



EIGHTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

(UNREVISED)

FIRST SESSION

WEDNESDAY 25 JUNE 2025

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GCSK, FRCP

Prime Minister,

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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

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Hon. Sayed Muhammad Aadil Ameer Meea	Minister of Industry, SMEs and Cooperatives
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Hon. Lutchmanah Pentiah	Minister of Public Service and Administrative Reforms
Hon. Ranjiv Wochit, OSK	Minister of Local Government
Hon. Mahendra Gondeea, OSK	Minister of Arts and Culture

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MAURITIUS

Eighth National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 21 of 2025

Sitting of Wednesday 25 June 2025

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

The National Anthem was played

(Madam Speaker in the Chair)

ORAL ANSWER TO QUESTION

TOURISM SECTOR – TOURISTS ARRIVALS (JAN-MAY 2025) –SOUTH AFRICA MISSION

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr G. Lesjongard) (*by Private Notice*) asked the Minister of Tourism whether, in regard to the tourism sector, he will state the –

- (a) number of tourists who visited Mauritius since January to May 2025, indicating the strategies envisaged to further promote Mauritius as a tourist destination, and
- (b) purposes of his recent mission to South Africa, indicating the –
 - (i) total cost incurred in relation thereto, giving details thereof, and
 - (ii) composition of the accompanying delegation and the respective roles and responsibilities of each member thereof.

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

Mr R. Duval: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

In reply to part (a) of the question, I am informed that 561,636 tourists visited Mauritius from January to May 2025. 39,850 of them were from South Africa.

The House may wish to note that for the same period in 2024, we had 557,133, that is, 4,503 less tourists than this year.

Likewise, Madam Speaker, for South Africa, from January to May last year, we welcomed 36,500 South African tourists, that is, 3,350 less than this year.

Madam Speaker, though the hon. Leader of the Opposition did not ask the figures till mid-June 2025, yet, I feel it is important to inform the House that as at 15 June 2025, we have registered a total amount of 610,064 tourist arrivals, as compared to 599,039 for the corresponding period in 2024. This means, Madam Speaker, that as at date, we have 11,025 more tourists than last year. So, this year is better!

Same applies for tourist earnings, Madam Speaker. From January to April 2025, we have recorded Rs32.195 billion, as compared to Rs31.384 billion for the same period of 2024.

I have no doubt that figures for the month of May and June will also be better as compared to last year.

Madame la présidente, que ce soit en termes d'arrivées touristiques ou de recettes, il est important de noter que nous sommes grandement en avance comparé à l'année dernière, sous l'ancien régime. Les chiffres parlent d'eux-mêmes !

Now, coming to the question on strategies, I am a bit surprised, Madam Speaker, that the hon. Leader of the Opposition is now showing interest in strategies to further promote the Mauritian destination.

During the time that he has been Minister of Tourism, that is, from November 2019 to June 2020, when we were also under the pressure of COVID-19, what strategies did he put in place? *Niet ! Zéro, Madame la présidente !*

He was succeeded, afterwards, by the great, the one and only, hon. Steven Obeegadoo, who was number two in the government. Again, no major strategy for the tourism sector.

In fact, Madam Speaker, hon. Obeegadoo was only a part-time Minister of Tourism! We know that Mr D. P. did most of the work for him. We know that.

(Interruptions)

Donald Payen! Donald Payen!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Obeegadoo was, on his part, very busy with the construction of 8,000 housing units under the NSLD project, which is still not completed, Madam Speaker. We can understand the reason behind. Hon. Obeegadoo has been talking every time about the blueprint for the tourism sector...

An hon. Member: *Li nepli* honorable member! The then!

Mr R. Duval: Yes, he is not honourable anymore! Thank you for reminding me, my friend.

Mr Obeegadoo has been talking about the blueprint for the tourism sector which was worked out by the World Bank. Same was received in May 2024. Madam Speaker, unfortunately, the blueprint remained in his drawers until we discovered it.

Maintenant, laissez-moi vous étaler la liste du triste bilan de l'ancien ministre. Il n'avait pas le temps de venir à s'occuper de son ministère, le ministère du Tourisme. Mais il a néanmoins trouvé le temps, au nom de ce ministère, d'accomplir multiples voyages. Tenez-vous bien, Madame la présidente, la seule chose qui saute aux yeux durant le mandat de l'ancien ministre c'est qu'il a voyagé 22 fois pour le ministère du Tourisme.

(Interruptions)

22 fois !

(Interruptions)

Et ces déplacements ont coûté plus de R 7,700 millions, excluant les coûts associés de la délégation.

Madam Speaker, due to this lack of vision and action from my predecessor, I have today inherited a tourist sector with the same tourist model which has existed over two decades; the same branding which is here for more than ten years. Absolutely no innovation in terms of offering of our destination! And no campaign for the last two years, apart from wild parties, of course, Madam Speaker!

Dr. Boolell: Stag party!

Mr R. Duval: Stag parties!

An hon. Member: Rave parties!

Mr R. Duval: In addition, our tourist attractions are in poor state. Madam Speaker, that is not the end of it. The list is so exhaustive that we prefer not to enter into the details *par respect envers le leader de l'opposition*.

C'est ce gouvernement, Madame la présidente, qui est venu avec des nouvelles stratégies pour redynamiser ce secteur. Comme on a été mandaté par le Budget 2025-2026 –

- (i) Nous allons revenir sur le document préparé par la Banque mondiale en consultation avec nos différents partenaires et venir avec un nouveau *blueprint*.
- (ii) Nous allons aussi venir avec une stratégie de haute saison pour toute l'année afin de s'assurer d'avoir un nombre soutenu de visiteurs.

- (iii) Nous allons aussi cibler d'avantage un tourisme de revenue élevé, comme l'a bien précisé le Premier ministre et ministre des Finances dans le Budget 2025-2026.
- (iv) Nous avons déjà eu aussi des discussions avec des compagnies aériennes sur l'extension de notre connectivité aérienne.
- (v) Le gouvernement va aussi moderniser les infrastructures portuaires, comme annoncé par le Premier ministre et ministre des Finances, ce qui permettra aux paquebots d'accoster Port Louis.
- (vi) R 4.5 millions ont été budgétées pour développer un tourisme durable entre autres.

Madam Speaker, with regard to part (b) of the question, I indeed attended a roadshow that was organised by the MTPA in South African cities, namely Durban, Johannesburg and Cape Town from 14 to 16 April 2025.

Madam Speaker, I wish to highlight that this was my first and only mission since my appointment as Minister of Tourism, and also, it is not the first time that a Minister of Tourism participates in a roadshow. That roadshow, Madam Speaker, aimed at reconnecting with South African travel agents to secure their interest and engagement in Mauritius as a tourist destination.

I wish to point out, Madam Speaker, that tourist arrivals from South Africa, which is just next door, have been declining from 2019 onwards. We want to reverse that trend and to get back to the same level as in 2018, which reached a peak of 128,097, or even do better.

The roadshow, Madam Speaker, was an ideal opportunity to identify the various challenges being faced in that market and which were continually raised by tour operators, to come up with joint actions to boost arrivals, not only on our existing South African markets but also from new provinces, which have not been exploited till now. For example, the regions of Hermanus, Constantia and Langebaan.

One important difficulty that was raised by the tour operators from South Africa is that the previous government did not re-open connectivity with Durban after COVID-19.

This route is very important, Madam Speaker, for the huge number of devotees who travel to Mauritius from Durban for the pilgrimage of Maha Shivratri. They now have to connect through Johannesburg, which makes their travel time consuming, more difficult, and costly. We are now looking into how to address the problem.

As for the total cost of my participation to that very important and significant roadshow, which saw the participation of more than 500 persons, Madam Speaker, it amounted to Rs259,800. This includes the cost of my air tickets.

Madam Speaker, I now let the whole population judge and draw their own conclusions with what I spent as compared to my predecessor.

Regarding the composition of my delegation, as the hon. Leader of the Opposition wants to call it, Madam Speaker, I was accompanied by Mrs Amrita Craig, who is the desk officer of the South African market of the MTPA.

Thank you, very much.

Madam Speaker: Thank you, hon. Minister!

Yes, hon. Leader of the Opposition, your first supplementary!

Mr Lesjongard: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Let me start with the situation prevailing in the world today – the conflict in the Middle East. May I ask the hon. Minister whether his Ministry has made an assessment of its impact on our tourism sector, and if yes, what are the measures that will be put in place to tackle this situation?

Mr R. Duval: I must say, Madam Speaker, that we have already worked on it, and there is a committee that I chaired not far from yesterday, and I must say that we are taking necessary precautions on this issue.

Madam Speaker: You will let us know in due course.

Yes, second!

Mr Lesjongard: Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether, with regard to the conflict in the Middle East, he has already met with the stakeholders of the sector to find ways and means to address the situation; whether there has been a meeting with the stakeholders?

Mr R. Duval: We did have a meeting, I must say, with the Ambassador and I must say that it was a very fruitful meeting. We are actually busy looking into it.

Madam Speaker: Yes, third!

Mr Lesjongard: Will he meet the stakeholders?

In the same vein, Madam Speaker, can he inform the House why his Ministry does not form part of the committee chaired by the Junior Minister responsible for Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade with regard to the situation in the Middle East? I have been told that they already had a meeting together with the various ministries; why doesn't his Ministry form part of that committee?

Mr R. Duval: But, as I have said, my hon. friend always talks to me on the phone and I must say that we are meeting tomorrow for an urgent meeting.

Madam Speaker: Good.

Mr Lesjongard: Doesn't he think that he should be forming part of that committee or his Ministry?

Madam Speaker: You have asked him; this is his reply.

Mr Lesjongard: Because this is an important question, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: He has already replied. It is a question of opinion. Factually, he has replied.

Mr Lesjongard: May I ask the hon. Minister to inform the House whether, he has regular meetings with representatives of Air Mauritius, and what is the strategy in terms of flights?

Mr R. Duval: Sorry, can you repeat, please?

Madam Speaker: In terms of?

Mr Lesjongard: Flights!

Madam Speaker: Flights?

Mr Lesjongard: Yes.

Mr R. Duval: I did not get your question, sorry.

Madam Speaker: Meeting with Air Mauritius.

Mr R. Duval: Of course, we did have a lot of meetings with Air Mauritius and, I must say, they were very fruitful. And, we are working on something that would be coming out maybe tomorrow afternoon; we will be having an answer from both sides.

Madam Speaker: Yes!

Mr Lesjongard: In his reply, the hon. Minister, stated that he is envisaging that the whole year will be a peak year; there will be no lean period, but we know that from the month of June to September, tourists' arrival decreases in the country. Can the hon. Minister inform the House the strategies first and the various markets being targeted to cater for the shortfall in the number of tourists during that period?

Mr R. Duval: I must say that we are busy working on it. I must also say that the Junior Minister, hon. Sydney Pierre, chaired several meetings on this issue. And you will definitely have some news soon.

Madam Speaker: Yes!

Mr Lesjongard: May I ask the hon. Minister whether, he will give due consideration to relaunch our campaigns towards Chinese tourists, and if not, why not?

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Minister.

Mr R. Duval: I must say, it is a very complex market, but the only problem that we got on the Chinese market is connectivity. We are having a big problem of connectivity. As you know, Air Mauritius is no more going to China, and we are actually busy negotiating with some airlines.

Madam Speaker: Okay.

An hon. Member: *Donn li so boulet! Donn li so boulet!*

Mr Lesjongard: Madam Speaker, tourists visiting our island are often encouraged to venture at sea, to encounter wildlife such as dolphins and whales. You will agree, hon. Minister, that these visits at sea disturb the natural habitat of those mammals. May I ask the hon. Minister whether, he has taken stock of the situation and what is he going to do?

(Interruptions)

Mr R. Duval: Of course, I must say, that we cater a lot for it. We have the Deputy Prime Minister, who chairs several meetings with my ministry and other ministries, and we are definitely looking into the matter. We are very much concerned about the matter.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: That was not quite ...

Mr Lesjongard: He is taking stock of everything.

Madam Speaker: Yes. I just want to say that your last question, which is very interesting, does not really come from your main question, because your main issue here seems to be strategies to envisage to further promote Mauritius as a tourist destination.

But it is very interesting!

Mr Lesjongard: But that forms part of this.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Okay? Next question! Next question!

Mr Lesjongard: Now, speaking of pleasure crafts, can the hon. Minister, inform the House whether he has received representations from the Federation of Pleasure Craft Operators (FPCO) concerning the mandatory VAT registration for small pleasure craft operators, as mentioned in the actual budget, that is, 2025-2026, and whether their requests for the removal of same will be given due consideration by government?

