and more enduring. It allows such punishments to be re-enacted through new laws which will then remain immune from constitutional scrutiny, as long as they mirror what existed prior to independence – 1964.

For example, corporal punishments such as flogging or whipping, long abolished in Mauritius, were once lawful under colonial rule. In countries like the Bahamas, such punishments were repealed and later reintroduced without being struck down, due to the existence of these "saving clauses of similar nature."

Madam Speaker, the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council has examined such "saving clauses" in several cases, such as –

- Pinder v. R (in The Bahamas): where a similar clause allowed colonial punishments to be repealed and later reinstated;
- Watson v. R (in Jamaica) and Philibert v. The State (in Mauritius): where colonial laws were given immunity from constitutional scrutiny, and
- more recently, Reyes v. The Queen (in Belize): where, by contrast, the Belize Constitution made such laws transitional for only five years post-independence.

Even then, the Privy Council held that where no time limit is set, the clause is not transitional and its effects endure indefinitely but these clauses, Madam Speaker, were only introduced with the intention of ensuring legal certainty and to secure an orderly transfer of power from colonial regimes to independent ones. They were not meant to hinder democratic progress of nations decades after independence.

Madam Speaker, the Courts' task in fulfilling their role is to interpret the Constitution by ensuring that its construction adapts to changing times and that all local laws of the jurisdiction conform with the organic growth of the Constitution. This is the "living tree" doctrine, as described by the Privy Council in very old case of Edwards v Attorney General of Canada. In that case, women were not considered to be persons under the definition of a local Act. However, the Privy Council stated that the term "persons" should be read broadly and preventing women to become members of the Senate in Canada was and I quote –

"…a relic of days more barbarious than ours".

For the Privy Council, and we agree fully with that proposition –

"…a Constitution should thus be capable of growth and expression within its natural limits."

Madam Speaker, section 7(2) remains on our law books. The risk persists that one-day Parliament could – not this one, of course – reintroduce archaic punishments and that such laws would then be shielded from constitutional challenge. We cannot, as a responsible government, allow that. This approach would prevent the interpretation of torture or inhuman or degrading punishment to ever evolve, similar to the definition of "persons" in Canada, under the "living tree" doctrine. It would be a Damocles sword hanging over our legal order.

This view was in fact adopted by the Privy Council recently in the case of Jay Chandler v. The State (Trinidad and Tobago) 2022, where it was again emphasised that the existing

laws could not be held unconstitutional but Parliaments were nudged to use a soft expression by the Judicial Committee to repeal and amend such laws.

Repealing Section 7(2) of the Constitution therefore, Madam Speaker, is just not symbolic. It is necessary.

I now turn to the Criminal Code (Amendment) Bill, which accompanies this constitutional reform. This Bill revises two provisions: Section 245, which governs the use of force under lawful authority and Section 242 which excuses manslaughter upon discovering adultery.

First, the repeal of Section 7(2) of the Constitution requires us to revise Section 245. Its existing language therefore no longer aligns with the updated constitutional standard.

The new provision ensures that the use of force, including lethal force, remains legally justified but only under defined conditions, which are –

a) the defence of persons or property;
b) the lawful arrest or the prevention of an escape;
c) the suppression of a riot, insurrection or mutiny, and
d) the prevention of a criminal offence.

This is consistent with international norms, with common law principles and with the doctrine of proportionality which is now implied in our section 7(1), soon to become section 7 *simplicitaire* of our Constitution. In other words, even in these justified circumstances listed (a), (b), (c) and (d), force must be used reasonably and cannot amount to inhuman or degraded treatment or torture.

Madam Speaker, let us now turn to section 242. Before I deal with it, let me read in French from the old Code Napoleon what that section says –

> « Le meurtre commis par l'époux sur son conjoint ainsi que sur le complice à l'instant où il les surprend en flagrant délit d'adultère est excusable »

You would have noted that the excuse would only apply to the male and not to the female. That provision, as I said, inherited from article 324 of the old French Penal Code, provides that manslaughter committed by a person upon catching his spouse in the act of adultery is excusable. In effect, and as per French jurisprudence, only a man convicted under these circumstances would get a reduced sentence.

France repealed that section in 1975. 50 years on, we are still at it here and having to debate this in Parliament but hopefully this will be a thing of the past in a couple of hours.

Although Section 242 of the Criminal Code has not been applied in a Mauritian court, it remains on our books and it remains the law of our land. And that, in itself, presents a legal and a constitutional risk. It offers a blanket excuse for killing, based solely on emotional provocation. This excuse lacks any consideration of proportionality, intent, or judicial discretion. And, that is problematic for at least three reasons –

- First, Madam Speaker, it is incompatible with our Constitution. Let us not forget Section 3 guarantees individual rights; section 16 prohibits discrimination. Section 242, in contrast, is at its core, rooted in unequal treatment where only male violent reaction is deemed excusable. No such provision exists to "excuse" a woman who would find herself in similar circumstances and kill her spouse.
- Secondly, it contradicts the general framework of our criminal law, where the notion of provocation is already recognised and considered on a case-to-case basis by our Judges and Magistrates every day in Court. Section 242 therefore imposes a redundant and rigid rule that bypasses judicial assessment and discretion.
- Thirdly, Madam Speaker, it is socially harmful. How can anyone look at our younger generations of this country and tell them that in our law, there is a provision that could "excuse' feminicide? What messages would we be sending to the country where domestic violence has been left unchecked for years?

International bodies have echoed this, Madam Speaker. The United Nations Committee Against Torture in 2017 and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women in 2018 have both urged a repeal of this section but nothing was done by the previous Government.

Madam Speaker, I must stress that today's reform is not being carried out merely to satisfy external recommendations. It is being done because the provision is out of place in our legal system and constitutional principles. Repealing Section 242 simply removes an aberration that should never have been preserved.

Madam Speaker, these two Bills remove provisions that no longer belong in our constitutional order. They reflect our responsibility to update the law; not only and merely to preserve its letter, but to uphold its spirit.

There are, of course, more sections of our law, including some in the Criminal Code, that must also be reviewed in the same spirit. For instance, we are presently working on a Bill to update and refine our legal arsenal on sexual offences and to better fulfil not only our international commitments, but also our moral obligations to the women, girls and boys of this country.

For today is but one step of many more to come. Steps which will include the giant strides that the forthcoming Constitutional Review Commission is expected to make. And step by step, slowly but surely like this, Madam Speaker, we will cross our government's bridge to the future.

I commend both Bills to the House.

Dr. Boolell rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Madam Speaker: Maybe we can carry on with Hon. Leader of the Opposition, for the moment. Yes!

(4.42 p.m.)

The Leader of Opposition (Mr G. Lesjongard): Thank you, Madam Speaker. I have listened with great care the intervention of the Attorney General. At the very outset, Madam Speaker, I wish to show support to the Attorney General and the Government for repealing, first, section 7 subsection (2) from our Constitution and repealing section 242 from our Criminal Code.

Madam Speaker, Mauritius is a State Party to the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment which we have acceded to on 09 December 1992. Additionally, Madam Speaker, we are also a State Party to the Optional Protocol to the CAT which was acceded on 21 June 2005. This means, Madam Speaker, that Mauritius is committed to preventing torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment both domestically and internationally.

Madam Speaker, as the House is aware, the National Preventive Mechanism Division was set up under the National Human Rights Commission in 2014 and since June 2015, the National Preventive Mechanism Division investigates complaints which are made by a detainee, and where the detainee so requests, investigates the complaint privately.

Madam Speaker, torture under any circumstance is a despicable act and should not be tolerated in modern Mauritius. Moreover, it was high time, Madam Speaker, to settle the debate on manslaughter committed as a result of a spouse caught in the act of adultery.

Madam Speaker, I also support modifications being brought to section 245 of the Criminal Code where it was stipulated that –

> "There is neither crime nor misdemeanour, where homicide, wounds or blows are ordered by law, and commanded by lawful authority."

This new section 245, Madam Speaker, now stipulates the following –

> "There is neither crime, nor misdemeanour, where homicide is, or wounds or blows are, committed as a result of the use, to such extent and in such circumstances as are permitted by law, of such force as is reasonably justifiable –
>
> (a) for the defence of any person from violence or for the defence of property;
> (b) in order to effect a lawful arrest or to prevent the escape of a person lawfully detained;
> (c) for the purpose of suppressing a riot, insurrection or mutiny; or
> (d) in order to prevent the commission by that person of a criminal offence or if he dies as the result of a lawful act of war."

Madam Speaker, despite the repeals being done today there remain for me some grey areas. For instance, section 78 of the Criminal Code which criminalises the offence of 'Torture by public official' provides for a penalty of imprisonment for a term not exceeding ten years and to a fine not exceeding Rs150,000. Hence, this is clearly, I believe, not consistent with Article 42 of the Convention in relation to the gravity of the offence.

