



EIGHTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

(UNREVISED)

FIRST SESSION

MONDAY 30 JUNE 2025

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MAURITIUS

Eighth National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 25 of 2025

Sitting of Monday 30 June 2025

The Assembly met in the Assembly House, Port Louis, at 2.00 p.m.

The National Anthem was played

(Madam Speaker in the Chair)

ANNOUNCEMENT

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PARLIAMENTARISM

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, as Speaker of this august Assembly, I think it is most fitting and proper to seize this occasion to commemorate the International Day of Parliamentarism which is observed today, 30 June 2025.

What better way than to seize this opportunity as a timely reminder for us, for you, hon. Members, to engage in a profound reflection on your role, our role. The vital and sacred trust vested in this House is that of serving as the steadfast guardians of the principles of democracy, the supremacy of the rule of law, and the inalienable rights and liberties of the citizenry.

Indeed, hon. Members, Parliaments, the world over, stand as temples of democracy. It is within these walls that the fundamental rights and freedoms, as enshrined in our Constitution, can become living realities.

When you elected me as Speaker of this august Assembly, I told you I will listen with an open mind, but without fear or favour. I also told you that my motto was contained in three R's: Rights, Respect, and Responsibility.

I invited you to promote a scrupulous democracy, not just in the National Assembly, but throughout the Republic of Mauritius.

I have now presided the National Assembly for seven months. The elections are behind us. We have had some very interesting sessions, but unfortunately, I lost my temper during the Committee of Supply for obvious reasons.

Hon. Members, we must strive to maintain the decorum of the House. *Je ne veux pas retourner dans les dérives du passé.* Let us all commit on this special day to respect the established procedures and decision-making processes of this august Assembly to achieve positive outcomes for our country.

Thank you.

PAPERS LAID

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

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

The Environment (Amendment of Schedule) Regulations 2025. (Government Notice No. 57 of 2025)

B. Ministry of Land Transport

The Road Traffic (Amendment of Schedule) Regulations 2025. (Government Notice No. 58 of 2025)

ORAL ANSWER TO QUESTION

BUDGET 2025-2026 MEASURES – REVISED VEHICLES TAXES – COSTS & SALES IMPLICATIONS

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr G. Lesjongard) (*by Private Notice*) asked the Minister of Land Transport whether, in regard to the measures announced in the Budget 2025/2026 with a view to reducing the number of vehicles on our roads, he will –

- (a) state if a prior study was carried out in relation thereto and, if so, indicate the outcome thereof and whether consultations were carried out with the stakeholders, and
- (b) for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the –
 - (i) estimated quantum of additional revenue to be generated over the period July 2025 to June 2026 in terms of revised Excise Duty and Customs Duty, Registration Duty and Road Motor Vehicle Licence, and
 - (ii) number of vehicles sold in June 2025.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Minister!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Madam Speaker, first of all, I would like to thank the hon. Leader of the Opposition for putting this very important question, which, undoubtedly, concerns the whole population, just like the first PNQ he had addressed to me earlier this year on road safety.

Madam Speaker, I would like to assure the hon. Leader of the Opposition that the budget measures do not purport to reduce the number of vehicles on our roads, but seek to decrease the alarming rate of increase of vehicles which have gone out of control.

Let me mention that for the first six months of this year, for a small island like Mauritius, a total number of 22,893 vehicles, as at 29 June 2025, have been registered at the National Land Transport Authority, that is, a whopping 200 vehicles approximately per day – the highest ever registered! This has been the trend over the last ten years.

Let me, Madam Speaker, mention that at the end of 2014, ten years ago, there were 465,052 vehicles, while as at date, there are 733,498, that is, an increase of 58% over the last ten years. This is paradoxical as during that period, an alternative mode of transportation has been provided – the Metro Express is one of them –, which ought to have triggered a decrease in the number of vehicles on our roads, but exactly the opposite has occurred. Like as I said earlier on, at an alarming rate!

This situation has led to four main problems –

- (i) Road congestion;
- (ii) Road accidents;
- (iii) Air pollution, and
- (iv) Parking problems and road rages.

Let me dwell a little bit on the road congestion aspect, Madam Speaker. Well, since the hon. Leader of the Opposition has made mention of the word “consultation” in his substantive question, let me inform him that the Government Service Employees Association had raised the alarm bells regarding the congestions being faced by commuters.

I personally met with the office bearers of the latter in formal meetings to discuss these critical issues, and was made to understand that the main areas concerned were, for example, at the entrance of Port Louis and in Ebène.

In addition, the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance as well as the Junior Minister of Finance, as is usually the case, have had wide consultations with all stakeholders during pre-budget exercise.

Madame Speaker, already, traffic congestion has a huge cost be it economically, environmentally, or socially. In fact, the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance has clearly explained during his Budget Speech that our import bill for vehicles is expected to be a drain of Rs20 billion this year on our foreign exchange. At this stage, I can tell the House that this figure is likely to be exceeded. If nothing bold and courageous is done, the pressure on our Forex market and our balance of trade will worsen significantly.

Now, as for road accidents, since we are at comparing figures, let me quote official figures from Statistics Mauritius regarding road accidents. In 2014, there were 51,398 vehicles that were involved in an accident and this figure has reached 71,191 in 2023 representing an increase of nearly 40%. So, *botte à botte* the number of vehicles increased on the road and the number of accidents tally.