Mr R. Duval: I must say that I had a phone call with the operators. I was meant to have a meeting with them yesterday at five o'clock, but, unfortunately due to Parliament, I could not meet them. However, we are scheduled to have a meeting tomorrow or by Saturday.

Madam Speaker: Yes. Don't go too far away from your main question, which is promoting Mauritius ...

Mr Lesjongard: Madam Speaker, this is the PNQ. Madam Speaker, Mauritius has reduced its frequency on several destinations, for example, the UK and India.

Madam Speaker: Ça c'est bien.

Mr Lesjongard: May I ask the hon. Minister whether there are negotiations with other carriers to increase air flight capacity to these countries?

Mr R. Duval: Of course, Madam Speaker! As you know what happened to Air Mauritius by the previous regime; what they did. We are still looking for two aircrafts till now.

Ms Anquetil: They did nothing!

Mr R. Duval: We don't know where the aircrafts are, but we are definitely looking at our connectivity. This is the main issue because there are lots of flights but people are looking for direct flights, especially.

Mr Lesjongard: Madam Speaker, may I ask, the hon. Minister, whether he has also received representations of interference from third party in the affairs of his ministry?

Mr R. Duval: Can you elaborate more on it, please?

Madam Speaker: That was not clear. It is not clear.

Mr Lesjongard: It is clear for him, Madam Speaker.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Prime Minister: *Avoy li ferfout!*

Madam Speaker: That was not very Parliamentary!

The Deputy Prime Minister: ... their fault.

(Interruptions)

Mr A. Duval: He is the new loudspeaker.

Madam Speaker: If you don't have a question, there is a question on this side. Do you mind? Have you finished?

Mr Lesjongard: Okay.

Madam Speaker: Come on!

Mr François: Thank you, Madam Speaker. May I ask the hon. Minister, whether, he is agreeable to collaborate with the Rodrigues Regional Assembly to align the Rodrigues Tourism Strategy with the national strategies while improving the national branding and marketing to position Rodrigues as a green national destination to enhance its socio-economic condition, bearing in mind the coming construction of the new runway at Plaine-Corail Airport, as announced by the hon. Prime Minister during his budget speech?

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Minister!

Mr R. Duval: Yes, of course, I will definitely look into it, but we are waiting for the hon. MP to come back to us. We will be glad to, of course, work together.

Mr Lesjongard: Madam Speaker, there have been many representations from several stakeholders with regard to the promotion of eco-tourism in our country. Can the hon. Minister inform the House where matters are?

Mr R. Duval: I must say that we have had several meetings with lots of organisations and that things are going very well. We are having a meeting on Monday, and from there, I can let the hon. Leader of Opposition know what was said in the meeting. Thank you very much.

Madam Speaker: What was said? You mean the outcome?

Mr R. Duval: Yes, the outcome!

Madam Speaker: Not everything that was said.

Mr Lesjongard: Can I ask the hon. Minister whether, he has regular meetings with the representatives of Air Mauritius, and what is the strategy...

An hon. Member: *Inn dir twa taler la!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Lesjongard: ... which is being discussed...

No. He has not replied!

... with the representatives of Air Mauritius?

(Interruptions)

Mr R. Duval: Well, definitely, when the need arises, I have meeting with them.

(Interruptions)

Yes, definitely, don't worry!

(Interruptions)

I have already answered that!

The Deputy Prime Minister: *Li pa ti pe ekoute!*

Madam Speaker: *C'est bon.* Thank you very much everybody.

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

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

The Deputy Prime Minister rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Madam Speaker: Yes!

STATEMENT BY MINISTER**PRESS PUBLICATION – JUNIOR MINISTERS & ADVISERS – ALLEGED
SALARY INCREASE**

(3.33 p.m.)

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, with your permission, I wish to make a statement relating to the publication in the press of alleged increase in the salaries of Junior Ministers and Advisers.

Let me first dispel a misunderstanding on allowances to be paid to Junior Ministers although this, I must say, was clearly explained to the House yesterday by the hon. Attorney General.

This subject has been widely misinterpreted by the Opposition and other quarters. They are arguing that the allowances to Junior Ministers are being raised while this is clearly not the case.

The National Assembly Allowances Act provides for the allowances to be paid to Ministers and other Members of the National Assembly, including Parliamentary Private Secretary. However, no provision has been made in the Schedule of the Act for the payment of allowances to Junior Ministers.

With a view to correcting this anomaly, mention was made in the Annex of the Budget Speech 2025-2026 that amendment would be brought to the National Assembly Allowances Act to cater for the payment of allowances to Junior Ministers.

As the House is aware, 10 Junior Ministers have been appointed and are in office since 22 November 2024. Administrative arrangement has been made for the payment of

allowances to Junior Ministers at the same quantum payable to former Parliamentary Private Secretaries.

I wish to reassure the House that Junior Ministers are not being paid a single cent more than what Parliamentary Private Secretaries used to draw in the past.

Madam Speaker, in respect of Advisers, I have noted the recent campaign which puts doubt in the mind of the population regarding what has been referred to as “substantial” increase in their salaries. This is clearly part of campaign of disinformation and innuendos.

I would like to point out that under the MSM regime, there were 4 categories of Advisers, namely –

- (i) Special Advisers;
- (ii) Senior Advisers;
- (iii) Advisers on Information Matters, and
- (iv) Advisers on Public Relation Matters.

Government has decided to rationalise the categories of Advisers with the introduction of a category of Senior Advisers (Technical) to cater for specialised fields in, for example, medicine, engineering or otherwise.

Government does not want to leave it to the discretion of whoever comes to power to decide on his own personal volition, his personal wishes, how much of public money should be spent on people who have been recruited by them.

Government is simply being transparent in respect of the different scales of salaries applicable to Advisers.

Madam Speaker, I should also point out that except in few cases, very few cases, where Advisers are serving on Boards, strict instructions have been given not to allow Advisers to be members of Boards of parastatal bodies and state-owned enterprises.

I wish to state, Madam Speaker, that under the former government, they boosted the income of Advisers by allowing them to serve on numerous Boards. Very often, these Advisers were earning revenues from these Boards which was higher than their own salary!

Let me give you a couple of examples to illustrate this without naming any names.

- (i) One Special Adviser who was drawing a salary of Rs163,250 was also appointed as Chairperson of –
 - Mauritius Revenue Authority, where he draws a salary;

- SBM (Bank Holdings) Ltd.;
- Mauritius Telecom;
- Multi-Carrier (Mauritius) Ltd., and
- Metro Express Ltd.

All drawing salaries!

He was also the Director of –

- SBM Africa Holdings Ltd – again, drawing a salary;
- SBM Bank (Kenya) Ltd. (paid in US dollars);
- Mauritius Duty Free Paradise Co. Ltd, and
- Rodrigues Duty Free Paradise Co. Ltd.

(Interruptions)

I am just giving a couple of examples.

- (ii) Another Special Adviser drawing Rs132,000 per month and Rs20,000 of extra duty allowance as Chairperson of –

- Airports of Mauritius Co. Ltd;
- Airport Terminal Operations Ltd., and
- Mauritius Duty Free Paradise Co. Ltd.

He was also a member of numerous boards and committees, including –

- 9 committees of SBM Holdings Ltd. Nine!
- State Insurance Company of Mauritius Ltd. (SICOM) and two of its sub-committees;
- Air Mauritius Ltd;
- Air Mauritius Holdings Ltd.;
- Airmate Ltd., and
- Mauritius Helicopter Ltd.

- (iii) Madam Speaker, another Special Adviser was drawing a salary of Rs119,500. He was also appointed on the following Boards –

- Gambling Regulatory Authority board;
- Mauritius Duty Free Paradise Co. Ltd;
- Rodrigues Duty Free Paradise Co. Ltd;
- Airport of Rodrigues Ltd;

- Pointe Coton Resort Hotel Co. Ltd, and
- Metro Express Ltd.

I could go on and on, Madam Speaker, and refer to others, but it will be far too long.

To conclude, Madam Speaker, let me reiterate what I have stated on several occasions in this House: This Government will not renege on its pledge to ensure that the principles of good governance and accountability underpin all its actions.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Thank you.

PUBLIC BILL

Second Reading

THE APPROPRIATION (2026-2026) BILL

(No. XIV of 2025)

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on the Appropriation (2025-2026) Bill (No. XIV of 2025).

Question again proposed.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Minister of Tourism!

(3.39 p.m.)

The Minister of Tourism (Mr R. Duval): Je vous remercie, Madame la présidente. C'est mon premier discours en tant que ministre sur les débats budgétaires. L'année 2025-2026 n'est pas des plus populaires, certes, mais c'est avec fierté que je viens le défendre. Car, c'est un budget courageux, héroïque même avec des mesures attendues depuis des décennies.

« Nous sommes face à un paysage en ruine. L'État a fait naufrage. » Cette phrase, prononcée par l'honorable Premier ministre et ministre des Finances, le 5 juin dernier, reste gravée dans la mémoire. Elle résume en somme le désastre laissé par le gouvernement MSM. Une image me vient à l'esprit. Celle de Simba, le roi lion, revenant chez lui après des années d'exil, forcé de constater un spectacle de désolation et d'obscurité.

La méchanceté, la petitesse, la gourmandise du MSM, les malhonnêtes avaient décimé le pays. Madame la présidente, ici, l'honorable Dr. Navin Ramgoolam, Premier ministre, a été confronté à un spectacle différent et tout aussi catastrophique. Il a vu un pays en faillite, des caisses totalement vides et des institutions près de la décomposition, Maurice était KO debout !

C'est celui qui voulait offrir à la population une meilleure vie dans les plus brefs délais qui a été confronté aux conséquences des frasques de l'ancien régime. Il est évidemment impossible dans une telle situation d'appliquer toutes les annonces faites durant la campagne électorale. Quoique, le 14^e mois a été payé à 90 % des employés du public et du privé.

Le Premier ministre a aussi pris son courage à deux mains pour annoncer la mesure difficile de l'extension de l'âge d'éligibilité à la pension universelle de vieillesse. Il a préféré porter cette lourde responsabilité au détriment de sa popularité, mais animé par le seul désir de sauver le pays du naufrage. Le pays avant tout, Madame la présidente ! Cet acte de bravoure mérite d'être salué. S'il fallait une comparaison, je ferais le parallèle avec l'agenda 2010 de l'ancien chancelier Gerhard Schröder.

Au début des années 2000, en Allemagne, les finances publiques avaient été plombées par le coût de la réunification, le chômage était élevé, le système de protection sociale était sous pression et la compétitivité du pays était en déclin.

Les réformes, sous l'Agenda 2010 consistaient à réduire les allocations chômage, rendre flexibles le marché du travail et réformer les systèmes de santé et de retraite. Je vois dire que ces mesures ont provoqué des vagues de protestation massives. Mais en tant bon capitaine, le Chancelier Schröder a tenu bon, convaincu que ces réformes étaient indispensables pour assurer la prospérité de son pays. Schröder a payé cher pour sa réforme, mais aujourd'hui, le monde entier loue l'Agenda 2010 pour avoir permis à l'Allemagne de redevenir un géant économique, d'avoir une économie qui a résisté à la crise financière, n'oublions pas de 2008, et d'être le moteur économique de l'Europe.

Il faut reconnaître le courage des leaders qui choisissent de regarder au-delà des sondages et de la satisfaction immédiate. L'honorable Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, le Premier ministre de ce pays, est de cette même trempe. La trempe des héros, Madame la présidente. D'autres orateurs l'ont dit avant moi :

- (i) Aucun gouvernement ne choisit sciemment d'être impopulaire ;
- (ii) Aucun gouvernement ne prend plaisir à venir avec des décisions qui affectent le quotidien de ses citoyens ;
- (iii) Aucun gouvernement n'introduit de nouvelles taxes ou augmente celles qui sont déjà existantes sur un coup de tête ou avec légèreté ;
- (iv) Enfin, aucun gouvernement n'abolit ou ne réduit une allocation de gaieté de cœur

Mais en revanche, Madame la présidente, il y a certaines choses inimaginables que nous avons vu un gouvernement faire ici, dans ce beau pays :

- (i) Nous avons vu les membres d'un gouvernement profiter allègrement de la pandémie Covid-19 pour faire des affaires sur le dos du petit peuple.
- (ii) Nous avons vu un gouvernement et son ministre des Finances littéralement braquer la Banque de Maurice, *Open Day Robbery*, afin de faire main basse sur les réserves et les distribuer généreusement à leurs copains et leurs mignons.
- (iii) Nous avons vu un gouvernement distribuer des allocations comme on lançait du pain à l'époque dans les arènes romaines.

Madame la présidente, n'étant pas, selon votre expression, aussi « beau parleur » que mon ami le ministre de l'Énergie, je dirai tout simplement que nous avons vu un gouvernement faire exactement l'opposé d'une gestion économique saine.