Madam Speaker, the second one is with regard to the absence of any provisions in our legislations prohibiting the use of any evidence obtained by torture and other cruel, inhuman, degrading treatment in accordance with Article 15 of the Convention. So, as long as there is no such prohibition of the use of evidence obtained by such treatments, the courts will admit such evidence secured by the police and adverse to a suspect's case.

Madam Speaker, there are also, I believe some practical and other challenges. First, a lack of awareness of the prohibition of torture and the contents of the Convention even though it has been acceded to. There is also the perception that investigating authorities continued to look for confessions by any means to resolve a criminal investigation, and see

the lack or scarcity of other means to solve criminal cases such as use of scientific and technological means, and lastly, the reluctance to report cases.

Now, I mentioned that earlier, Madam Speaker, I do not find any necessity to introduce the term ‘lawful act of war’ in our Criminal Code, especially at a time where we should be condemning all acts of war around the world. It is to be stressed that we are a peaceful country and should remain so and there should not be any justification such as an act of war that should be qualified as lawful, I believe, in our Criminal Code.

Furthermore, Madam Speaker, I can understand that the relevant authorities should be allowed to act if there is a riot, an insurrection or a mutiny in our country. And, Madam Speaker, not only as the Leader of the Opposition, but also as a citizen of this country and a patriot, I do not wish to see, I make reference to that, another episode of *Février* 1999 happening again in our country.

However, Madam Speaker, should this subsection (c) have existed back then, for example, would the death of Berger Agathe have been justified? Obviously, I am not a legal person but I hope the Attorney General provides some clarity on this aspect of the Bill.

Now, coming to subsection (b), I do have some concerns, Madam Speaker with this part of the Bill. Firstly, may I ask what is a lawful arrest, nowadays?

Firstly, may I ask what a ‘lawful arrest’ is nowadays? Is it an arrest based on probable cause or one based on reasonable suspicion? What kind of arrest would justify the use of force that might lead to a homicide that, by virtue of this subsection, may not be considered as a crime? Would it not have been more explicit and unambiguous to define the use of force as necessary, proportionate and reasonable in all circumstances that is, no more than is necessary or in other terms nor excessive force.

Madam Speaker, we have seen a series of arrests by relevant authorities since the beginning of the mandate of this new Government and by ‘we’’ I mean…

Mr Jhummun: *Avan pa ti ena?*

(Interruptions)

Mr Lesjongard: Let me finish…

Mr Jhummun: *Aster? ki aster?*

Mr Lesjongard: and by ‘we’ I mean the people. Are we entitled to know where we are going with this kind of addition to our criminal code? Should we, as a population, be worried or is this leading us to a situation where we operate, where law and justice prevails? What do we do, Madam Speaker, for example when a detainee or a prisoner escapes? Does this mean this person deserve to die and justifiable under the eyes of the law? Madam Speaker, you as a legal person, must know, self-defence is already in our law.

Madam Speaker, that is in section 246 of the Criminal Code but what about defence of property? Are we talking about trespass? So, many questions, Madam Speaker, that I believe the hon. Attorney General will clarify in due course.

Madam Speaker, I believe that if the Government wishes to bring improvements to the present laws, fair enough, I will give my support where the interest of the people lies. However, let us not create loopholes for abuse.

Ces amendements, Madame la présidente, découle du rapport comme ça a été dit de la Commission des Nations Unies contre la torture qui date de 2017 et oui, j’accepte. Peut-être qu’il fallait se pencher dessus depuis des années…

(Interruptions)

Mais cela ne veut pas dire que le régime précédent…

(Interruptions)

… ne l’a pas considéré. Quand on parle du code criminel et de la constitution d’un pays, il ne faut pas procéder au coup par coup dans ce genre de situation. Ce même rapport, Madame la présidente, évoque aussi le *Police and Criminal Evidence Bill*, un projet de loi qui a été longtemps évoqué mais qui attend toujours de voir le jour.

(Interruptions)

Mr Lesjongard: À mon humble avis, Madame la présidente, les amendements du jour viennent certes…

An hon. Member: FCC!

Mr Lesjongard: …condamner encore plus des cas de torture mais viennent aussi exonérer l’État dans des cas spécifiques.

Where do we draw the line, Madam Speaker, as a sovereign nation?

(Interruptions)

Mr Jhummun: *Demann gel. Li pu dir twa.*

Mr Lesjongard: Le rapport parle aussi de beaucoup de manquements dans les enquêtes de la police, par exemple comme celle concernant le décès de Monsieur Rajesh Ramlogun décédé en détention policière le 12 janvier 2006.

Madam Speaker, I believe in line with the recommendations of the United Nations, we are taking a firm stand against torture through our Constitution and by replacing section 242 of the Criminal Code and at the same time, I believe that we are also tolerating violence in specific cases which might, as I said earlier, create loopholes for any future abuse by the authorities and I would ask and request Government to trade – let us say, with caution be defining the various categories of force whether physical, restrain equipment, firearms, police dogs etc.. but more importantly, Madam Speaker, by setting the limits of the use of force.

Madame la présidente, nous avons aussi remarqué une dégradation inquiétante de la situation du *law and order* dans le pays depuis le début de l'année.

(Interruptions)

Le gouvernement et surtout la police doit réagir afin de calmer la situation mais pour but qu'il n'y ait pas d'abus.

Now, for example, Madam Speaker, to reduce to a minimum the risk of abuse by the authorities during any operation, maybe we should consider the introduction of body cameras for our police officers. This way, Madam Speaker, any arrest…

(Interruptions)

This way, Madam Speaker, any arrest, any drug seizure for that matter is filmed, recorded and Government, I believe, should amend the law so that those images can be used as evidence in Court. This way, Madam Speaker, it will be clear in the eyes of the law if there has been unjustified violence or not. We are, Madam Speaker, a peaceful country and we should leave no stone unturned in our quest to eradicate completely any suspicion of acts of torture on our territory. I am done, Madam Speaker, thank you.

An. hon. Member: Good news.

Mr Jhummun: We commend the law!

Madam Speaker: I propose we break for half an hour. Thank you.

At 4.56 p.m., the Sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 5.44 p.m. with Madam Speaker in the Chair.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, you may be seated.

I now call on hon. Lobine for his speech.

Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix): Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I rise today to give my full and unequivocal support to these two bills: the Constitution (Amendment) Bill (No. X of 2025) and the Criminal Code (Amendment) Bill (No. XI of 2025). I fully adhere to the delivery of the hon. Attorney General with regard to these two Bills but I deplore the banality with which the hon. Leader of Opposition has intervened during the debate. Completely out of context; he could not understand the purpose of those two very crucial amendments that are being brought to our laws especially to our Constitution and this is something that is unbecoming from a Leader of Opposition concerning such an important piece of legislation that would bring some clarity to our position as a modern society, as a modern country whereby, once again, another milestone to restore our dignity, our democracy and our constitutional values.

Madam Speaker, way back in 2017 as rightly pointed out by the hon. Attorney General, the United Nations Committee Against Torture issued clear and forceful recommendations to the Mauritius way back in 2017 – 8 years back, Madam Speaker. But the previous government, unfortunately, could not even solicit debates with regard to what was the recommendation of this Committee. What did this Committee say, Madam Speaker? They urged Mauritius to repeal section 242 of the Criminal Code which excuses manslaughter when a spouse is killed upon being caught in adultery.

The Committee urged Mauritius to repeal section 7 subsection (2) of the Constitution which undermines the absolute prohibition of inhuman or degrading punishment by preserving laws from 1964, Madam Speaker, and I quote paragraph 42 of the recommendations –

> "The State party [that is, Mauritius] should abrogate section 242 of its Penal Code and ensure that the Constitution provides for the absolute prohibition of torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment".

The previous regime failed to address all these issues, Madam Speaker. Today, we have got a government together with the way that the hon. Attorney General is handing affairs with

regard to those very important amendments that are being brought. Each and every 2 or 3 weeks, important amendments are being brought to consolidate our Constitution, our democracy and we are awaiting further major amendments through the establishment of a Constitutional Review Commission whereby each and every citizen would also be able to give their views on those various precolonial legislations that we need to amend and also, to revamp our Constitution after 57 years, Madam Speaker.

So, Madam Speaker, I would qualify section 242 as a colonial era excuse for gender-based violence. This is the gist that the hon. Leader of the Opposition has missed to point out as a patriot. He could have, as the Leader of the Opposition, a point of view with regard to section 242, which talks about gender-based violence, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, section 242 belongs to another era. It allowed men to kill their wives or their wives' lovers and then plead passion. It created a legal shield for violence, particularly violence against women under the narrative of betrayal but this defence has no place in a modern legal system and I would not repeat what the hon. Attorney General has said but I would just, for the sake of clarity and for the sake of the record, state the position of our judiciary, the Supreme Court with regard to those particular sections.