Justement, Madame la présidente, c'est sur cette mauvaise gouvernance qui fait que l'urgence économique a pris le pas sur la popularité politique à Maurice. C'est cette gestion catastrophique qui fait que la dette publique a franchi la barre de 90 % de notre PIB. C'est un ancien gouvernement irresponsable qui a transformé le déficit budgétaire année après année en un véritable gouffre économique. L'ancien ministre des Finances parlait, à la veille des dernières élections, d'un pays qui a connu un boom économique en l'espace de deux ans. Non, vraiment !

Madame la présidente, ce qu'il aurait dû avouer, c'est qu'il y a eu une déflagration. En effet, Monsieur Padayachy, le pays a fait BOOM ! Il a explosé, Madame la présidente, sous le régime MSM. Il a fait BOOM !

D'où la nécessité pour ce gouvernement de toucher à certains acquis. Je comprends que la mesure concernant la pension de vieillesse génère inquiétude et frustration mais, je sais aussi que des efforts et des sacrifices sont demandés à la population et je suis néanmoins convaincu que les Mauriciens ont la maturité nécessaire pour comprendre que ces décisions constituent des investissements pour l'avenir.

Il y a des moments, dans la vie, Madame la présidente, d'un pays, où le calcul et la cote politique sont superflus, futiles, inutiles parfois. Sans ces quelques mesures austères du budget, il n'y avait plus d'avenir.

Laisser la dette échapper à tout contrôle équivalait à hypothéquer le futur de nos enfants et petits-enfants. Oui, Madame la présidente, hypothéquer leur avenir. Quel leader politique

responsable peut laisser un tel scénario se produire ? En tout cas, pas ce Premier ministre ! Pas ce côté-ci de la Chambre ! Pas nous, contrairement à Pravind Jugnauth et ses *cronies*.

Ils ne se sont jamais, Madame la présidente, souciés de l'avenir. Ils ne pensaient qu'à leurs poches et à leurs protégés. Voilà quelques exemples, Madame la présidente, et le Premier ministre l'a souligné mardi, une manne de R 3,5 milliards a été octroyée sur un plateau au groupe Nundun Gopee. C'est autant de coups de poignard dans le dos du petit peuple. Et, ce n'est pas tout ! Le contrat de fourniture de produits pétroliers à *Mercantile Maritime Group* concerne un montant de R30 milliards, R 30 milliards, Madame la présidente. Qui a empoché combien ? Bientôt la réponse.

Et, comparé à ces deux gros dossiers et je n'ai même pas envie de revenir là-dessus tellement qu'ils en ont parlés, les R 45 millions de la MIC à la compagnie Pulse Analytics, les R 79 millions de l'affaire Molnupiravir et les R 78 millions...

Puisqu'on parle des chiffres, laissez-moi évoquer les dépenses et gabegies de la *Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority* (MPTA), d'avant, je précise, au profit du groupe Maradiva qui a changé de nom récemment. À se demander pourquoi !

Madame la présidente, mes collègues députés de ce côté-ci de la Chambre avaient raffolé des détails sur les White Parties, les Coco Girls parties, les Pinocchio, Pool & Dounk Parties ainsi que la Royal Ascott party, le cas Snow Polo, regardez la quantité que je vous ai énumérée et l'affaire des cartes de crédit et, Madame la présidente, je vous annonce, que deux autres dossiers sont allés rejoindre la pile sur la table des enquêteurs de la Financial Crime Commission.

L'un concerne des contrats d'un montant de R 144 millions alloués par la MTPA pour ses campagnes de relance après la Covid-19. Le manque de transparence dans l'attribution de ces contrats avait été déjà sévèrement critiqué par le bureau de l'Audit.

Le second dossier concerne des contrats d'un montant de R 78,9 millions, pour la période 2022 à 2024, pour la construction de stands destinés à des foires internationales en Europe et là, c'est une firme française qui avait obtenu ces contrats. Mais encore une fois, les procédures n'avaient jamais été suivies.

Je me vois forcer de rappeler ces abus, Madame la présidente, mais tout ceci est heureusement chose du passé, Madame la présidente. Je répète encore une fois que je ne vais jamais tolérer aucune magouille au sein du ministère du Tourisme. D'ailleurs, depuis mon arrivée, je ne cesse de me battre avec ceux qui sont un petit groupe qui ont flirté avec le MSM

pendant 10 ans et ne réalisent pas que les *good old days* et le bronzage au soleil sont terminés. Il a fallu nettoyer mais il reste tout de même des murs lézardés à réparer.

Madame la présidente, vous avez dû lire ou voir dans la presse que du 1^{er} janvier au 15 juin 2025, notre pays a accueilli un total de 610 064 visiteurs contre 599 039 dans la même période de l'année dernière. Cela représente 11 025 touristes de plus et je le répète – 11 025 touristes de plus.

Madame la présidente, nous avons eu un mois d'avril historique avec 119 850 visiteurs contre 103 955 pour le mois correspondant de l'année dernière. Nous avons aussi eu un mois de mai record avec 110 671 touristes.

Et, Madame la présidente, la première quinzaine de juin a été magnifique, avec 48 212 visiteurs. Grâce à cette performance, notre destination a pu se rattraper et la baisse accumulée durant ces trois premiers mois de l'année 2025 et même s'accorder une marge non-négligeable. Pour ce qui est des recettes touristiques, nous avons déjà rattrapé notre retard depuis le mois d'avril. Nous sommes à R 32 195 milliards pour les quatre premiers mois. Une croissance de 5% est attendue pour le secteur touristique de cette année et nous souhaitons de tout cœur dépasser la barre des R 100 milliards en termes de recettes cette année.

Mais, je rappelle que ce secteur est dynamique. Il a évolué en fonction de plusieurs facteurs, notamment géopolitiques. Il n'y a donc jamais de certitudes dans le domaine du tourisme. Le Proche-Orient vient encore une fois de s'enflammer. L'honorable leader de l'opposition part. Je parle pour lui là. Le proche orient – c'est ça que je n'ai pas répondu tout à l'heure.

(Interruptions)

Le Proche-Orient vient encore une fois...

(Interruptions)

...vient encore de s'enflammer. Nous devons être réalistes. Nous avons été épargnés. Maurice sera définitivement impacté par le Proche-Orient d'une façon ou d'une autre, aussi bien directement ou indirectement, Madame la présidente. Mais, pour l'instant, les chiffres concernant les arrivées et les recettes sont bons et encourageants pour l'avenir.

Pourtant, Madame la présidente, les critiques ont été nombreuses à mon encontre. J'ai eu droit aux articles de mauvaise foi et aux venins lancés sur les réseaux sociaux de certains frustrés. En d'autres temps, sous d'autres cieux, j'aurais sûrement été pendu haut et court ou

alors, envoyé au bûcher ! Mais les chiffres parlent d'eux-mêmes, Madame la présidente. L'on a accusé le ministre du Tourisme de déclin, de tout et je m'en passe. Mais, en ciblant sans relâche le ministre, certains ne réalisent pas qu'ils sont en train de faire du mal à l'industrie du tourisme.

Mais, Madame la Présidente, je vais décevoir bien des personnes. Ni le déclin des trois premiers mois, ni le rebond des deux mois et demi suivants ne sont attribuables à mon équipe. En fait, plusieurs facteurs pourraient expliquer la baisse dans les arrivées du premier trimestre. D'abord, il y a le fait que durant la deuxième partie de l'année 2024, la MTPA était trop occupée à agir comme vache à lait pour Maradiva et Ton George. Trop *focused*...

(*Interruptions*)

Trop *focused* pour Maradiva et Ton Georges. Pour faire...

(*Interruptions*)

Je me reprends, Madame la présidente. Pour faire correctement la promotion de Maurice.

(*Interruptions*)

Ensuite, il y a le climat, Madame la présidente. Le pays a reçu 531 mm de pluie en janvier 2023, 573 mm en janvier 2024, contre 293 mm en 2022. Il est fort probable que les inondations, couplées de la mauvaise gestion des inondations par l'ancien régime, l'ancien gouvernement, avec des scènes de voitures emportées par les eaux, aient poussé un certain nombre de visiteurs à opter pour une période plus calme. C'est d'ailleurs ce qui explique le nombre record d'avril 2025. Il est vrai que la fête de Pâques a été évoquée comme l'une des raisons. Mais, elle n'est pas la seule. En 2019 et 2023, où la Pâques était aussi célébrée en avril, le nombre d'arrivées avait augmenté, mais la hausse n'était en rien comparable à celle de 2025.

Il y a aussi le fait que le navire AIDAblu va venir à Maurice en octobre au lieu de janvier de cette année. À ces facteurs, j'ajouterai un autre, c'est le péché capital commis par le régime Jugnauth de suspendre les réseaux sociaux du 31 octobre au 2 novembre, soit 48 heures au total. Combien de touristes ont opté pour une destination autre que Maurice en prenant connaissance, dans les médias ou dans les réseaux sociaux, de la dérive totalitaire de l'ancien régime du MSM ?

Madame la présidente, la coïncidence veut que le jeudi 5 juin, le jour du budget, *Statistics Mauritius* publiait le nombre d'arrivées pour le mois de mai, montrant que nous avons rattrapé notre retard au niveau du tourisme. Quelques heures plus tard, le Premier ministre annonçait la nouvelle stratégie qui devrait privilégier un tourisme de qualité et de forte valeur ajoutée, au lieu de dépendre de la quantité des recettes brutes. C'est une idée à laquelle j'adhère totalement, Madame la présidente. Heureusement que le Premier ministre a fait cette annonce lorsque les chiffres sont passés au vert, sinon on m'aurait accusé de trouver des prétextes. Le Budget 2025-2026 nous enjoint à venir avec un plan directeur pour repenser à l'avenir du tourisme à la lumière des défis et des opportunités.

Ce que nous ferons, Madame la présidente. J'ai dit dans mon discours sur le discours-programme qu'il y avait une nécessité impérieuse de développer et de valoriser le tourisme intérieur, le tourisme culturel, le tourisme patrimonial et le Budget 2025-2026 vient confirmer tout cela. Permettez-moi, Madame la présidente, de vous dire que le travail a déjà démarré –

- (i) Mes officiers travaillent actuellement sur un projet de circuit historique et patrimonial dans la région du sud-est. Notre vision est de faire des musées à ciel ouvert ;
- (ii) Nous allons aussi créer des itinéraires qui mènent nos visiteurs au-delà des plages, vers le cœur authentique de notre nation ;
- (iii) Cette année, 5 villages de l'île – soit Souillac, Grande Rivière Sud Est, Bel Ombre, Chamarel, Trou aux Biches – vont soumettre une demande pour obtenir le titre de « Meilleur Village Touristique ». Je rappelle que Grand Baie et Roches Noires l'ont obtenu lors de l'édition 2024. C'est la première fois qu'un tel nombre de villages participe à cette initiative de l'ONU du tourisme.
- (iv) Nous travaillons aussi sur un projet de la réhabilitation de La Citadelle. Ce lieu historique, fréquenté par pas moins d'un millier de personnes chaque jour, est appelé à devenir une sorte de musée à ciel ouvert, mais aussi un lieu où l'artisanat local et tout ce qui est *made in Mauritius* – *Made in Moris* – règneront en maître.
- (v) Nous travaillons aussi sur un projet de villages culinaires. La cuisine mauricienne, évidemment cuisine de notre île, représente une fenêtre ouverte sur une histoire riche et complexe. Et nos grand-mères, nos *dadis*, nos *kalas* sont des véritables cordons bleus.
- (vi) Nous allons aussi investir dans la signalétique culturelle, la restauration de nos sites historiques, la formation de nos guides et l'art de conter nos histoires.

- (vii) Madame la présidente, nous allons faire découvrir la richesse de nos forêts, de nos montagnes, de nos plaines fertiles et de nos villages pittoresques.
- (viii) Nous allons aussi amener le visiteur à s'immerger dans la vie locale, à rencontrer nos agriculteurs et à goûter à l'authenticité mauricienne.
- (ix) C'est un tourisme durable, qui encourage la préservation de nos écosystèmes fragiles et qui offre de nouvelles perspectives économiques à des régions parfois oubliées du développement touristique.
- (x) En fait, Madame la présidente, nous allons mettre de l'avant une autre facette de l'âme mauricienne.

Ce plan directeur sera préparé en collaboration avec des partenaires, mais aussi, avec la Banque mondiale qui a effectué un travail dans ce sens déjà. Mais son rapport n'avait jamais été publié, comme je l'ai dit un peu plus tôt pendant la *PNQ*, par mon prédécesseur pour des raisons connues de lui seul.