Madam Speaker, our Courts have already began shifting away from the logic of section 242. In recent years, judgments have signalled out that the passion or jealousy can no longer excuse or mitigate violent killing. I would state a few and quote a few case laws, Madam Speaker, for the sake of this august Assembly and for the sake of completeness to know how these things are being treated by our judiciary and what the narratives that we now have to move on, with these new legislations coming in, are.

In the case of State v Takoordyal, Madam Speaker – it is a 2017 Supreme Court judgement case – the Court accepted a manslaughter plea after a man killed his wife over suspected infidelity but significantly, the Court weighed not only emotion but also the calculated and prolonged nature of the act, hinting at the limits of provocation.

And again, in a 2018 case of Seegoolam, Madam Speaker, the killer claimed rage after witnessing his wife with another man but the Court's reasoning focused on the deliberate disposal of the body and the accused conduct after the fact. Then, the year after, there has been a shift in the tone and principle being adopted by the Supreme Court in Mauritius. In the case of Prayagsing Booshan, Madam Speaker – it is a 2019 case, Supreme Court judgement of 74 – the Court stated plainly, I quote –

"Neither anger nor jealousy reduces the blame worthiness of a crime. In a democratic society, violence is not a means of resolving emotional conflict."

This is a shift to what the law itself was stating and this was reaffirmed in the case of Nelia. It is a 2021 Supreme Court judgement case 282, Madam Speaker. I again quote what the Court stated –

"Such violence cannot be further tolerated in our society."

And again, in a 2021 case of Vishnu Bungary and confirmed in the case of Jenisen Ramen, very recently, a 2024 case Supreme Court judgement where the judiciary dismissed emotional provocation as a defence even in the face of remorse or psychological stress. So, the shift is clear and today in Parliament, all of us are unanimous to salute the actions of Government and the hon. Attorney General to bring these two amendments but again, this famous section 7(2) of our Constitution – it is a constitutional contradiction with regard to the values of a democratic society. I am of the opinion that the legality and the morality of this particular section of our Constitution is untenable. And again, I salute, I congratulate the Government and the hon. Attorney General to bring this amendment and this, in fact, protects human dignity, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, the hon. Attorney General referred to France. Yes, France repealed its crime of passions defence in 1975 by abolishing article 324 of the penal code. And that was also followed by Italy in 1981, repealing its article 587 which had allowed reduced sentences for adultery-based killings. Other countries also, Madam Speaker, Portugal has done so with abolishing its article 133 of its penal code. Brazil, Madam Speaker, in 1991. The UK, Madam Speaker, under the Coroners and Justice Act 2009, created a new partial defence of loss of control but explicitly excluded sexual infidelity as qualifying trigger. New Zealand also – these are Commonwealth countries, Madam Speaker – abolished the provocation defence altogether in 2009. And in Australia, Madam Speaker, every State has now repealed or severely restricted the provocation defence with South Australia completing the process in 2020. So, better late than never. It should have been done in 2017-2018 but we are in 2025 with a new Government, mandated by the people of Mauritius and we fully support this Bill.

And, Madam Speaker, when we talk about this famous section 242, we cannot speak of that section without acknowledging that it has overwhelmingly shielded men who kill women. Again, vividly described by the hon. Attorney General; it has allowed rage to masquerade as honour and permitted our Courts against their better instincts to reduce murder

to manslaughter in the name of passion. By repealing section 242, Madam Speaker, in this very august Assembly, we say that a woman's life is not worth less because she is unfaithful. Adultery is not a provocation to violence and no one has a legal right to kill in the name of wounded pride. This reform, these two amendment Bills, Madam Speaker, strengthen our commitment under CEDAW and the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development to eliminate all forms of gender-based violence.

Madam Speaker, this Bill does not just update our law; it upholds the dignity of every person, aligns our statutes with our Constitution, respects international obligations and ends the legal fiction that some killings are excusable because they are emotional. It also reflects what our Courts have already began to do with those latest judgements. And today in Parliament, we shall be making history again because we shall choose justice over tradition and dignity over vengeance.

I fully support this Bill. I thank you all for your kind attention.

Madam Speaker: Thank you. Hon. Minister of Gender, it is your turn!

(5.58 p.m.)

The Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare (Ms A. Navarre-Marie): Madame la présidente, merci de me donner la parole ce soir sur ce débat autour d'une part, les deux amendements qui sont apportés au *Criminal Code*, notamment les sections 242 et 245, et à celui qui est porté à la Constitution de Maurice avec l'abrogation de la section 7(2) liée à la torture, auxquels j'adhère totalement.

Depuis six mois, ce gouvernement a réussi à placer notre pays à l'aube d'une ère nouvelle. Et, je voudrais ici rendre hommage à mon collègue, l'*Attorney General*, d'être venu aussi rapidement avec ces amendements, tant au niveau de la Constitution de Maurice qu'au niveau du code pénal, qui, j'en suis certaine, feront date dans l'histoire de la justice mauricienne. Je vais d'abord aborder l'article 242 du code pénal et ensuite, l'amendement proposé à la Constitution.

Pendant trop longtemps, Madame la présidente, l'article 242 du Code pénal a servi à justifier une injustice profonde légitimant sous le vernis des vieilles traditions des actes de violences qui ne sont rien d'autres que le reflet d'un déséquilibre entre l'honneur masculin et le droit inaliénable des femmes à la sécurité.

Aujourd'hui, les femmes de ce pays vivent un moment historique, car avec l'abrogation de la section 242 du Code pénal, nous tournons résolument la page de toutes formes d'injustice envers les femmes. Dans sa logique historique, la section 242 du Code pénal justifie les féminicides en offrant une excuse légale à un mari tuant sa femme en flagrant délit d'adultère, alors que le contraire ne s'applique pas. Or, la loi doit être un rempart inébranlable contre la violence – une voix forte qui met fin à l'impunité et une réponse à celles qui ont trop longtemps été réduites au silence.

L'abrogation de la section 242 du Code pénal veut dire que tout cas d'homicide, de blessure et de coup infligés par un mari ou un conjoint en cas d'adultère ne sera plus considéré comme excusable. En effet, servir l'adultère comme une justification ou comme une excuse pour violenter ou tuer une personne n'a plus sa place dans la société dans laquelle nous vivons aujourd'hui. Dans de nombreux cas, nous avons tous été témoins du degré de violence ignoble, voire odieux, utilisé contre les femmes. Des fois, Madame la présidente, la violence est utilisée rien que sur des soupçons d'infidélité pour commettre des crimes infâmes. Avec l'abrogation de la section 242, nous mettons fin à un système patriarcal de notre société qui a trop duré.

L'histoire nous rappelle combien ces conceptions ont été ancrées dans certaines sociétés. William Blackstone, juriste britannique, définissait les femmes comme des *chattels* de leurs maris – des possessions, des biens privés, dénués de statut juridique ou d'autonomie. Il y avait *the doctrine of irrevocable consent upon marriage, as stated by Sir Mattew Hale, where in his opinion, a husband does not require consent from his spouse for sexual intercourse as the latter is an essential part of the marriage. Blackstone shared the same opinion when he developed the Unity Theory.*

Cette croyance, Madame la présidente, a justifié des siècles d'injustices et de violences sous prétexte de droit conjugal. Si cette conception archaïque a été renversée en 1980 aux États-Unis par une décision de la Cour suprême dans l'affaire Trammel v. United States, affirmant enfin que les femmes sont des entités juridiques indépendantes, nous devons toutefois regretter que la criminalisation du viol conjugal demeure encore aujourd'hui en suspens dans tant de pays, y compris le nôtre, chez nous.

Il est inadmissible qu'une femme puisse être contrainte, sous prétexte du mariage, que l'union légale puisse être invoquée pour priver une personne de son consentement et de son intégrité. Nous avons le devoir absolu de mettre fin à cette ambiguïté juridique et de

reconnaitre que toute forme de violence, y compris dans le cas du mariage, doit être sanctionnée sans exception.

Marital rape, Madam Speaker, is an issue that has to be dealt with at a later stage. Probably in the Domestic Abuse Bill currently under preparation. Mauritius too will have to mark the death sentence of the marital rape exception. I am happy that the Attorney General announces a Sexual Offences Bill which will be presented in Parliament. This Bill will encompass, I am sure, sexual abuse on women and minors altogether.

Madame la présidente, la démarche de ce gouvernement n'est pas un acte isolé, mais une pierre angulaire d'une politique globale visant à rétablir l'égalité réelle et à offrir à chaque être humain et surtout aux femmes la protection qu'elles méritent. Mais cette réforme, aussi fondamentale soit-elle, ne suffit pas à elle seule à transformer les mentalités qui, trop souvent, continuent de perpétuer la domination masculine dans notre société.

Cette avancée législative s'inscrit dans la logique de nos engagements internationaux et régionaux. La Convention sur l'élimination de toutes les formes de discrimination à l'égard des femmes (CEDEF) nous exhorte depuis longtemps à supprimer ces justifications archaïques qui ne sont rien de moins qu'un affront à l'égalité et aux droits fondamentaux des femmes. Nous sommes aussi signataires du *Maputo Protocol* de 1995 qui, lui aussi, exhorte les États membres à adopter les mesures nécessaires pour prévenir et éradiquer la violence à l'égard des femmes. Nous devons, donc, éliminer toutes les formes de discriminations à l'encontre des femmes.

Grâce à ce gouvernement, nous sommes donc entrés dans la modernité au même titre que des pays tels que l'Australie, le Canada et le Royaume-Uni qui, eux aussi, ont amendé leurs lois pour rendre justice aux femmes. Avec la présentation de ces amendements, désormais, un mari ou un conjoint qui tue sa femme ou sa conjointe va devoir répondre de ses actes devant la justice.

Madame la présidente, nous portons, aujourd'hui, une responsabilité immense : celle de ne pas céder aux demi-mesures, ni de nous satisfaire de simples ajustements. Nous répondons, aujourd'hui, à cet appel avec détermination et avec des amendements qui reflètent notre volonté de progresser vers une justice véritablement équitable. Nous devons aller plus loin, réformer, éduquer et garantir que chaque citoyenne et chaque citoyen de ce pays puisse jouir de la pleine protection de la loi, indépendamment de son genre, de son statut ou de son messeoir. La confiance de la population nous impose une exigence absolue d'actions.

Avec les amendements que nous propose l'*Attorney General* et l'arrivée bientôt du *Domestic Abuse Bill*, fini le temps où certains identifiaient leurs épouses comme leur possession, leur bien, leur propriété plutôt que comme des êtres humains indépendants.

Madame la présidente, dans cette même lignée, l'abrogation de la section 7 (2) de la Constitution était nécessaire parce que Maurice a ratifié les sept traités fondamentaux des droits humains des Nations unies et cinq *optional protocols* liés à ces traités, y compris la Convention contre la torture. En supprimant l'article 7 (2) de notre Constitution, cette action redéfinit clairement notre espace juridique. Elle proclame que toute loi autorisant des peines susceptibles d'impliquer tortures ou traitements inhumains est incompatible avec nos valeurs fondamentales.

Concrètement, ce changement renforce la protection des droits fondamentaux et crée un rempart juridique contre toutes pratiques contraires aux droits humains. Plus jamais un individu ne pourra voir sa dignité bafouée sous prétexte de sécurité ou de répression, même dans les cas les plus graves. Ce changement améliore le contrôle et la responsabilité de nos institutions.

En effet, Madame la présidente, même si la création de la Commission indépendante des plaintes contre la police a été saluée par les experts des Nations unies, il est à constater cependant que les enquêtes diligentées par cette instance montrent que, trop souvent, les plaintes relatives à ces violences ne débouchent pas sur une action judiciaire ferme, laissant les victimes livrées à leur désarroi.

Ce problème est tout aussi grave lorsqu'il s'agit des cas de trafic humain dénoncés par des ONG et touchant principalement des femmes et des enfants vulnérables. Ces situations alarmantes soulignent la nécessité cruciale d'un cadre juridique qui garantisse en toutes circonstances que la dignité humaine ne soit jamais compromise. En imposant une norme constitutionnelle claire, face à la torture et en redéfinissant la section 245 du code pénal, nous dotons les organes de contrôle et les enquêtes indépendantes telles que l'*IPCC* d'un cadre juridique solide pour agir efficacement contre les abus. Cela permettra de restaurer la confiance des citoyens mauriciens dans notre système judiciaire et de positionner Maurice à la pointe des standards internationaux.

Au niveau régional et international, notre engagement fera de Maurice un exemple en matière de respect des droits humains. Le ministère de l'Egalité des genres et du Bien-être

familial travaille chaque jour pour protéger les plus vulnérables et garantir que la justice ne serve jamais de prétexte à des abus.

En adoptant ces réformes, nous faisons le choix déterminant d'une législation qui, même en cas de détention, place le respect des droits de chacun au-dessus de toutes considérations. On ne peut pas tuer la vérité, Madame la présidente. On ne peut pas tuer la justice. On ne peut pas tuer ce pourquoi nous nous battons. En nous engageant pour ces amendements, nous affirmons notre combat pour la justice, la dignité et le respect de chaque citoyenne et citoyen, et l'opportunité historique de corriger des dérives.

Je vous remercie.

Madam Speaker : Merci, Madame la ministre.

Hon. Deputy Prime Minister!

(6.12 p.m.)

The Deputy Prime Minister: *Madam Speaker,* je tiens à commencer un court discours en cette occasion, mais je tiens à commencer ce discours en criant, pas en disant, mais en criant mon indignation à un moment où nous amendons la loi suprême du pays, notre constitution, pour faire des choses admirables. Au moment où le leader de l'opposition fait son discours - ils sont deux assis là-bas dans l'opposition ; deux ! -, l'autre n'est même pas présent. Et ce même leader de l'opposition, aussitôt son discours terminé, nous tourne le dos, il s'en va. Après avoir dit qu'il est en faveur du projet de loi, un projet de loi qui nécessite trois quarts pour amender la constitution. Monsieur, ça ne le concerne pas. Il a fini de se faire voir à la télévision, il s'en va. C'est pourquoi je crie mon indignation. C'est choquant de voir ce qu'il reste comme opposition, se comporter de cette façon en une occasion pareille.

Ceci dit, je ne serai pas long. Puisque l'*Attorney General* est parmi nous, bravo, et bravo pour le discours qu'il a prononcé en notre nom à tous. Je ne vais donc pas me répéter. Mais aujourd'hui, c'est quand même le jour où nous amendons notre constitution pour y mettre l'*absolute prohibition of torture*. C'est un grand jour. C'est un jour qui s'est trop fait attendre, mais c'est un grand jour. C'est aussi le jour où *manslaughter committed by any person on his spouse as well as on his partner at the very moment he finds them in the act of adultery, will no more be an excusable offence*. C'est un grand jour pour ces deux raisons, et je félicite ma collègue la ministre de l'Egalité des genres et du Bien-être familial pour le discours qu'elle vient de prononcer, *Madam Speaker*.

Deux grands moments pour tous ceux qui sont ici et qui sont fiers de participer. Nous savons qu'à l'horizon - l'*Attorney General* l'a annoncé -, se profile un *new Sexual Offences and Hate Crimes Bill*, et nous trouverons le plus tôt possible, nous l'espérons tous, dans ce *new Sexual Offences and Hate Crimes Bill*, un nouveau délit, le *marital rape*, qui, nous devons le reconnaître, n'est pas quelque chose d'accepté par tous, parce que les préjugés sont difficiles à vaincre. Mais que vienne le plus rapidement possible ce jour-là. Quant à moi, je n'ai pas de doute que l'*Attorney General* que nous avons saura aussi apporter une nouvelle définition, dans ce texte de loi à venir, parce que la définition - *marital rape is one thing* - de *rape* qui est dans notre loi est complètement dépassée. Nous le ferons tous ensemble, *under the guidance* de l'*Attorney General*, et nous aurons une nouvelle définition de *rape*. Ces jours-ci, comme nous le savons tous et surtout vous-même, presque tous les jours, il y a des débats dans la presse, dans la presse spécialisée sur la définition actuelle de ce qui devrait être la définition actuelle de *rape*.

Donc, je dis ces quelques mots pour saluer ma collègue la ministre de l'Egalité des genres et du Bien-être familial, et surtout en ce jour tellement important, en notre nom à tous, pour remercier et féliciter l'*Attorney General* pour le service immense qu'il rend à son pays en cette occasion.

Merci, *Madam Speaker*.

Madam Speaker: Merci.

Yes, hon. Prime Minister!

(6.17 p.m.)

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, the two Bills we are presenting today, one for amending the Constitution, and the other one to amend the Criminal Code, aim at removing exceptions to provisions in our legislations which allow torture.

The Criminal Code is also amended in respect of any injustice in our law, recording the so-called excusable homicide committed by a man on his spouse. I will address the House in the first instance on the amendments relating to Chapter II of the Constitution.

Madam Speaker, I will not repeat what the Attorney General, the Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister for Gender have just said, so eloquently. These amendments are in

line with our Government Programme, which provided for amendments to be made to Chapter II of the Constitution to better protect our fundamental rights.