Madame la présidente, un plan de restructuration est en cours à la *Tourism Authority*. Et, je dois dire, depuis l'arrivée du directeur, il a fait un travail extraordinaire en l'espace d'un mois et je vois que les résultats arrivent.

Le budget 2025-2026 nous enjoint d'adresser l'impact du tourisme sur l'environnement et de relever les défis de durabilité de l'industrie afin d'assurer une croissance touristique respectueuse de l'environnement.

C'est dans cette optique, Madame la présidente, que la *Tourism Authority* va venir avec de nouveaux règlements concernant deux activités appréciées par les touristes. Je ne voulais pas le dire, mais c'était déjà dans mon discours. Donc, la nage avec les dauphins et l'observation des baleines.

C'est un dossier suivi de près par le *Deputy Prime Minister*, l'honorable Paul Bérenger, qui a présidé plusieurs réunions à ce sujet. D'ailleurs, je tiens à le remercier de nous avoir fait profiter de sa riche expérience. Je lui dis merci encore une fois.

Le pays, de l'autre côté, est aussi en bonne voie pour décrocher la certification de *Green Destination* d'ici 2030, ce qui, évidemment, va renforcer notre image en tant que pays

écologique et destination éco-consciente. De plus, la *Tourism Authority* va intensifier les programmes de formations afin d'inciter les opérateurs touristiques à adopter les meilleures pratiques durables.

Madame la présidente, je ne peux m'empêcher d'évoquer trois mesures du budget qui me réjouissent au plus haut point. J'avais évoqué ces deux sujets lors de mon intervention sur le discours programme.

Je suis heureux que le Premier ministre et ministre des Finances ait alloué R 6 millions dans le budget pour l'implémentation d'un *Automatic Identification System* (AIS) sur tous nos bateaux de plaisance. J'insiste, Madame la présidente, que l'urgence de renforcer notre contrôle sur les mouvements des bateaux de plaisance est plus pressante que jamais pour combattre le trafic de drogue.

L'autre mesure concerne l'introduction de portiques électroniques (*e-gates*). Le système de reconnaissance de l'*IRIS* (*Iris Recognition System*) va mettre un terme aux longues attentes à l'aéroport et aux procédures administratives lourdes à l'immigration !

Enfin, la troisième concerne le *revamping*, qu'on attend avec impatience, de la *Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority* (MTPA). Nous y travaillons actuellement déjà pour améliorer l'image de marque de l'île Maurice.

Je suis aussi heureux que le budget évoque le problème de connectivité aérienne. C'est un élément essentiel pour le secteur. Nous avons déjà eu plusieurs sessions de travail avec le ministère des Affaires étrangères, l'honorable Ritish Ramful et le *Junior Minister* aussi, l'honorable Rajen Narsinghen. Évidemment, nous sommes en contact permanent avec le PMO.

J'ai entendu un honorable membre évoquer la mesure obligeant tout opérateur commercial d'un bateau de plaisance à s'enregistrer pour la TVA. Je pense qu'il faudra revoir, repasser réellement et qu'il manque d'arguments, d'où le fait qu'il n'a fait que passer dessus.

En revanche, je parlerais du *Tourist Fee* de 3 euros par personne par nuit, excluant les enfants de 12 ans, dans l'objectif suprême de contribuer au développement du tourisme

durable et au soutien des infrastructures. Certains diront que ces frais agiront comme obstacle à l'arrivée des touristes.

À cela, je répliquerai, Madame la présidente, que cette mesure existe dans plusieurs pays déjà et que le montant le plus élevé, par exemple, est à Bali où la taxe est de 10 dollars. Alors qu'aux Seychelles, elle va jusqu'à 8 dollars. Même les Maldives ont une taxe pour les touristes.

Comme l'a si bien souligné le ministre délégué, Sydney Pierre, Maurice est l'un des derniers pays à introduire cette taxe.

C'est une taxe qui va garantir que les bénéfices de ce secteur contribuent au développement à long terme et aux objectifs de durabilité du pays, c'est-à-dire la préservation de l'environnement et le maintien des infrastructures essentielles.

Madame la présidente, je soulignerai aussi que cette mesure va nous forcer à formaliser le secteur informel. C'est un dossier urgent, d'autant plus que le plan directeur doit permettre la création d'opportunités pour le plus grand nombre possible de nos citoyens.

Madame la présidente, le budget 2025-2026 nous enjoint aussi de nous pencher sur le problème du manque aigu de main d'œuvre dans le secteur. Comme l'avait si bien dit Sir Gaëtan Duval à l'époque, il nous faut tout miser sur la formation, car le tourisme, disait-il, requiert des compétences qui visent l'authenticité et la versatilité.

Nous n'avons pas d'autre choix, Madame la présidente, que d'attirer plus de jeunes vers le secteur. Et pour cela, il faut d'abord des cours de qualité ainsi que l'introduction des mesures incitatives au niveau des salaires. Il nous faut aussi encourager les institutions existantes, comme l'École hôtelière Sir Gaëtan Duval, à participer à leur formation.

Donc, il est primordial, Madame la présidente, de récupérer ces jeunes qui ne sont pas très portés sur l'académique et de leur offrir des opportunités de formation dans le secteur de l'hôtellerie et de l'hospitalité.

Madame la présidente, ce sont le sourire et l'accueil légendaire du Mauricien qui sont à la base du succès de notre tourisme. Nous voulons que le secteur soit synonyme d'espoir pour les familles mauriciennes, comme ce fut le cas dans le passé.

Sur ce plan, nous avons presque finalisé un plan concernant le fonctionnement de l'École hôtelière Sir Gaëtan Duval. Nous allons aussi établir des partenariats, outre celui avec l'École hôtelière de Lausanne, avec qui nous sommes déjà en contact, et avec d'autres établissements internationaux de renom.

Madame la présidente, mon ministère a déjà eu des consultations sur ce sujet avec le secteur privé. Vu le contexte dans lequel nous nous trouvons, nous allons devoir gérer la dotation de R 900 millions judicieusement.

Nous sommes convaincus qu'à cette même période, l'année prochaine, nous parlerons des progrès accomplis avec ces mesures visant à redresser notre économie.

Pour conclure, Madame la présidente, je souhaiterais évoquer un mot à ceux qui ont exprimé leur mécontentement sur les radios ou les réseaux sociaux. Ce mot est « liberté », Madame la présidente !

Ils doivent se rappeler qu'ils ont de nouveau la liberté de s'exprimer eux-mêmes et leurs proches et leurs proches ne vont jamais être inquiétés encore par la *Special Striking Team* (SST). Certains semblent l'avoir oublié que pour des critiques moins acerbes, ils ont été victimes...

An hon. Member: Planting !

Mr R. Duval : ... d'arrestation arbitraire ou de *planting*, moi inclus.

Certains semblent avoir oublié mais pas plus tard que samedi dernier, il y a eu deux manifestations contre la réforme de la pension. Ceux qui étaient dans la rue devraient se demander s'ils auraient eu la même liberté sous le règne Jugnauth ? D'ailleurs, l'ancien Premier ministre, semble avoir tout d'un coup redécouvert les vertus de la manifestation, subitement l'ancien Premier ministre. Il ne lui manquait, Madame la présidente, que de reprendre le fameux slogan BLD.

Madame la présidente, quand le MSM suspend les réseaux sociaux et les critiques, sous le gouvernement Ramgoolam, la rue peut se mobiliser et gronder sans risque de représailles. Ce gouvernement a même licencié un directeur qui a refusé d'accorder l'autorisation du Champ de Mars pour une manifestation organisée par ceux qui s'opposent à sa propre réforme.

Avez-vous déjà vu un autre chef du gouvernement, Madame la présidente, autre que le Premier ministre, Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, faire preuve d'autant de sagesse et de fair-play ? Il est cependant malheureux de noter que les mêmes manifestants, victimes de la dérive autocratique de l'ancien régime, flirtent avec leurs anciens bourreaux dans la rue, côte à côte, Madame la présidente.

Aujourd'hui, nous sommes le 25 juin, Madame la présidente, ces mêmes personnes viendront un jour remercier le Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam.

La population a aussi tendance à oublier un peu vite qu'il y a eu le drame du Wakashio, les abus durant la Covid-19, les décès des patients dialysés et les morts suspectes de Kistnen et de Kanakiah et j'en passe, Madame la présidente.

Et moi, je dirais à la population – ayez confiance en l'honorable Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, Premier ministre, qui avec le soutien du vice-Premier ministre, l'honorable Paul Béranger, saura mener le pays à bon port. Et je dis, Madame la présidente, que l'honorable Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, Premier ministre, ne s'est pas soucié de sa gloire personnelle. Les mesures difficiles qu'il a prises, en tant que ministre des Finances, le prouvent amplement.

C'est pour ça que je dis et je terminerai en rappelant que le monde déteste le changement mais que c'est pourtant la première chose qui lui a permis de progresser. Et, tout changement difficile au début et compliqué au milieu mais magnifique à la fin. Heureusement, que l'histoire a bonne mémoire.

Merci, Madame la présidente.

Madam Speaker: Merci, M. le ministre. Vous avez fait coup double aujourd'hui.

M. le ministre de la Santé !

(4.17 p.m.)

The Minister of Health and Wellness (Mr A. Bachoo): Madam Speaker, since my young days, I was taught that there are always two courses of action in life. There are two ways open to man: one is the good way, the right way and the other is the pleasant way. Both have different objectives. Both ways approach a man. But the wise man chooses the good path, the righteous path and rejects the pleasant one. Both paths are wide open to men. Both comes to us; both are at our disposal. Nectar and poison, both are kept in two cups before us,

drink whichever you want. The glamour of poison kept in a beautiful cup is more attractive than the nectar. All that glitters is not gold, goes the saying. But the foolish, the opportunist and those who have mean and hungry looks, they accept the pleasant way, they cannot withstand the temptation.

This is exactly what the MSM regime have done in their ignorance and lust for power. They accepted the pleasant way, the easy-going life and in so doing, they have dragged our country towards the slippery slope of financial and economic destruction and ruin. They have mortgaged the future of our children. The right path is sharp and narrow as the edge of a razor but the present Government, under the leadership of the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister, has taken the rightful path. It may seem bitter but you know the future will be bright. Tomorrow's harvest depends upon today's ploughing and sowing. But if for fear of bad weather, we do not plough and sow today, we will have no harvest tomorrow. This is exactly what they have done. They were static, they were stagnant and they were swimming *dans la marre des corruptions et du népotisme*. There is a saying –

“He slept beneath the moon, he basked beneath the sun; he lived a life of going to do and died with nothing done.”

This is what they have done. The case of the previous government, only talking and talking and no action and this is what has happened to our country.

They have been plucking the fruits without watering the plant. And, you know what happens if you only pluck the fruits, you don't water the plant. They were milking the cow, they were not feeding the cow and the end result has been disastrous, today, for the entire community. They have dried up everything. They have finished everything and they have the guts and courage to come in front of the public and they are trying to tarnish the image of the Government. Truth is bitter, truth is naked. And, public will come to know tomorrow what was the truth. They have completely destroyed the economy of this country. Those crooks were steeped in ignorance and arrogance.

They do not know the history of this country. Our ancestors had done a lot for the country. Today, we are proud of their achievements. They disapproved the great prediction of great economic laureate, James Meade, who predicted that the future of Mauritius would be doomed, we will have a gloomy future. There is no denying the fact that the father of the nation Sir Seewoosagur had the vision and the foresight to bring Mauritius on the forefront of

the world. We say bravo to him! We bow before the work that this great man had done to prove even economists of those days wrong.

Even the Noble Prize Winner, V. S. Naipaul described Mauritius as an overcrowded barracoon in 1971. He was also proved wrong. The credit goes to our ancestors because they got their education from the school of suffering which taught them the formula ‘strive, struggle, sweat and succeed’ and we have succeeded in making a modern Mauritius today. Free education and welfare state led to unprecedented progress. We became the foster child of development. We were known as a star and key of the Indian Ocean. The spirit of belonging and patriotism was entrenched in our culture of unity in diversity – *anekta mein ekta*, that is, unity in diversity, that is the characteristic of our nation.

Unfortunately, all that we had achieved crumbled down like castle of cards in the last ten years. The sanctity of our key institutions was desecrated, defiled and defamed. From the hallmark of democracy, we were reduced to the status of autocracy and dictatorship. They even dared to desecrate and sullied the sacred lake of Ganga Talao where the Prime Minister of this country had poured the gangajal into it, where Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam toiled and moiled to keep that place a sacred place, a former minister was engaged in stag party with wine, wealth, women at a time where the country was reeling under the distress of confinement, following the COVID-19 pandemic and these people have the guts to come in front of the public and they are criticising the work that is being done by this government. It is a shame for them.

Hon. Members: Shame!

Mr Bhagwan: He was not alone!