As the Attorney General has pointed out, section 7(1), I want to repeat it because it's important, section 7(1) of our Constitution provides that –

> "(1) No person shall be subjected to torture or to inhuman or degrading punishment or other such treatment."

However, the same section, section 7(2) on 'Protection from inhuman treatment' –

> "(…) authorises the infliction of any description of punishment that was lawful in Mauritius on 11 March 1964."

By authorising such punishment, this section, that is, section 7(2), opens the door to gross violation of human rights by an oppressive regime meant on defying universal principles regarding physical integrity and dignity. With these amendments we are proposing today, we are aligning our national legislation with the universal principles that enhance fundamental rights and fundamental freedom of individuals as laid down in Chapter II of our Constitution.

Therefore, the Constitution (Amendment) Bill proposes to repeal section 7(2) of the Constitution completely. It is important to recall that section 7 appears under the heading 'Protection from inhuman treatment' and forms part, as I said, of Chapter II of our Constitution. It is entitled 'Protection of fundamental rights and freedoms of the individual'.

Chapter II, Madam Speaker, is at the very heart of our democracy. In the Government Programme, we have made clear our intention to strengthen and further extend these fundamental rights. The repeal of section 7(2) is one step in the wider process. While section 7(1) bans torture and other inhuman and degrading treatment, section 7(2) allows for exceptions to this rule. As the law stands, if that punishment was legal in March 1964, then it cannot be considered unconstitutional even if it is inhuman. That section was originally inserted as part of a larger set of transitional arrangements around independence.

In theory, it was meant to provide continuity in the legal system. In practice, it preserved a dangerous mindset. The idea that some forms of torture could be perpetrated by the State as long as it was allowed in a law of the colonial era is erroneous. As the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council noted in a case from the Bahamas, provisions like these often call special saving clauses allowed for colonial laws to be repealed and then reinstated without being subject to constitutional challenge.

Madam Speaker, no sensible government today would call for the return of corporal punishment such as flogging or whipping, but the exception remains on the book, as the Attorney General just pointed out, and its very presence weakens the coherence of our Constitution. Worse, it opens the door for such punishments to be reintroduced by a simple Bill, as the Attorney General pointed out, and thus bypass the constitutional ban on torture. This is why the United Nations Committee against Torture has repeatedly asked us to repeal section 7(2) and to bring our Constitution in line with the absolute and non-derogable nature of the prohibition against torture.

The recommendation is clear: no justification may be involved under any circumstances, be it legal, political, or historical to permit torture or inhuman punishment. We are in total agreement with the stand of the Committee, and we are acting accordingly.

Madam Speaker, our Constitution is sacred; any Constitution, but it is a living instrument not a museum. It must be updated where parts of it no longer serve the purpose, value the values which we hold and may require further safeguards. This is the task which is the Constitutional Review Commission will examine, hopefully shortly. It will work on the promises of the Government, of our Government Programme such as a new generation of rights, of citizens, of nature, electoral reform and the consolidation of national unity. It will require time, expertise, and consultations. But, in the meantime, whatever we can do to repeal an absurdity such as the one we are tackling today, we will do so straightaway.

As per the Criminal Code (Amendment) Bill, it is a direct consequence of the repeal of section 7(2) of the Constitution because it deals with homicides, blows under lawful authority. We are ensuring that it remains clearly within the scope of the revised constitutional provision. In other words, no exceptions, no loopholes, no confusion. Force cannot be used by the State at the expense of human dignity. The new section 245 explicitly allows for the use of force only under very narrow defined conditions: in defence of persons, of property, in the course of lawful arrest, to supress a riot, to prevent the commission of a serious crime, and even when such conditions are met, the use of force can only be to such an extent as can be reasonably justified in these circumstances.

The message is clear. We cannot and we will not tolerate any form of torture, whether from the police or anyone else. This Government will not allow any abuse carried out by certain rogue groups, which we have seen under the previous regime did such things. The citizens of this country must not and will not accept barbarism.

Now, Madam Speaker, the other amendment of the Criminal Code (Amendment) Bill, that is, the repeal of section 242. This provision dates back, again, to our colonial era. It was directly inspired by Article 324 of the old *Code pénal*. It provides that persons who kill their spouse and the spouse's lover upon discovering them in the act of adultery is guilty only of an 'excusable' homicide. In fact, it offers a partial defence to the so-called crime of passion.

Article 324 was repealed in France, as was rightly said, in 1975. 50 years ago, it was already recognised that this provision was based on an outdated and sexist assumption, in particular that a man as if could possess his wife and that a woman who was unfaithful deserved to die. It is high time we recognise it in Mauritius that this cannot be so. The law is uneven in its application and it extends the excuse to the male spouse but not to women, only to the male spouse, in similar situations. More fundamentally, it legitimises violence against women under the cover of emotional reaction.

It is true, Madam Speaker, that section 242 has never been invoked in any known case here, but its presence in our law, as rightly pointed out by the Attorney General, is in itself an affront to the principle of equality. The fact that it remains dormant does not make it harmless. If it is not repealed, it could one day be used - I think the Attorney General gave an example of Bahamas, if I am not mistaken -, where an act of deadly violence can be rekindled, and that is a risk we cannot afford.

The argument is simple. There is no crime of passion; a crime is a crime. Anger, betrayal, emotional distress, these may explain behaviour, but they do not excuse the act of actually killing. A society governed by the rule of law cannot allow emotions to justify the taking of a human life. This principle must be taught to our children and understood by all of us, and it must first be respected by our State and embodied in our laws. Over the past decades, our society has seen an accelerated decay in its moral fabric. The law of the jungle and unabashed greed have prevailed, leading to frustration, despair in the hearts of many.

The consequences are there for all of us to see. We have seen cases of road rage, neighbourhood aggression, even lynching, domestic killing, which are too frequent. The reflex of violence as an emotional response must be stopped. My Government is all too aware of the immensity of the challenge, but we are determined.

The repeal of section 242 also addresses another issue. The continued existence of this section contradicts, in fact, our Constitution's commitment to non-discrimination. Section 3 and section 16 of our Constitution protect the rights and freedoms of all individuals without

distinction. Section 242, by contrast, does this opposite. It allows for the law to excuse the killing of a woman by a man because she is unfaithful to him, but makes no such provision if the roles were reversed and it was the woman who killed the man. I think the hon. Minister for Gender Equality and Family Welfare rightly stressed on this.

This is not only discriminatory but also degrading. That is why in 2017, the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions described section 242 as an unjustifiable lenient approach and rightly pointed out that no one, male or female, owns or possesses his or her spouse or partner. To leave section 242 in or law is to maintain the idea that violence, in some cases, is understandable or acceptable when it is directed against a woman. That fiction has no place in the law of a republic that claims to treat all its citizens equally.

Some may ask, ‘why now’? I think the Leader of Opposition has a misconceived idea. I don’t know what he was talking about, in fact. But some may say, ‘why now? If the provision has never been used, why not leave it alone’? The answer is what the Attorney General has just said. The law is not about precedents; it is about possibilities.

A law that has never been used can still be invoked tomorrow, and if it is against the principle we aspire to uphold, of equality before the law or protection against violence, of non-discrimination, then it should be removed.

Madam Speaker, these two reforms - one constitutional and one legislative - are part of the same broader commitment to modernise our legal framework to remove outdated and harmful provisions and to align our laws with both our international obligations and our democratic values. The past has shaped us, but it does not define our future. Let us ensure that the laws of this country reflect not the outmoded Mose and prejudices of a distant era but the convictions of our own time.

With these words, I commend both Bills to the House.

Madam Speaker: Thank you.

Yes, your winding-up speech, hon. Attorney General.

(6.31 p.m.)

The Attorney General (Mr G. P. C. Glover, S.C.): I like the term, Madam Speaker, ‘winding-up’. I would have thought ‘winding down’, but when you will hear what I have to say, maybe we will say that the expression ‘winding-up’ is the proper expression.

Let me first start by addressing the hon. Minister for Gender, my colleagues, and say in no uncertain terms that marital rape will become an offence in the next law, and let me address what the hon. Deputy Prime Minister said. Yes, we will look at the new definition of 'rape' in order to ensure due protection of our citizens in this country. We shall not shy away from these fundamental changes, Madam Speaker.

It is by promoting a proper structure of our criminal justice system that we will ensure equality before the law, an essential ingredient for the rule of law to prosper.

Now, as an answer to the hon. Leader of the Opposition, not for the first time in this legislature, Madam Speaker, have we been served with a half-baked intervention from the hon. Leader of the Opposition. It is not because one is in the Opposition that it becomes necessary to say something just for the sake of saying so. We were even served with a very expression I used in my address when I said that, on this side of the House, we shall leave no stone unturned and bang, right on time, the same expression was used by the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Then, the hon. Leader of the Opposition gave us a brief of what the United Nations had observed as far back as 2017-2018. What he did not tell us is that faced with the inactive and downright derelict attitude of the previous regime of the previous years, we had to come up with a quick but nonetheless substantial amendment to placate the Committee against Torture in early April when I attended the Geneva Convention, and it worked, Madam Speaker.

Next is the inexplicable aberration from the hon. Leader of the Opposition that we should go about things rather cautiously. He said, "step by step", and guess what? Exactly the same words I had used in my conclusion, and his next point was rather extraordinary because he told us that when amending section 245, we should not create loopholes.

When we amend the law and we put stringent conditions on a law, he says we are creating loopholes. How he comes to that conclusion is beyond me and the final straw was the inability of the hon. Leader of the Opposition to actually grasp the fact that the language of the new section 245 before this House today, as amended, is an exact replica of section 4(2) of our Constitution. The (a), (b), (c) and (d) stem from our Constitution and he did not even realise it, and he based his speech on it.

I am tempted to lapse back in French and ask you, Madam Speaker –

"*Qui dit mieux, Madame la présidente.* "

So, at this stage, Madam Speaker, I move…

Madam Speaker: You again commend the Bills to the House?

Mr Glover: I commend the Bills to the House. Yes.

Madam Speaker: And the motion of course. The motion needs to be seconded again.

Question put and agreed to.

Bills read a second time and committed.

COMMITTEE STAGE

(Madam Speaker in the Chair)

The Constitution (Amendment) Bill (No. X 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 Constitution (Amendment) Bill (No. X of 2025) was read a third time and passed.

Mr Glover: Madam Speaker, I move for a division of votes.

Madam Speaker: Yes. Hon. Members, since some of you are new to the House, I will say a few words, as this Bill requires a qualified majority of votes of not less than three-quarter of all of the hon. Members of the Assembly pursuant to section 47(2) (c) of the Constitution. We will then proceed with the taking of votes by division. The division bell will ring for two minutes and a division shall be taken and recorded by the Acting Clerk by asking each hon. Member separately, in accordance with precedence, beginning with the Member who stands last in that order.

The votes shall be taken by *Ayes* and Noes. An hon. Member may also choose to abstain from voting.

Acting Clerk, please proceed with the division.

(Division Bells were rung)

On question put, the House divided.

AYES

1. Hon. Ms A. Savabaddy
2. Hon. R. Saumtally
3. Hon. K. Rookny
4. Hon. C. Ramkalawon
5. Hon. A. Ramdass
6. Hon. F. Quirin
7. Dr. the hon. S. Prayag
8. Hon. C. Lukeeram
9. Hon. K. Lobine
10. Hon. S. Jugurnauth
11. Hon. R. Jhummun
12. Hon. Ms D. Henriette-Manan
13. Hon. F. François
14. Hon. R. Etwareea
15. Hon. J. Edouard
16. Dr. the hon. Ms R. Daureeawo
17. Hon. Ms M. R. Collet
18. Hon. L. Caserne
19. Hon. N. Beejan
20. Hon. R. Beechook
21. Hon. C. Baboolall
22. Hon. B. Babajee
23. Hon. T. Apollon
24. Hon. P. Venkatasami
25. Hon. E. Juman
26. Hon. V. Baloomoody
27. Hon. Ms S. Anquetil
28. Hon. Ms V. Leu-Govind
29. Hon. K. Parapen
30. Hon. H. Narsinghen
31. Hon. Ms A. Babooram
32. Hon. F. Allymun
33. Hon. S. Pierre
34. Hon. Ms K. Foo Kune-Bacha

35. Hon. F. David
36. Hon. Ms J. Bérenger
37. Hon. D. Damry
38. Hon. M. Gondeea
39. Hon. R. Woochit
40. Hon. L. Pentiah
41. Dr. the hon. A. Ramtohul
42. Dr. the hon. M. Gungapersad
43. Hon. A. Ameer Meea
44. Dr. the hon. K. Sukon
45. Hon. M. Yeung Sik Yuen
46. Hon. Ms A. Navarre-Marie
47. Hon. Osman Mahomed
48. Hon. R. Uteem
49. Hon. D. Nagalingum
50. Hon. P. Assirvaden
51. Hon. A. Subron
52. Hon. R. Duval
53. Hon. A. Bachoo
54. Hon. G. Gunness
55. Dr. the hon. A. Boolell
56. Hon. S. Mohamed
57. Hon. P. Bérenger
58. Hon. Prime Minister

ABSENT

1. Dr. the hon. Ms B. Thannoo
2. Hon. M. Seeburn
3. Dr. the hon. F. Aumeer
4. Hon. A. Duval
5. Hon. G. Lesjongard
6. Hon. D. Ramful
7. Dr. the hon. Ms J. Jeetun
8. Hon. R. Bhagwan

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, the results of the Division are as follows –

Ayes: 58 **Noes:** 0 **Abstention:** 0 **Absent:** 8

Hon. Members, I wish to inform the House that the Constitution (Amendment) Bill (No. X of 2025) has, on final voting, obtained 58 votes, that is, has been supported by a three-quarter majority as required by Section 47 (2) (c) of the Constitution. I declare that the Bill has been read a third time and passed.

(Applause)

COMMITTEE STAGE

(Madam Speaker in the Chair)

THE CRIMINAL CODE (AMENDMENT) BILL

(NO. XI of 2025)

The Criminal Code (Amendment) Bill (No. XI 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 Criminal Code (Amendment) Bill (No. XI of 2025) was read a third time and passed.

ADJOURNMENT

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Thursday 05 June 2025 at 5.00 p.m.

The Deputy Prime Minister seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Madam Speaker: The House stands adjourned!

At 6.51 p.m., the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Thursday 05 June 2025 at 5.00 p.m.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

RODRIGUES-MAURITIUS – AIRFARES SUBSIDY

(No. B/472) Mr F. François (Second Member for Rodrigues) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the subsidised air-fares for the people of Rodrigues travelling to Mauritius, he will state if consideration will be given to maintain same for the forthcoming financial year and, if so, give details thereof.

Reply: The Rodrigues Subsidy on Airfare Scheme was introduced on 15 February 2015 to provide subsidised airfares for individuals travelling from Rodrigues to Mauritius. The objective of this measure was to promote greater mobility between the two islands and to ensure parity in ticket pricing with the discounted fares available to Mauritian residents under the special holiday package.

Without any subsidy on the airfares, a return air ticket from Rodrigues to Mauritius costs approximately Rs8,490. With that scheme, passengers benefit from a fixed subsidy of Rs1,856 during the peak season and Rs2,456 during the off-peak season. This subsidy is jointly financed by the Government and Air Mauritius Ltd, with the Government covering two-thirds and Air Mauritius Ltd covering the remaining one-third.

It is to be highlighted that from February 2015 until March 2025, approximately Rs267 m. has been disbursed as subsidy, benefiting around 185,000 passengers who have taken advantage of the subsidised airfare.

Passengers travelling from Rodrigues to Mauritius are not subject to any conditions, such as advance booking or a minimum number of nights' stay to benefit from the subsidised airfare.

The Budget for the financial year 2025/2026 is under preparation, and the issue of continuing to grant the subsidy will be examined and will be announced thereafter.

N. G. & CO. LTD. & SUBSIDIARIES – CONTRACTS AWARDED – PERIOD 2015-2024

(No. B/473) Mr R. Jhummun (Second Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to N. G & Co. Ltd. and its subsidiaries, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain

information as to the number of contracts awarded thereto by Ministries and/or Parastatal bodies over the period 2015 to 2024, indicating in each case the –

(a) contractual value thereof, and

(b) procurement method used therefor.

(Withdrawn)

MAURITIUS CITIZENSHIP – BENEFICIARIES DETAILS – PERIOD NOV 2019-DEC 2024

(No. B/474) Mr A. Duval (Fourth Member for Port-Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to Mauritius Citizenship, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Passport and Immigration Office, information as to the number thereof granted to foreigners for the periods November 2019 to November 2024 and December 2024 to date, indicating in each case the –

(a) names of the beneficiaries thereof and their respective country of birth, and

(b) section of the Mauritius Citizenship Act under which citizenship was granted.

Reply: By virtue of the Mauritius Citizenship Act, the citizenship of Mauritius may be granted by the Prime Minister under the different sections of the Act to non-citizens. From 01 November 2019 to 10 November 2024, 1,499 foreigners were granted citizenship of Mauritius and from 14 November 2024 to 09 May 2025, 49 foreigners have been granted citizenship of Mauritius.