Mr Bachoo: The reign of terror and political vendetta crippled the health of this nation. It created economic and social havoc. Anyone who dared to raise his head, were persecuted and even detained in jail.

Hundreds of innocent citizens were under provisional arrest. I was under provisional arrest; our Prime Minister was under provisional arrest. That was the darkest period in Mauritian history. In the history of Mauritius, the greatest number of political charges as political opponents were during the reign of *Pinokio* and Lady Macbeth! Everybody knows.

An hon. Member: Shame! Shame!

Mr Bachoo: The history of Mauritius had never known so many provisional arrests. Every day, starting from morning till late night, they were catching people, putting them behind the bars just because you had the guts, the courage to raise the voice against those people. They had stooped so low that even Holy Virgin Mary was not spared. A former Commissioner of Police made improper remarks and attacked a particular community. Immorality, corruption and nepotism, large scales frauds reached its peak. I am not saying so; the then Prime Minister, Pravind Jugnauth made an honest admission when he said, I am quoting him –

“Mafia has infiltrated all key institutions of this country.”

He said so.

If this is not an abatement of failure, of state capture and Kitchen Politics, what do you call it?

An hon. Member: *Li mem sef mafia la!*

Mr Bachoo: The destiny of our lovely, great little country, as Mrs Gandhi used to say ‘the great little country’, was under the whims and caprices of a Lady Macbeth who was controlling all levels of power. Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Power blinded them to such an extent that they did not hesitate to drag a former Prime Minister from his house, by his collar, and brought him before Central CID to *Casernes centrales* on frivolous charges. And, all these charges were dismissed by the Court.

I remember; I have to speak it out. When the Prime Minister of India visited Mauritius in 2015, there was a delegation comprising of the President of the Party, Dr. Arvin Boolell, hon. Shakeel and myself, we met him and I do not hesitate to say, I asked him a question, that –

“When you became the Prime Minister, what was the first action you did?”

He smiled.

I replied that –

“You went to the former Prime Minister, you bowed and touched his feet but that has not been the case in our country. Our Prime Minister took handcuff and moved towards the house of our former Prime Minister. That makes the whole difference.”

He did not say anything; he stayed put. I still remember but he realised what I told him.

So, this makes the whole difference. Here, we are treated as enemies; there they treat their adversaries as adversaries, not as enemies.

Mauritius was branded as narco-state under drug mafia who reigned in all the impunity. Government *dan nou lamin* was a phrase coined in the time of MSM.

Can you forget how Franklin, the notorious drug peddler, was benefiting from occult protectors from higher quarters? Can you forget that?

Have you forgotten that *tractopelle* full of drugs, worth millions of rupees passed under the nose of the then Prime Minister and the Commissioner of Police during an official function at the harbour? Have you forgotten all these?

The MSM government precipitated, rushed to blame COVID-19 pandemic to justify the economic order of the country and taking this as a pretext; they printed Rs180 billion. This is the worst thing that somebody could have done; that is, the country was reeling under grip of problems, of disease. At that particular moment, they took the opportunity just to start printing money.

In 2019, they took Rs19 billion from the Reserve Bank of Mauritius to finance electoral promises of raising the Basic Retirement Pension. COVID-19 came as a manna from heaven for the cronies of MSM, *loot mar* as much as you can *looto*, you can take – try to take as much as you can.

A series of emergency procurement contracts were forked out to *copains copines* of ministers, even the Bank of Mauritius, the State Trading Corporation, became piggy bank for those welding power, of those close to corridors of power. The abuse of power and misuse of public funds became the mantra of the day.

Madam Speaker, dozens of murders and kidnappings, can we forget that? Corruption was there; fraud was there. What about ‘murders? Dozens of murders and kidnappings took place during that time. The former government had blood in their hands. Shakespeare through Lady Macbeth would have said –

“All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand.”

That was the situation in the country. Our memory is not so short that we can forget the cold-blooded murder of Kistnen, of Kanakiah, strange and terrific news, that procurement officer threw herself from a 10th-floor building, one committed suicide by hanging under the lavabo, another by hanging with door of remained silent, nobody could open their mouths.

Under the pretext of building up enterprises and tourism industry, billions were signed off by the MIC. Maradiva benefited more than a billion rupees of tax payers' money and today, they will come and tell you that our government is not doing the right thing. Notorious political agents benefitted billions of rupees for setting up even private clinics. They did not even respect our diseased, our old persons, those people who were dying, those people who were not well. At one point in time, private clinics were mushrooming in the country. It was so tempting that even one ex-Vice Prime Minister and Minister of Health went running after license to start a clinic because that was the best way to make money, best way to print money.

Can people stoop so low as to play with the health of the nation? The message is clear; they downgraded the public hospital in this country so as to promote their business; so that their business flourish. At one given point in time, all the private clinics were full and the public hospitals were empty. This is what they have done to loot our people. Over Rs10 billion was loaned to big comrades. Even land granted for cultural centres were grabbed forcibly to give them back to the blue-eyed boy.

The case of Royal Green that benefitted over Rs3 billion is another flagrant example of loot *mar*. That was not enough; they cast their evil eyes on that state land at Anse La Raie, where devotees meet for spiritual festivals. Had it not been for the support of the movement led by our friends of the North, even that would have been lost. It is a shame; naked day robbery. And, these people dare to come and speak about philosophy to us. They will go on the streets and they will try to open slogans against our government.

BAI was dismantled; everybody knows. Tax payers had to pay for it, Rs25 billion. I remember that time the Minister, Roshi Bhadain, openly declared that not a single rupee of taxpayers would be utilised but Rs25 billion – they grabbed in their thirst for vengeance. What about Betamax? They had to pay Rs6 billion. Patel and Engineering Ltd, over Rs2 billion. It appears that we have forgotten the Safe City and Heritage City where over billions of rupees were stipened off. In the system of trial and error, this is how they have looted our country. They bled our country white as if our country caught jaundice. Mauritius came on its knees; it was suffocating and taking its last breath. That reminds me of a great Indian writer –

“Hai re manushya ki Manorath..”

“Oh the desire of man, how baseless can be your standing!”

Madam Speaker, what to speak of the common men? They did not even have respect for the poor, the helpless, the sick and the diseased elders. Have you forgotten the case of our elders? Those dialysis patients, they were treated worse than animals. They were confined in segregated place, left to die without even the basic necessities of life. Among them we had those who had no eyesight, those who were really sick – five patients were visually impaired. The total number of deaths from Souillac Dialysis Centre was 12. It is such an insult for our people, our elders.

And we know how to treat our elders in our houses. This is heart-breaking. Unacceptable! They had undergone unimaginable suffering in isolation and neglect. They were parents and loved one whose dignity and right to human care should have been protected.

Madam Speaker, literary speaking, they were left to die. Luckily, our government under the leadership of the Prime Minister, has opened up investigations on that and those who are guilty should pay, at any cost! The ex-Prime Minister, qualified the report on the State of the Economy as a *torson*.

Maybe in his days, he used to call public officers to produce such type of *torson*! Suffice it to tell him that the actual report has been prepared by public officers who are now free to breathe. They can breathe; they can discuss; they can talk; they can move. They can do whatever they want within the limit of the law.

Why did they overstate the budget income by Rs26 billion and understate the expenditure by 15.5? Why did they do that? They must know the reason. We do not need to be an economist to detect that that government was cooking the books and cooking the population at the same time! To make matters worse, they overstated GDP by Rs73.8 billion. They were living in fools' paradise and wanted the population to believe that all is well. During the electoral campaign, MSM was speaking of economic boom.

It is them who prepared the country to be downgraded! It is them who put the country in the trajectory of a narco-state. It is them who isolated our country internationally. I remember when hon. Dr. Navin Ramgoolam was the Prime Minister, what was the status of our country. You go to Africa or to any part of the world, everybody speaks about Mauritius. But these buffoons have isolated the country. They dilapidated all the reserves and funds of our parastatal bodies.

I have been a Minister for almost 20 years. There was a time in this country – I know – where each and every parastatal body used to have, I will not say not billions, but millions of rupees in their coffers. Starting with the State Trading Corporation – I was a Minister for five years there. Take any department, CEB or any other. But now, they have looted everything. All reserves have been looted from the parastatal bodies. They took Rs180 billion from the Bank of Mauritius. They made MIC a *caverne* of Alibaba for MSM mafia to pilferage at the expense of hard-working taxpayers.

Who sold the two aircrafts at throwaway prices? Everybody knows! But nobody speaks about it! Who printed notes that led to disastrous consequences? Who depreciated our rupee? Who destroyed our purchasing power? They are responsible for the skyrocketing inflation. They increased the public debt from Rs238 billion to over Rs600 billion. This amount is accounted for, but there is more than that. In my Ministry, we owe Rs2.2 billion! If they were so good, if they were so capable, they would not have left so many debts everywhere.

I will talk on my Ministry. I have not talked on ‘him’ yet!

(Interruptions)

Why did they consciously crash the economy of this nation?

There is a very interesting anecdote in one our epics. When Lord Krishna asked the foolish Duryodhana, the evil-minded man: ‘don’t you think that what you are doing is wrong? Why are you doing that?’

‘My Lord, I know what is wrong and what is right, but I simply do not want to do right.’

So, that was the situation there!

As Shakespeare would have said –

“I am in blood stepped in so far that, should I wade no more, returning were as tedious as go o'er.”

I am already in blood. What is the point of returning back? Let me go ahead!

This is what they did. They looted and looted the country day and night.

History will recall, Madam Speaker, the herculean task of the hon. Prime Minister and the hon. Deputy Prime Minister who, without hesitation, presented a budget to save our children and to save our generation. They had the courage and the conviction. They have

superb values, and they have self-respect. They did not cheat on anybody. They did not deceive anybody. They speak nothing, but the truth. They may look firm at times when they are talking about the budget, but they are friendly. They appear tough, but they are tender towards the population. They are courageous and they are compassionate.

They believe in innovation. They do not believe in stagnation. This budget is not about goodies. This budget is not about buying people for vicious or malicious motives. This budget is a lifesaving medicine for all Mauritians and for our children and our future. We are passing through turbulent times. And turbulent times give us incredible opportunities to come up.

I always used to quote one of my teachers –

“In all adversities, there is, in its depth, a treasure of spiritual blessing secretly hidden.”

I believe in that.

This Government is giving you a stable currency; is controlling inflation; and is creating confidence in the country, in public administration, in the Mauritian rupee and the Mauritian economy. You know, many people hide in themselves when the going gets tough. They live in their comfort zone. The wise are those who eat their fear before their fear can eat them. I say thank you, hon. Prime Minister. You have done it for us!

Let us inform the House, and through the House, to the nation at large, how the former government treated the Ministry of Health and the public health system. The public health system was on the verge of bankruptcy. There was a total collapse everywhere. There was lawlessness everywhere. When we took over, there was hardly, Madam Speaker, any penny left to be spent on essential services, such as procurement of medicines, maintenance and repair, among others. The House is aware of the State of the Economy Report, but let me inform you about the state of the health system in this country.

What I have observed, neither my pen nor my tongue can describe it! I have been a Minister for many years. I have known victories and defeats. I have known ups and downs, pleasure and pain. But I have never seen a Ministry financially naked, bankrupt, and down to its knees! Unbelievable! Wherever you look, there is nothing, but unpaid bills, bills and bills. Coffers were not only empty, but there was an outstanding debt to the tune of Rs2.2 billion which they had left.

The MSM is claiming from housetop that they have left a flourishing economy. I heard that buffoon, former Minister *savat*, that the economy was booming. Is this the meaning of booming? Keeping a debt of Rs2.2 billion! I question, I ask then: why were the workers of all health grades – drivers, health care assistants, attendants, medical, paramedical staff, and doctors, not paid their duly earned overtime for so many months?

Why were suppliers of car batteries, maintenance companies, petrol station, laundry services not paid for their services? They have not been paid a single cent. Is it not a fact? Is it not true that the supplier of fuel had threatened to stop the supply of fuel, except for ambulances? The country had gone through such a situation. Even the suppliers of other services had stopped their supply with the result that all vehicles of the Ministry were not properly maintained. Many vehicles, including lifesaving ambulances, were lying idle.

Everyday suppliers and creditors were calling at the Ministry to demand immediate settlement of their dues. They even shamed us overseas! This is very important for the country to know. Hospitals abroad, which had treated our patients, had not been paid! The sum of approximately Rs200 million had to be paid. They had not paid Rs200 million!

An hon. Member: *Voler!*

Mr Bachoo: The report of the National Audit Office mentions –

“The pharmaceutical products to the tune of Rs 72.5 million were disposed of.”