In regard to part (a), I do not think it is appropriate to give the names of the recipients of citizenship of our country. However, information for part (b) is being compiled and will be placed in the Library of the National Assembly.

I seize this opportunity to inform the House that my Office is currently reviewing the procedures relating to the issue of Mauritius Citizenship to foreigners.

MR N. J. V. B. ARREST – POLICE BRUTALITY – INQUIRY

(No. B/475) Mr A. Duval (Fourth Member for Port-Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in

regard to the arrest of Mr N.J.V.B by the Police on 30 April 2025, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to whether an inquiry has been initiated into allegations of excessive use of force and police brutality thereon and, if so, indicate the actions, if any, taken to date, including disciplinary measures and/or provisional charges brought against any of the officers involved therein.

Reply: At the very outset, I wish to inform the House that my Government will not tolerate any form of police brutality under any circumstances whatsoever.

As regards this incident, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that on Tuesday 29 April 2025, one Mr. G. M. P. V. B., reported a case of larceny at Albion Police Station wherein he stated that on the same day, his grandson, one Mr. N. J. V. B., had stolen his private car from his place of residence at Albion.

On Wednesday 30 April 2025, following reliable information obtained that the stolen car was located around Nicolay Street, Sainte-Croix, a team comprising Police Officers from the Crime Intelligence Unit of the Metropolitan North Division, mounted an operation to track the stolen car and apprehend the individual. Reaching Blanche Street, Roche Bois the Police Officers identified the car and requested the driver to stop but the latter failed to do so. He continued his way in the direction of Abercrombie by driving in a very dangerous manner along the main road overtaking vehicles and without stopping at the red traffic light. At that point Police lost sight of the vehicle.

Whilst continuing its pursuit, the Police found the stolen car emerging from Muslim Cemetery Street, Battery Cassée and again attempted to stop the vehicle. The suspect refused to do so and deliberately drove the vehicle onto the approaching Police Officers and escaped.

Whilst escaping, the driver hit against a concrete wall, rammed into a police car, hit a private car and a motorcycle but still did not stop. It was also reported that by driving in such life endangering manner in those narrow roads around Battery Cassée, a five-year-old boy got injured and was admitted to hospital.

The escape of Mr. N. J. V. B. came to a halt when his way was obstructed by an oncoming tractor along Muslim Cemetery Street. Even then, despite repeated requests to open the door, he refused to cooperate with the Police, locking himself inside the car and again trying to flee by driving forward and backward. It should also be pointed out that several inhabitants of the region wanted to stop the driver because of the way he was acting.

Due to the irresponsible behaviour of the driver which was endangering the lives of the residents along Muslim Cemetery Road and other people as well as the immediate risk he

posed to the Police Officers, the Police acted decisively and had to struggle to immobilize the vehicle and arrest the driver.

Members of the House must have also listened to the statement in the press of the mother of the five-year-old boy who stated –

"……*si la police pas ti arrête li, beaucoup dimoune ti pou blessé. Capav ti pou éna ène grand accident. Capav éna dimoune ti pou mort. Missié la ti pé crase partout vini même. Li ti pé roule extra vite.*''

I am further informed that during the struggle and the several accidents he met with during the pursuit, the suspect sustained injuries. He was taken to Dr Jeetoo Hospital by the Police and was later transferred to Clinic Darné, where he remains under police watch.

The case has already been referred to the CID of the Metropolitan North Division for enquiry. Same is ongoing.

I wish to also inform the House that it is not the first time that Mr N. J. V. B. has been reported to the Police. In fact, from 2019 to date, he has been involved in five larceny cases as well as one case of larceny with internal breaking, one case of larceny with violence and one case of breach of conditions of bail.

With regard to allegations of police brutality, an inquiry has been initiated by the National Human Rights Commission and my Office is closely following the matter.

I would like to state that whilst this Government will do its utmost to uphold human rights, I will never allow any unruly element of society to undermine the authority of the Police or threaten law and order in our country.

RODRIGUES – CORRUPTION CASES – GOVERNMENT PROJECTS – INVESTIGATIONS

(No. B/476) Mr F. François (Second Member for Rodrigues) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the fight against corruption in Rodrigues over the past three years, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Financial Crimes Commission, information as to the number of cases currently under investigations thereat, indicating the number of public officials, service providers and contractors who have been or are facing investigation, particularly in relation to the award of government projects.

(Withdrawn)

ICAC & FCC – CORRUPTION CASES INVESTIGATED – PERIOD 2014-2024

(No. B/ 477) Mr C. Baboolall (First Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to corruption cases investigated formerly by the Independent Commission against Corruption and currently by the Financial Crimes Commission over the period 2014 to 2024, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom information as to the number thereof, indicating the number thereof –

(a) completed and referred to the Director of Public Prosecutions, and

(b) not yet completed and since when.

Reply: The Independent Commission Against Corruption, set up in accordance with the defunct Prevention of Corruption Act 2002, was mandated to provide for the prevention and punishment of corruption and fraud. The Financial Crimes Commission established under the Financial Crimes Commission Act 2023, has, as mandate, to detect, investigate and prosecute financial crimes and any other ancillary offence connected thereto.

Financial crimes comprise several types of offences, including corruption offences.

In regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the FCC that, from 2014 to 2024, investigation in 150 corruption cases has been completed and referred to the Director of Public Prosecutions.

In regard to part (b) of the question, 177 corruption cases are still under investigation.

The number of corruption cases investigated and not yet completed for period 2014 to 2024 is being placed in the library of the National Assembly.

AIR MAURITIUS CO. LTD – SSR AIRPORT – LEASED & UNUTILISED LAND

(No. B/478) Mr C. Lukeeram (Third Member for Mahebourg & Plaine) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to land owned by Air Mauritius Co. Ltd. at the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam International Airport, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom information as to the extent thereof, indicating the portion of unutilised land, if any, allocated/leased to third parties and the procedures followed therefor.

Reply: I am informed by the Chief Executive Officer of Airports of Mauritius Co. Ltd, the Aerodrome Operator for the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam International Airport, that on 03 October 2014, the Ministry of Housing and Lands granted a 60-year industrial lease of a total approximate extent of 422ha2780.37m^2 of land for the purpose of airport development.

In addition, Airports of Mauritius Co. Ltd acquired freehold land of an extent 32.58 hectares for airport development projects in line with the approved Airport Master Plan.

A total extent of 70.58 hectares of land currently located outside the airport boundary is unutilised as follows –

(a) State Land leased: 38 hectares,

(b) Freehold Land purchased: 32.58 hectares.

The unutilised land has not been leased to third parties.

CÔTE D'OR – 27 AUGUST 2024 PROTEST – INQUIRY

(No. B/479) Ms A. Savabaddy (First Member for Port-Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the incident which occurred during a protest at Côte d'Or on 27 August 2024, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to whether an inquiry has been carried out thereinto, indicating if –

(a) the police had recourse to the use of force against the demonstrators, and

(b) private bouncers also intervened thereinto.

(Withdrawn)

DEPUTY PERMANENT SECRETARY – 2023 RECRUITEMENT EXERCISE – SENIORITY CRITERIA

(No. B/480) Mr N. Beejan (Second Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre D'or) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the post of Deputy Permanent Secretary, he will –

(a) for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the number of officers recruited following the advertisement issued therefor in 2023, and

(b) state if consideration will be given to reverting the recruitment process thereof to one based on seniority from the grade of Assistant Permanent Secretary.

Reply: In regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Public Service Commission that following an advertisement issued by the Commission on 26 April 2023, 23 Assistant Permanent Secretaries were appointed as Deputy Permanent Secretary in a temporary capacity for a period of six months in April 2024.

In regard to part (b) of the question, prior to 2021, appointment to the post of Deputy Permanent Secretary was made by promotion on the basis of experience and merit, of officers in the grade of Assistant Permanent Secretary, who reckon at least eight years of service in a substantive capacity in the grade.

However, the Pay Research Bureau has, in its 2021 Report, recommended that the recruitment of Deputy Permanent Secretary be made by selection from among officers in the grade of Assistant Permanent Secretary reckoning only six years instead of eight years of service. The recruitment exercise carried out in 2023 was based on the recommendations of the 2021 PRB Report.

In view of the responsibilities devolving upon the post of Deputy Permanent Secretary and with a view to ensuring that we have officers with the required skills and competencies to operate at that level, the mode of appointment to this post will be taken up with the Pay Research Bureau in the context of the forthcoming PRB Report.

PORT LOUIS – LINE BARRACKS – DRIVING TESTS – JANUARY-MAY 2025

(No. B/481) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to driving tests at the Line Barracks in Port Louis, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number thereof carried out since the beginning of January 2025 to date, indicating the –

(a) maximum number thereof conducted daily;

(b) time scheduled therefor, and

(c) number of Police Officers deployed therefor.

(Withdrawn)

PRE-PRIMARY SCHOOLS – GRANT-IN-AID SCHEME – CARERS & ALLOWANCE

(No. B/508) Dr. Ms B. Thannoo (Second Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resource whether, in regard to pre-primary schools under the Grant-in-Aid Scheme, he will state if the provision of carers is accessible to students with Special Education Needs enrolled in these schools and, if so, the allowance paid thereto.

Reply: With regard to pre-primary schools operating under the Grant-in-Aid (GIA) Scheme, I wish to inform the House that no specific provision has been made for the engagement of carers in these private pre-primary schools.

However, it is important to note that each GIA school is entitled to one Assistant Teacher for every 15 children. These Assistant Teachers provide support to the main teacher in managing the classroom, including attending to children with Special Education Needs (SEN).

As far as the Early Childhood Care and Education Authority (ECCEA) pre-primary units are concerned, I am informed that, to date, 87 children with Special Education Needs have been enrolled across 27 ECCEA schools.

In the absence of a provision for Assistant Teachers in ECCEA units, the services of 27 carers have been enlisted on a day-to-day contract basis to support teachers in addressing the specific needs of these children.

It is worth highlighting that the post of carer does not exist on the establishment of the ECCEA. Moreover, there are currently no trained carers specifically for SEN children available on the labour market.

I further wish to inform the House that the Grant-in-Aid Scheme in pre-primary schools and Special Education Needs (SEN) schools was implemented in January 2024.

Given the increasing demand for the admission of SEN children, particularly those aged 3 to 5 years with autism and the fact that the Special Education Needs Authority (SENA) provides services only for children aged 5 and above, the ECCEA had to adopt an alternative recruitment strategy.

Accordingly, the Authority contacted training institutions such as True Academy, *Organisation Mondiale pour l'Éducation Préscolaire* (OMEP), Bethléem, Hansraj Health

Training Centre Limited (HHTC), the Mauritius Institute of Education (MIE), the University of Technology, Mauritius (UTM) and the Mauritius Institute of Training and Development (MITD), which offer Caregiver courses, to obtain a list of trained or in-training candidates. Suitable candidates from among them were then engaged on a day-to-day basis.

The daily allowance paid to carers is Rs526.13, in addition to travelling expenses.

Although the ECCEA has no formal Scheme of Service for carers, the carers are called upon to *inter-alia* –

1. ensure the safety of the SEN child;

2. change diapers;

3. feed the SEN child, and

4. accompany child in daily classroom activities.

With the continuous increase in the number of SEN children being admitted, especially those with autism, the ECCEA has identified the need for 13 additional carers to meet the growing demand.

I wish to reassure the House that this Government remains firmly committed to promoting inclusive education at all levels, starting from early childhood. We will continue to support children with SEN and ensure that their learning environment is safe, nurturing, and conducive to their development and well-being.

LAND DRAINAGE MASTER PLAN – DOCUMENT PUBLICATION

(No. B/517) Mr A. Duval (Fourth Member for Port-Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure whether, in regard to the Land Drainage Master Plan, he will state where matters stand as to the proposition to making the document public.

Reply: Making the report of the Land Drainage Master Plan public is a long outstanding issue which has been delayed by the previous government.

Since the finalisation of the report in May 2022, the then government agreed to the proposals contained in the Land Drainage Master Plan report in July 2022. An Inter-Ministerial Committee was set up under the chair of the then Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning, Minister of Tourism. The committee was

supposed to look into all the implications in terms of review of legislation, specific conditions to be imposed in relation to construction in 'No Go Zone' or 'No Expansion Zone', amongst others.

Following the recommendation of the Inter-Ministerial Committee, the Land Drainage Authority was requested to come up with a revised report summarising the proposals contained in the Master Plan, which excluded all recommendations relating to 'No Go Zones' and 'No Expansion Zones'.

The previous government took note of an adapted version of the Master Plan on 02 December 2022 wherein it was agreed that yet another Inter-Ministerial Committee be set up. The committee under the chair of the then Vice Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management was tasked to look into issues that were cropping up with the implementation of the recommendations in the plan and come up with measures to address same. This committee did not meet even once.

It was only in May 2024 that the previous government decided that the Inter-Ministerial Committee chaired by the then Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning, Minister of Tourism would meet to determine which part of the plan could be released to the public. It is to be deplored, once again, that the said Inter-Ministerial Committee never met, in spite of the seriousness of the issue.

1.5 million Euro has been spent for the preparation of the Master Plan which caters for measures, projects, recommendations to not only mitigate the effects of flooding and prevent destruction of properties including buildings, vehicles amongst others, but also most important preventing loss of life. Here we can see the laxism and lightness with which critical issues were being taken by the previous government.

This is least to say a care free and '*fiche pas mal*' attitude adopted by the previous Ministers including the then Deputy Prime Minister and the then Vice Prime Minister who were trusted to chair the two Inter-Ministerial Committees.

These two Inter-Ministerial Committees set up to look into the issues were unproductive and had no outcome.

This is yet another blatant example of how the previous government was functioning under the leadership of the previous Prime Minister.

Last year, even before the elections, *L'Alliance du Changement* announced in its electoral manifesto, that the Land Drainage Master Plan report will be made public which was reaffirmed in the Government Programme as at paragraph 60.

As a responsible government, Cabinet took note of the recommendations of the plan on 07 February 2025 following which we have agreed that a Technical Committee comprising of various Ministries be set up to review the Master Plan prior to the document being made public. The Technical Committee which has already started it assignment since 14 March 2025 has been allocated a timeframe of three months to submit its report.

CAMP THOREL – CUT-OFF DRAIN PROJECT – PHASE 2B

(No. B/523) Mr P. Venkatasami (Third Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure whether, in regard to the cut-off drain project phase 2B being implemented by the Drain Infrastructure Constructions Ltd., at Camp Thorel, he will state where matters stand, indicating –

(a) the scope of works and cost thereof;

(b) if access to private land were sought from and granted by the respective land owners prior to the implementation thereof and, if not, the reasons therefor, and

(c) the expected completion date thereof.

Reply: The region of Camp Thorel has been subject to recurrent flooding due to surface run off being generated from higher grounds. Due to the land topography which naturally slopes towards the village, flooding and water accumulation is a high risk.

The Land Drainage Authority in August 2019 declared the region of Camp Thorel as a high-risk flood prone area and a drain project was earmarked for implementation under the National Flood Management Programme.

A phased approach was considered for the implementation of the project –

(i) Phase 1 of the project which involved the construction of around 280 metres of right hand side of cut-off drain near Kalimaye up to the outlet into river Pondar was undertaken by the District Council of Moka from NDU funding. Same was completed in November 2021;

(ii) Phase 2A comprising of the construction of internal drains within the village was implemented by the NDU and completed in March 2023;

(iii) Phase 2B which includes the construction of right hand side of cut-off drain from highest point to connect to the drain constructed by the District Council of Moka is being undertaken by the Drains Infrastructure Construction Ltd, and

(iv) Phase 2C which involves the construction of left hand side of cut-off drain from highest point to River Pondar is being implemented by the NDU.

Regarding part (a) of the question, the scope of works and costs of phase 2B are being placed in the Library of the National Assembly.

Regarding part (b) of the question, out of 31 plots of land concerned for Phase 2B, the right of access on 28 plots had been secured at the start of the construction works. The owners of the remaining three plots of land were not agreeable to the project. Compulsory land acquisition has been initiated in February and June 2024 and procedures are ongoing. Construction works have reached 80% completion as at date.

With regard to part (c) of the question, it is expected that the works for Phase 2B will be completed by December 2025.

E-HEALTH PROJECT – IMPLEMENTATION STATUS

(No. B/524) Mr R. Beechook (Second Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the e-Health Project, he will state the current status thereof.

(Withdrawn)

GENTILLY BRIDGE – RECONSTRUCTION PROJECT

(No. B/525) Mr P. Venkatasami (Third Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure whether, in regard to the project for the reconstruction of the Gentilly bridge, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the District Council of Moka, information as to where matters stand, indicating –

(a) the initial start and expected completion dates thereof;

(b) the scope of works and cost thereof, and

(c) if there are any cost overrun and delay for the completion thereof and, if so, give details thereof.

(Withdrawn)

ALMA, DAGOTIÈRE, L'AVENIR REGIONS – WATER SUPPLY – BOREHOLES DRILLING

(No. B/526) Mr P. Venkatasami (Third Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to water supply in Alma, Dagotiere, L'Avenir and surrounding regions, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Water Authority, information as to whether consideration will be given for the drilling of new boreholes to service these regions and, if so, when and, if not, why not.

(Withdrawn)