We had to throw them out as rubbish! To add insult to injury, the worst part of it, the insulting part, they had not even paid the dues of over USD 20 m. for COVID-19 vaccines. The vaccines were not yet paid. The then government had taken Rs2 per litre of petrol in order to amass billions of rupees to be kept in their coffers! They did not even pay for the COVID-19 vaccines. We are now paying for them!

Can we forget the Pack & Blister saga? They had purchased 50 defective ventilators which were never put to use. They were returned to the supplier. We had not even seen the ventilators, and they were returned. They are actually lying in the freeport in the custody. We are paying the rental for keeping your rubbish. We are paying for it. We have spent over *R 100 million* in Pack & Blister. So, who’s fault is that? Ours or theirs? It is their fault!

Now, they are trying to put it on us that we are not ruling the country. We have to accept that they constructed oversized, poorly planned empty infrastructures at great costs. You know the reason why they have done that. There has been no human resource planning for

many years. The result was 1,500 nurses, record officers, lab technicians, doctors and other paramedical staffs were hardly recruited in ten years. That is why we are in such a situation today. We have to act. We cannot stay idle.

Till the recruitment of staff, we have to encourage our staff to work for the country. I will fail in my duty if I do not share with the House the evaluation carried out independently by the World Health Organisation – that will be very bad – regarding the health sector strategic plan for 2020- 2024. This was launched in 2020. The overall target is so alarming and so catastrophic. According to the health sector strategic plan, the life expectancy should have reached 75.5 years in 2024. It is still 73.9. It is a failure. A flop!

Infant mortality was targeted to reach 10 out of 1000 in 2024, we are stuck at 14.3 – the same. The five years mortality was targeted to reach 12 out of 1000 in 2024, it is still 15.4. Maternal mortality ratio was targeted to reach 0.35 in 2024, it is still high. HIV AIDS cases were supposed to become zero in 2024, we have 549 registered cases to date. It means wherever they have laid their hands had been a complete fiasco. The mortality rate of 5%, as far as noncommunicable diseases are concerned, they wanted to bring it back to 5% – it is 13.5% increase in mortality rate. It was a big failure, catastrophic – shocking their plans. This is a real slap on the shameless cheeks of those who are in power of that time.

We eradicated Malaria. We dealt with the outbreak of Chikungunya as well Dengue and we succeeded because we had a well-equipped staff. Unfortunately, over the 10 years, they had neglected and destroyed everything to such an extent that I have to announce to the House that Dengue has now become endemic in Mauritius. This is a direct result of criminal negligence on the part of Public Health Department. They have failed; 10 years were lost. The country was bleeding white. Luckily, when all hopes were shattered, the electorate booted them out of power. If they had not done that, the predictions of Meade and V. S. Naipaul would have become true.

When the country was at its lowest, the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister came unitedly to save the nation. The country needed a saviour. The country needed a selfless and dedicated being; both put their differences apart and rushed to rescue the nation that was reeling on the grip of dictators and mafias.

I take this opportunity to congratulate the Prime Minister for the budget that he has presented. He has chosen the good path rather than the pleasant path. It was such a situation that the capacity of leadership quality of the person is judged.

A party without a leader is just like a field without water supply. A party without a leader is just like electric wire without power supply. It is just as like a class without teacher. That is why the Opposition today is leaderless. We have on our side true leaders.

Allow me, Madam Speaker, to go the landmark measures announced for my budget now. There is a provision in my budget for the creation of the post of an Ombudsman and that will be of great news for those and my friends who keep on shouting at me. Now I know the work is done, all the complaints will be dealt by the Ombudsman. Any cases of alleged negligence will be dealt by him. The Ombudsman will be the voice of the public. He will protect the rights of the patients.

Madam Speaker: By him?

Mr Bachoo: No, we do not have a name of the Ombudsman. Ombudsperson, I am sorry.

Madam Speaker: That is better!

Mr Bachoo: He will ensure an independent and impartial oversight. He will improve transparency and accountability. As far as monitoring of quality of healthcare is concerned, we are operating in a void. In order to address this unacceptable gap, a National Health Quality Commission is being created that will ensure standardisation of care through enforcement of national and clinical standards and protocol.

The Prime Minister, since long, has been talking about the importance of putting up credible managers in all our big establishments because medical experts with no management experience cannot manage efficiently a healthcare institution. So, this is being addressed and it was him who insisted that five professional managers with suitable qualifications and experience will be recruited for management of regional hospitals. So, apart from the doctors, directors of the health will be having managers at the top. They are going to administer our hospital.

Madam Speaker, day in day out, most of their time, and that of my advisers, was spent in receiving calls from the public and in addressing their problems but now, we can even keep on hearing people on local radios, on social media complaining about problems that they have encountered in our public health services. To solve this problem, a 24-hour hotline for public to address their complaints is being created so that the Ministry might resolve them in a responsive and timely manner.

I had working session with the World Health Organisation for a new Public Health Act which dates back 1925, which is archaic and primitive. Similarly, a new Pharmacy Act will be prepared in order to put an end to the unscrupulous practices prevailing actually in the service. I am also planning to bring amendments to the Food Act, Optical Council Act, Medical Council Act and Private Health Institution Act. The Food Act is being amended to enable on-site testing, that is, no need to take the food and bring in to the laboratory for inspection. The inspectors will come on site, take the sample, and they will try to test it on the spot, and for that, Rs20 million has already been earmarked.

The Trust Fund for Specialised Medical Care will be revamped. This Government is promoting research and capacity building for clinical trials as a prerequisite to drive innovation in medical and healthcare. Other research projects such as noncommunicable diseases and national health survey will follow. In that respect, a dedicated division in metabolic advanced cardiac-imaging and research will be set up within the Trust Fund.

Funds have already been secured through Professors Derek Yellon and Walker from the University College of London through the intervention of the Prime Minister to kick start a major research project regarding remote ischemic preconditioning in patients suffering from myocardial infarctions. Advanced metabolic and hormonal testing platform will be rolled out to detect hidden risk factors for noncommunicable diseases well before symptoms emerge and need for treatment. Similarly, Diabetes Path to Remission Programme will be launched in a phased manner. Our biggest public health problem in Mauritius is diabetes.

Nearly 20% of the population are victims of diabetes and another 20% are pre-diabetic patients in this very House, there must be over one third of our friends who may be suffering from diabetes and they may not even know it. So, we are launching a new programme called the Path to Remission Programme (PTR). We are taking it very seriously. All the sacrifices of Professor Owens had gone to the drains because of the carelessness of the then government. I assure the House, with the help of the international experts, we will meet the challenge.

Madam Speaker, we cannot close our eyes on the vector borne diseases like Chikungunya and Dengue. The former government was so indecent that they had completely given up the vector biology infrastructure. I am pleased to announce that with the collaboration of senior advisers of my Ministry, we are setting up a full-fledged Department of Vector Biology at Sir Seewoosagar Ramgoolam National (SSRN) Hospital. Activities will start soon. A sum of Rs24 million has been allocated for the project.

I am pleased to announce that E-health project will shortly be a reality and is starting from the East. Proper health records and long queues will become a thing of the past. We believe in investing in people, not only in buildings. That two buildings constructed without the proper planning, and worse, without the collaboration of the Ministry of National Infrastructure and ESD. Provisions are made in our budget for 1000 nurses over the next three-year, 50 trained midwives, 50 medical health officers, 30 specialists. Budget for training capacity has also been increased.

Madam Speaker, you would be probably shocked to learn at over the past 10 years, electrical system and water reticulation system of Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam National (SSRN) Hospital had been neglected to such an extent by the outgoing government that patients were not provided adequate hot water for their showers.

I would like to remind the House that works in that direction had already started in 2014 but for reasons known to them, the project was boycotted. Most of the wards do not have safety fire certificates because of neglected electrical systems. Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam National (SSRN) Hospital and Victoria Hospital were criminally neglected. A capital budget of Rs1.8 billion has been allocated to my Ministry to support the modernisation of health infrastructure.

Allow me, Madam Speaker, to give an update regarding other infrastructural works. We will be opening a new Eye Hospital in days to come. We have corrected all deficiencies in the building. The Renal Transplant Unit at Jawaharlal Nehru Hospital sponsored by the Government of India is nearing completion. At the same time, I would like to inform the House that kidney transplant is being performed by top surgeons of India in our country.

The PET scan, STEC scan, DEXA scan at the National Cancer Centre were lying idle for almost years. They are being commissioned and will be fully functional in days to come. That is a great achievement.

I have to be honest and inform the House that I am not satisfied with the care that was being provided to the cancer patients till now. When we speak of cancer, it should be prevention, prevention and prevention. A major awareness campaign had been launched to sensitise population regarding health lifestyles and early detection of noncommunicable diseases in general, and cancer, in particular.

I am pleased to announce to the House that the mortality rate for cervical cancer has dropped by 40% as a result of National Screening Programme. In high-risk patients for breast

cancer, there will be a programme for screening the mammography. We are currently in negotiation with India to get an expert in cancer to lead the National Cancer Centre. Much emphasis will be laid on early detection of cancer.

Madam Speaker, a memorandum of understanding on cooperation in the field of ayurvedic medicines was signed between Government of Mauritius and India. Such a centre would make Mauritius a hub in the region, in the field of ayurvedic medicine. We are finalising arrangement for that centre to be a reality in the near future.

Across the world, accident and emergency departments are manned by trained specialists in accident and emergency. Actually, we have 30 doctors trained in accident and emergency medicine but they are not being utilised properly. The system is being restructured. Accident and emergency departments will be led by a qualified emergency physician. This will lead to faster triage and higher efficiency in patient flow. This will also lead to advanced standardised care for trauma, strokes and cardiac arrests. This will also lead to improved survival rates through timely specialised interventions as demonstrated internationally.

In Mauritius, we do not have support in terms of interventional bronchoscopy for a number of patients who have certain types of pulmonary diseases and because of their condition, they cannot be sent abroad. In that respect, I had a discussion with Professor Fayon, *président* of the *Société de Pneumologie de l'Océan Indien* et *La Fédération de l'Académie de Médecine de France* for support for the setting up of interventional bronchoscopy services in Mauritius. They have agreed to provide us with necessary equipment and training for these services to be set up. A Memorandum of Understanding is being finalised.

Madam Speaker, in every hospital, we have patient facilitation desks to streamline patient appointment, wards allocation, follow-up to assist with enquiries. A new family communication system will help doctors and nurses to provide regular updates to relatives, including daily medical progress, proactive outreach during prolonged admission of critical care; support for those unable to visit due to work or distance. This service will strengthen trust between hospitals and communities.

The budget also provides for establishment of five regional diabetic centres to provide under one group specialist consultations and dictation, multidisciplinary care, diabetes specialist nurse support, nutrition education, food care, renal screening, psychological support

and support for practice of regular exercise. An International Advisory Committee on Diabetes and Cardiovascular Disease is being set up to bring global best practices in the Mauritian medical healthcare to provide clinical trials and precision in medicine efforts. To support our expanding diabetes centres through membership and training, the budget includes a new ophthalmology cardiac surgery in Flacq soon. The neurosurgery department will be opened in the months to come. We are also negotiating with some surgeons from India. Hospital services will include cataract surgery, cardiac bypass, valve replacement, that will greatly reduce national and regional waiting times. Actually, we are conducting five cardiac surgeries daily but that number will be doubled in the next months to come.

Madam Speaker, presently, there is only one stroke unit for the whole population at Victoria Hospital. Stroke Units reduce mortality of patients who are suffering from cerebrovascular accidents by up to 20%. This budget provides for the establishment of one stroke unit in each regional hospital. We have been provided finance for that work. We have been repeatedly talking about ageing, about an ageing population. Till now, there is a total absence of geriatric healthcare services in our regional hospitals. Again, under the instructions of the Prime Minister, we have decided to setup one geriatric ward in all hospitals so that our old ones will be taken care of properly.

With regard to substance abuse and harm reduction and HIV/AIDS, my Ministry will work in close collaboration with National Agency for Drug Control. Patients living with HIV deserve the same freedom of choice as any other citizen managing a chronic illness, antiretroviral treatment to be made available both in public and private sectors. The transition to one-pill regime will represent a significant step forward in improving care being provided to HIV/AIDs. With regard to parallel import for medicine, my Ministry will form part of the high-level steering committee which is being set up to accelerate the parallel import framework which will implement the recommendations of the committee.

Madam Speaker, we had to take immediate steps to ensure that spending of available funds is optimised. We will ensure that every rupee of taxpayers is judiciously spent. In that respect, we have discontinued the use of cardisialography, ECG, AI ECG, a procedure unvalidated in Mauritian population and not in line with evidence-based medicine. This was introduced by the previous Government. We have already saved the Ministry millions of rupees. Pooled procurement through G-2-G arrangement with India and through SIDS Pool Procurement Programme is being looked into to achieve faster and more cost-effective procurement of medical products. What...

Madam Speaker: Minister...

Mr Bachoo: Madam Speaker...

Madam Speaker: Are you concluding soon?

Mr Bachoo: I am concluding.

Madam Speaker: Okay.

Mr Bachoo: What you have heard...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker, what you have heard is not a lofty wish. It is a comprehensive action plan for a healthier and more resilient Mauritius. We are transforming hospitals through professional leadership and special care, revolutionising food safety and legislative frameworks, embedding safety through discharge summaries and clinical audits, protecting our future by targeting childhood obesity, improving patient experience through hotlines facilitation desks and family updates. These reforms reflect a holistic vision, better health outcome, economic productivity and resilience against future shocks. Health is not a luxury. It is our formulation of national prosperity. This is our moment of national decision to act with courage, unity and foresight. We choose responsibility over populism, sustainability over short-termism and the health of our people at the heartbeat of the nation. Let us endorse this budget with resilience, compassion and pride for today and Mauritius tomorrow.

In the end, I conclude by thanking the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister who have been the brain, who have the spring, the fountain of these decisions that have been taken for the welfare of the community.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Thank you! I suspend the Sitting for half an hour!

At 5.05 p.m., the Sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 5.35 p.m. with the Deputy Speaker in the Chair.

The Deputy Speaker: Please be seated.

Hon. Minister Gunness!

The Minister of National Infrastructure (Mr G. Gunness): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me, first of all, congratulate the Prime Minister, the Minister of Finance for presenting a courageous, but responsible budget. *Un budget de vérité* where we face the situation as it is. I must also congratulate the Deputy Prime Minister, who all along, I am sure, has contributed a lot with the Prime Minister in preparing this budget.

Before I start my intervention, let me also say that 25 June is the World Vitiligo Day. We have the great pleasure to have in our midst the founder of the Mauritius Vitiligo Foundation, Mr Nastili, who is also the Chairperson of the DICL. In fact, he founded the association when the previous Speaker, the loud Speaker, treated my good friend, my brother, Rajesh Bhagwan, 'Go look at your face!'. It was then that he decided to set up this organisation. You can imagine the type of people who were presiding the debates in this House.

The Deputy Prime Minister: *Pa* people!

An hon. Member: What type of beast!

Mr Gunness: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this first budget, which is entitled 'From Abyss to Prosperity', as I said, is a responsible budget presented by a responsible government. When we have dared in this budget, you have some people who have been kicked by the people of Mauritius in November who are now coming out of their holes. You have the Leader of the MSM, who, these days, is very busy in tracking where his luggage is, full of you know what. The GPS is in his hand, trying to monitor where the luggage is. He came out of his hole.

An hon. Member: His hole?

Mr Gunness: Yes!

An hon. Member: Big hole!

Mr Gunness: What did he say in a press conference? We entitled our Budget, 'From Abyss to Prosperity'. In a press conference, he put a banner entitled, 'From Prosperity to Abyss'. So, let us see what is prosperity for MSM.

For the MSM, prosperity means –

- A debt of Rs642 billion on the population. This is prosperity *version* MSM!
- A trade deficit of Rs203 billion is prosperity for the MSM.
- A debt servicing of Rs21.8 billion is prosperity for the MSM.
- A budget deficit of 9.8% GDP represents prosperity for them.
- A depreciation of the Mauritian rupee by 46% since 2014 is prosperity for the MSM.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, do you think a country can sustain a debt of 90% of GDP if nothing is done? What does this mean in simple terms for layman persons? It means that for every Rs100 that you have in your pocket, Rs90 is in the form of debt you have borrowed. Only Rs10 that you have earned is for you. This is what it means in simple terms when you have a public debt of 90%. That is Rs90 of Rs100 is a debt.

When you get a trade deficit of Rs203 billion, what does it mean? It means that you are importing Rs203 billion more than you are exporting. Who will continue to lend you money? I think all households know that you can go to the shopkeeper and get a credit for one month, two months or three months. And if you do not pay your debts, obviously, there will come a time when the shopkeeper will say no more credit for you. This is in simple language for a household.

We are all socialists here. We are all for a fair distribution of wealth in the country. But you do not distribute debts! Just like a father, if he wants to distribute money among his children, he has to earn it. He has to earn the Rs1,000. Then, he distributes it among his children. I do not think a father will go and borrow Rs1,000 from the bank, and then, distribute it among the children. Then, when he passes away, the debt becomes for the children. It is the children who will have to pay the debt because the father is gone.

This is what the MSM did with this country. They made fake illusions, distributing money here and there. But what money were they distributing? They did not create the wealth. Not a single new sector, new economic pole, has been set up by the MSM. Not a single one! So, where do get the money? You print the money, you borrow the money, and then, you distribute it, and tell the population that you are distributing wealth. Fair distribution of wealth! A country cannot be managed in this situation, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have seen the figures – the economic statistics. We have seen where they have brought the country. But we must see what was prosperity *version* MSM. What did they do with the Bramer Bank? Midnight, they revoked the license of that Bank and what did they do? Late Sir Anerood Jugnauth, his son and Mr Roshi Bhadain, they go and take out their money from the bank...

Dr. Boolell: They withdrew their money!

Mr Gunness: They withdrew their money because they knew in advance, they are going to revoke the license of the Bank, and then they revoked it, and then the simple depositors, they were stuck. A nightmare for the people, hundreds of Mauritians, had a nightmare and these people were leading the country! These people were supposed to lead the country? The crash of BAI was a man-made catastrophe. It disproportionately affected the middleclass and tragically some victims passed away while waiting for justice and reimbursement. And, do you remember, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, what they said when they dismantled BAI? They said no single Mauritian rupees will be injected. No single Mauritian rupees will be injected when they made the crash of the BAI. But do you know how much they injected after that? Rs3.69 billion in MauBank. The National Insurance Company Ltd, around Rs4 billion. The National Property Fund Ltd, according to Audit Report, Rs14.8 billion. They injected public money, public fund, wastage of public fund which could have been used elsewhere.

The Deputy Prime Minister: For pension!

Mr Gunness: For pension, obviously! The Heritage City, yesterday, Mr Bhadain, the one who was given a rider, he was a simple Minister, he was given rider...

The Deputy Prime Minister: At his request!

Mr Gunness: At his request!

Mr Bhagwan: *Li dir so lavi an danze!*

An hon. Member: *Li per!*

Mr Gunness: He asked at that time, in Heritage City, they even earmarked Rs2.7 billion in the national budget at that time to develop the so-called flagship urban development project. But you know the project has been abandoned at a cost. Yesterday, the Prime Minister told us that they wasted Rs40 million as consultancy fees to Stree Consulting – for

the MSM Rs40 million is nothing – and this also, without any tendering procedures. Consultancy Services were given to Stree Consulting, Rs40 million paid, project abandoned, as if nothing for them.

The Neotown scandal and Betamax – and it is good reminding on 12 February who was then Minister of Finance, Mr Vishnu Lutchmeenaraidoo. All these were together – Bhadain, Lutchmeenaraidoo, all these were together. They announced the unilateral terminal without negotiation of the Neotown project, leased to Patel Engineering Ltd. That lease was signed in 2008; 58 acres of land was given at Les Salines for 99 years at Rs15 million per annum. Mr Soodhun declared at that time that if compensation of Rs250 million was necessary, the government would pay it. As if nothing for them Rs40 million for Heritage; if we have to pay Rs250 million, we pay, we terminate the contract, and do you know what it is today? A decade later, the people of Mauritius has been handed a bill of Rs1.9 billion, following the ruling of the Permanent Court of Arbitration in London – Rs1.9 billion.

The list continues, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Rs5.6 billion wasted on Betamax. COVID-19, my good friend the Minister of Health and Wellness has told you. Now, the Air Mauritius saga, another tragedy in public governance. Air Mauritius, our national carrier, was placed under voluntary administration following cumulative losses of Rs868 million between 2018 and 2019. Around the same time, the SBM, another jewel in the crown of the public sector got a dramatic collapse. Can you imagine how the Air Mauritius aircraft was sold *dipin diber* and on the other hand, Mr Sattar Hajee Abdoula, when he was appointed Receiver Manager, was pocketing money.

An hon. Member: Single assets stripper!

Mr Gunness: When you get the SBM saga, €40 million loan given to the former Minister Vishnu Lutchmeenaraidoo without adequate collateral. You get losses for unrecovered debts. You get a single non-performing loan of Rs1.7 billion granted to an Indian businessman in the United Arab Emirates. The individual is now insolvent and facing investigation for fraud.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, when we see the Rs4.4 billion loan scandal to the Pabari Brothers, who was chairing SMB Holdings at that time? It is Mr Sattar Hajee Abdoula himself, who is also head of the Grant Thornton, the firm responsible for recovering and transferring the Pabari Group's debt. An affidavit sworn in Kenya accuses him of interference in the matter. The implications are deeply troubling.

Other incidents further tarnished SBM's reputation, which was at one in point in time, the jewel of the crown. Rs1.2 billion loan to Renish Petroleum backed merely by an email of which only Rs8 million has been recovered. Rs90 million loan granted to late Mr Alan Govinden, a figure already entangled in the infamous Angus Road saga. Rs12 billion in loans to foreign clients that ended up classified as non-performing. Toxic loan of Rs1.7 billion to an Indian businessman, I said previously. In total nearly some Rs20 billion vanished due to MSM interference in the affairs of the SBM. When all these happened, can you imagine how can a Director, Mr Gufflet, Director of SBM Holdings Ltd, is earning Rs41 million per year? After having looted the bank, he is earning Rs40,949,000 and all these are in official documents.

M. le président, Mauritius Investment Corporation, crée pour préserver la stabilité économique du pays en période de crise, a hélas été détourné de sa mission fondamentale. Elle est aujourd'hui entachée de grave soupçon de favoritisme, de conflit d'intérêts flagrant et d'un usage abusif de fonds publique à des fins partisans. Au 30 septembre 2024, la MIC avait investi R56,83 milliards dans 60 entités. Mais loin de refléter une stratégie nationale cohérente, ces investissements traduisent une gestion sélective orientée souvent au bénéfice de cercle étroit lié à l'ancien régime. Ce n'est pas seulement une dérive administrative, c'est une trahison du mandat publique.

Le cas le plus emblématique est sans doute l'octroi de R 650 million à Mauriplace Beach Resort Ltd, société détentrice de l'hôtel Maradiva Villas Resort & Spa et de l'hôtel Sands dans laquelle l'épouse et le beau-frère de l'ancien Premier ministre, Pravind Jugnauth, détiennent des parts considérables.

Peut-on parler ici des simples coïncidences ? Le doute est plus que permis. Autre cas aussi troublant, R 350 millions allouées à Luxury Retirement Village Ltd dont l'actionnaire principale est N G Holdings Ltd, propriété de M. Avinash Gopee, un proche du couple Jugnauth. Ce même monsieur Gopee a également bénéficié d'un financement de R 100 million via PSH Investment Ltd.

Ce n'est pas fini. R 3,450,000 000 d'argent public, un véritable jackpot décroché par Nundun Gopee sous le régime précédent pendant que tant des familles peinait à joindre les deux bouts.

Ce qui se dessine, M. le président, c'est un schéma de financement préférentiel au mépris des principes de bonne gouvernance, de transparence, et d'équité. Et que dire enfin du

rachat à hauteur de 70% de l'hôtel Ambre pour R 2.4 milliards ; une opération finalisée le 07 juin 2024, entourée des soupçons persistants quand la désignation d'un conseiller en transaction, en l'occurrence Verde, notoirement proche de l'ancien régime. Verde aurait perçu une commission exorbitante de R 400 millions. Par ailleurs, la même entité opérant à travers Pulse Analytics aurait encaissé R 45 millions pour la production des sondages truqués lors des élections de 2024.

M. le président, ce Parlement ne peut rester silencieux face à de telles allégations. Nous ne parlons pas ici des erreurs, des jugements ou des simples irrégularités ; nous parlons d'un système organisé d'appropriation indue des ressources publiques au profit d'une minorité privilégiée.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will summarise the wastage and loss of public funds over the 10 years. The total wastage and loss of public funds amount to nearly one trillion – listen well – I am saying one trillion. You know, these people they are funny people, really.

I refer you to the Budget Speech – Fostering Economic Dynamism of Dr. Padayachy, the last one, which is ending on 30 June. He said –

Paragraph 47 –

“What is this strategy? This strategy will bring us to one trillion-economy by 2030.”

Not an economy of one trillion; a debt and wastage of one trillion not by 2030, in 2025 they brought us.

I give you the figures rapidly –

- MIC – Rs73 billion;
- Public Sector debt – Rs642 billion;
- Metro Express Ltd – Rs300 million annual loss, and we owe Rs15.9 billion;
- CEB – Rs7 billion overdraft;
- STC – Rs1.5 billion;
- Price Stabilisation Account – Rs3.41 million;
- National Property Fund – Rs14.8 billion;
- CWA – Rs5.53 billion;
- Pipe laying – Rs700 million;
- Wastewater Management Authority – Rs3.46 billion;
- Air Mauritius Airport Holdings – Rs25 billion;

- NTC – Rs100 million;
- Airport of Rodrigues, losses – Rs781.2 million;
- Mauritius Post Ltd – Rs83 million, shareholders deficit in that – Rs2 billion;
- Pension deficit – Rs2.6 billion;
- Statutory Bodies Pension Fund, even pension funds they have not left – Rs47 billion;
- BAI, MauBank Ltd– Rs3.69 million;
- NICL – Rs4 billion;
- National Property Fund Ltd – Rs11.9 billion;
- Neotown Project – Rs 1.9 billion;
- CSG, depleted – Rs 25.8 billion;
- Betamax – Rs5.6 billion;
- SBM saga – Rs40 million to Minister of Finance;
- Toxic loan – Rs1.7 billion
- Pabari brothers – Rs 4.5 million;
- Renish Petroleum – Rs1.2 billion;
- Alan Govinden – Rs19 million;
- Foreign clients – Rs12 billion;
- Rose-Belle Sugar State – Rs180 million;
- Accumulated debt – Rs1.2 billion;
- Even the rental due to Vieux Moulin and Plaisance Mall – Rs15 million;
- Sugar Investment Trust – Rs1.4 billion.

When you add all these, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it comes to trillion. Here is the one trillion-economy that they promised.

So, now the population must understand. This is the background in which we are. So, when our government is coming with a pension reform *ce n'est pas du gaieté de coeur*. We are coming with a pension reform because the pension is not sustainable and the economy cannot sustain it.

But since we presented the budget, government listened to the people. *On était à l'écoute!* That's why the government has set up two Interministerial Committees, which are working and which will come with proposals in due time to propose to the population what has to be proposed.

So, we are a government of the people, in the interest of the people. Don't you think after having been elected; we would not like to be popular? Everybody would like to be popular but populism will not feed the population in the years to come. We are in a situation and this is the result of the mismanagement of the MSM government. This is what the people have to understand. This is what the population has to understand that if we are in such a situation today; it's not our doing, it's their doing. For ten years, they have mismanaged the affairs of the public, they have mismanaged the affairs of the country and today, we are having to take difficult decisions in the interest of children, our grand-children so that we can live in a country where on n'hypothèque *pas l'avenir de nos jeunes*. This is what we are preparing for in our country.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me dwell a bit on my Ministry now. First of all, let me come to the measures announced in the budget for my Ministry.

In the forefront, in the announcement of the implementation of the much-awaited M4 Project, most specifically, the Phase I and II, of the project – the proposed Motorway M4 Project is a dual carriage-way of approximately 55 km starting from Forbach on Motorway M2 in the North by passing villages such as Poudre d'Or Hamlet, Rivière du Rempart, Plaine de Roches, Laventure, Pont-Blanc, Constance, Queen Victoria, Clemencia, Bel Air, Olivia and ending at Grand Bel Air.

The proposed Motorway M4 consists of three phases, mainly –

- Phase I – Forbach to Pont Blanc, 15.6 km;
- Phase II – Pont Blanc to Bel Air, 13.5 km, and
- Phase III – Bel Air to Grand Bel Air, 25 km.

Necessary budgetary provisions have been made for Phase I and II of the Motorway M4 project.

Notwithstanding the above, we are actively investigating ways and means to ensure an earlier implementation of the project taking into consideration the critical and strategic importance of the Motorway M4.

Unlike the precedent government which had announced the Motorway M4 Project in its Government Programme, but failed deplorably to execute it. This Government, despite the vulnerable economy, will definitely find the way and means to implement the project during our current mandate.

This project will ensure connectivity in terms of motorway, in terms of a real ring road around the island. We are also proposing to have recourse to consultancy services for an amount for Rs35 m. for Phase 3 to define the best alignment from Bel Air to Grand Bel Air which will form part of the new Motorway M4. Again, I seize this opportunity to emphasise that the proposed alignment will under no circumstances affect the Vallée de Ferney. We are going to ensure that the Vallée de Ferney stays intact and at the same time preserve its biodiversity.

Another colossal project announced in the Budget Speech is the renewal Phase 2 scheduled for implementation in Financial Year 2027-2028. It is a continuation of the first phase which starts from Montebello to Guibies. The Ring Road Phase 2, extending over a length of 4.75 kms will start around 200 meters before the end of the Ring Road Phase 1, will cross Quoin Bluff Mountain and Monroe Hill through two tunnels to connect to the end of Boulevard Victoria at Vallée Pitot and will also connect to Tranquebar through a grade separated junction.

My Ministry intends to finalise all preparations for the project, including a definite alignment and associated pending land acquisition as well as the detailed design for that segment. I wish to reassure the inhabitants that any qualms or suggestions will be taken on board as and when we progress with the alignment. I have to stress here that after Phase 1 of the project, the MSM government just shelved this project as it would not have given them political mileage.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, since I have assumed office, I spearheaded the completion of several major road projects designed to improve the lives of our citizens. Some of these projects are –

- Construction of Hermitage Bypass;
- Construction of a grade separated junction at Wooton;
- Construction of a flyover Motorway M1 at La Vigie;
- Stabilisation works along B103 at Chamarel;
- Construction of flyover Terre Rouge on Motorway M2, and
- Construction of roundabout and access road of Goodlands Bypass.

During the coming financial year, we shall be witnessing the completion of several major projects which, for some obscure reasons, were not progressing satisfactorily, namely –

- (i) La Vigie-La Brasserie-Beaux Songes Link Road Phase 2.

When I assumed office, I found out that the road was a misnomer as the village of La Brasserie is not connected to the new road. I can now assure the inhabitants of La Brasserie that they will be definitely connected with the new road. It is only today itself that we received the letter from the Ministry of Housing for a portion of land which will help us in connecting the village of La Brasserie to the link road;

- (ii) Upgrading of Savanne Road from La Flora to Tyack;
- (iii) Construction Flic en Flac Bypass;
- (iv) Construction of foot bridge at Trianon;
- (v) Rehabilitation of Roche Bois Foot Bridge across motorway;
- (vi) Reconstruction of Beau Champ Bridge at Bel Ombre, and
- (vii) Upgrading of part of Holyrood Road.

As far as construction of the bypass in Trianon is concerned, Dukesbridge School had some apprehensions for the pavement construction of Pellegrin-Trianon Link Road. I have met with them. We carried out site visits. I can assure them that we are not taking any portion of land from the school. The children and even the management are so sympathetic. I assured them and reassured them that no portion of land will be taken from this school.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, despite a tight fiscal window, the emphasis of road infrastructure investment has not dwindled. We shall endeavour to embark on a series of road infrastructure projects such as –

- Upgrading of Julius Nyerere.

In fact, next week we will be launching – the MPs of the region will be obviously called to attend – the upgrading of Julius Nyerere and B1-M1 Link Road;

- Construction of Haute Rive Bridge at Rivière du Rempart;
- Upgrading of bridge along B28 Road at Grand Sable;
- Upgrading of Roussel Bridge;
- I just said the construction of Pellegrin-Trianon Link Road;
- The Melrose-Dubreuil Road Phase 1, which eventually will lead to Phase 2, will also be connected with La Vigie-Flic en Flac-Beaux Songes Road.

Apart from major road projects, as a Government of proximity, we will be undertaking a series of minor and medium projects at the request of inhabitants to alleviate their daily hardship. Some of these quick win projects, which I am very proud to share, are –

(i) Reconstruction of Notre Dame de Lorette Street in Curepipe.

Hon. Members of the House will be astounded to learn that the road has been closed for more than four years. Yes, you heard it well! As it had collapsed due to the presence of a natural cave. Despite we had the Deputy Prime Minister in that constituency – *politique autrement*. For four long years, inhabitants and commuters were greatly inconvenienced due to the indifference of this previous regime.

Once we came in power, I initiated remedial measures. Here, I am grateful to the Road Development Authority. My two colleagues Ministers immediately carried out the work. Now, the road has been opened to the public and to the commuters;

(ii) The access road to Coriolis.

The inhabitants of Residence Antoinette had long made a request to construct a new access road connecting Antoinette Street to Coriolis Road at Midlands as the sole access to the residence is very narrow with no pedestrian facilities.

Upon my request, the RDA is implementing the new access road which follows the alignment of an existing track road approximately 270 meters long. Works are currently ongoing and will be ending by the end of this month. Probably in one or two weeks' time, we are going to launch the road. There also, we had the former Deputy Prime Minister who had done nothing.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, no relief of infrastructure is complete without appropriate drainage system. Based on the recommendation of the LDA, the RDA is currently upgrading the existing drain network along classified roads with the aim to enhance resilience to climate change by improving the storm water drainage network. A number of drainages on classified roads –

- Construction of drain network at Midlands.
- We are upgrading a road side drain at Plaine Magnien Phase 1.

To resolve the following problem in the village of Magnien, a major drain project is being implemented in two phases. Phase one, under constructing comprising 1.2 km of drains connecting to existing drains along A10 Road from Plaine Magnien Football Ground to Motorway M1. Works just started in May 2025 and it shall be completed in August 2026. Phase 2 will be implemented to connect Phase 1 to a third discharge to ensure that there is no flooding on the Motorway M1.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it pains me to note that although cycle lanes were built at a few places by the previous government, they were left in an abandoned state due to an absence of sensitisation campaign. However, as announced in the Government Programme 2025-2029, emphasis is being laid on promoting walkability and cycling for the benefit of pedestrians and those seeking alternative and sustainable modes of transportation. We will engage in providing the appropriate infrastructure to enable cycling in a coherent and holistic manner contrary to the haphazard and disjointed mode in which the previous regime was implementing its *soi-disant* bicycle lane.

Upon my assumption of office, I was astounded to learn that a whopping amount of Rs444.7 million had been committed and partly spent by the previous government to construct around 31.3 km of bicycle lanes which are not being used. These cycling infrastructures are mostly located outside residential zones and have no connection whatsoever to neighbouring villages or existing conurbations. Thus, why should it be a surprise that most of these infrastructures are lying idle?

This Government promises to do things differently by ensuring that money is spent where it is most deserved. We are completely reviewing the policy for provision of cycle lanes to ensure that public money is spent diligently and the Mauritian public is able to benefit from these infrastructures.

The Deputy Speaker: You have one minute to conclude, hon. Minister!

Mr Gunness: So, I go to my conclusion, therefore. Let me say something which is important. The Budget Speech 2025/2026 rightly emphasizes sustainability as central to our development strategy. My Ministry, through the CIA, is also finalising the minimum energy efficiency requirements for governing bodies.

This means every new public facility will be designed to consume less energy and reduce operating costs while contributing to our national climate commitments, showing our social responsibilities. This is a major milestone aligning our national building code with global best practices in bringing construction.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, since you asked me to conclude...

The Deputy Speaker: Please conclude.

Mr Gunness: So, let me go to my conclusion, I go to my conclusion. So, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this budget is not the easy way but it is the right way. It is what leadership

should look like and I believe that in time, the people of Mauritius will look back on this moment not as a betrayal but that as a real turning point – a moment when together, we choose the responsibility over recklessness, courage over comfort.

This budget is more than numbers. It is about trust restored through delivery. It is about a nation that chooses resilience over neglect, equity over privilege and long-term gain over short-term applause. Through the work of my Ministry, we are building a Mauritius that is safer during natural calamities, more connected by road infrastructure, more vibrant in its communities, more inclusive in its development, more resilient in face of tomorrow.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, a call for unity and responsibility. To those who ask why make sacrifice now? I say this: ‘if we delay today’s decision, we will forfeit tomorrow’s opportunities.’ To protect the next generation, we must act with foresight, fairness and resolve.

This government is not driven by populism but by principles. We choose a path of shared responsibility and national renewal. We choose to tell other people the truth and to act in the long-term interest. We stand firm not because it is easy but because it is right.

This budget is a bridge from the abyss, bequeathed by misrule, to a future of renewed prosperity. It demands courage but offers hope. It calls for solidarity but promises shared reward. Let history recall that when faced with collapse, we did not stop, we led. Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. Minister. Yes, hon. Minister Bhagwan!

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

The Deputy Prime Minister rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Debate adjourned accordingly.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Prime Minister!

ADJOURNMENT

The Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Thursday 26 June 2025 at 3.00 p.m.

The Deputy Prime Minister rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker: The House stands adjourned!

At 6.20 p.m., the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Thursday 26 June 2025 at 3.00 p.m.