Now, Madam Speaker, I have in front of me the figures, and I will table it for the eyes of the hon. Leader of the Opposition and for anyone who wants to have a look at it.

Now, insofar as air pollution is concerned, Madam Speaker, our air quality has deteriorated from being not long ago, about 12-15 years ago, to the second position in the world in terms of best air quality to today. We are now at the sixth position in the world, because of more vehicles coupled with the fact that our grid has become more polluting as it uses more coal as compared to during the days of *Maurice Île Durable*. I had already

explained and hon. Assirvaden also already explained during his speech – mine was on 23 June 2023. We all know who is responsible for this state of affairs that our grid has become more polluting. Like the hon. Assirvaden has always said “watch my eyes”, the hon. Leader of the Opposition was Minister of Public Utilities.

Madam Speaker, insofar as part (a) of the question is concerned, the level of traffic congestion today in the country, the number of road accidents, and the air pollution we witness every day on our road coupled with parking issues and the problem of road rages on our roads besides the pressure on our Forex reserves speak louder than any feasibility studies that any consultant could ever do.

In fact, consultants have been coming here in Mauritius telling us that building more roads will solve the congestion problem. However, they have been wrong. Let me give clear examples of the concept of “congestion-con”, which I have myself canvassed over the last two budget speeches – in fact, last week as well –, which simply says “the construction of more roads means more vehicles given time”. This is proven and the problem is compounded if the roads are wrongly built at wrong locations. A glaring example is the flyover at Ebène where the traffic flow has worsened after the construction of the flyover on the Ebène roundabout at the cost of more than half a billion rupees during the mandate when the hon. Leader of the Opposition was minister in Cabinet. Tomorrow, hon. Anquetil has a very pertinent question...

Madam Speaker: Don’t talk about tomorrow! Keep with the time.

Mr Osman Mahomed: ...on Hilcrest at Quatre Bornes. She has put a PQ for tomorrow. Another example, as I have explained before, is the SAJ Bridge which has had a contrary impact during peak time on the M1 Motorway because it has diverted traffic from A1 Road to the motorway. So, the at the entrance of Port-Louis, every morning, we have additional traffic coming from the west coast.

Madam Speaker, let me now come to the increase of Motor Vehicle License (MVL) that is also provided for in the budget, and what we call “road tax” also what known as “*déclaration*”. I am informed that it was last increased in 2008, that is, 17 years ago. Meanwhile, cumulative inflation has reached 90% over that period of time.

Meanwhile, the cost of operation and maintenance of road infrastructure has also increased substantially. This measure, among others, therefore, seeks to address this huge imbalance. I am sure that the population will understand, and I hope the same will apply to the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Against the above backdrop, Madam Speaker, as I have just enumerated above, the reply to part (b) of the question is as follows: the quantum of additional revenue to be generated over the period July 2025 to June 2026 are as follows –

- (i) Excise and customs duty: Rs2.5 billion;
- (ii) Registration Duty: Rs100 million;
- (iii) Road Motor Vehicle licence (*déclaration*): Rs620 million.

Having said so, Madam Speaker, let me underline that the budget exercise of this year has abolished payment of registration duty on sale and transfer of domestic pre-owned vehicles, that is, *vente de voitures locales/seconde mains*.

This measure will, besides bringing significant facilities for buying pre-owned vehicles, also address a long-standing illegal practice of sale of vehicle on “*papier blanc*”. I hope that the hon. Leader of the Opposition will appreciate that this practice had wide implications, and I do not think I need to delve in this because we all know what the implications are.

But more importantly, this measure seeks to encourage transfer and sale of vehicles already in the motor vehicle park, espousing the very essence of the budgetary philosophy which is to reduce the alarming rates of additional vehicles in our country.

With regard to part (b)(ii), I am informed by the Registrar General’s Department that the number of vehicles sold in June 2025 is 7,304 as at 10 o’clock this morning.

Madam Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Mr Osman Mahomed: No, I have not yet finished.

Madam speaker, I have to mention that the Government could have applied the *guillotine*, meaning this budgetary measure, on 06 June 2025 itself. However, in a spirit of fairness, we have given a full 25 days for the population to acquire a vehicle on previous rates of taxes and rebated prices.

The NLTA office, MRA, and the Registrar General’s office have been working late and even on Saturdays to facilitate the process. In fact, the number of new monthly vehicles reached a record number this month. I hope that the population and the hon. Leader of the Opposition will understand.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Thank you, Minister. Your first supplementary, hon. Leader of the Opposition!

Mr Lesjongard: Yes, thank you, Madam Speaker. The hon. Minister himself, in his reply, has said that those measures have created a situation of panic-buying and this was the case for the month of June. Because he mentioned the impact on foreign currency reserves, can I ask the hon. Minister to inform the House, what has been the impact on foreign currency reserves for vehicles which were sold during the month of June? Does he have an idea?

Mr Osman Mahomed: Madam Speaker, the hon. Leader of the Opposition is a seasoned politician. He must be aware that the vehicles that have been sold during the month of June were already in Mauritius, were already here, already imported.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Can we let the hon. Minister reply, please?

Mr Osman Mahomed: In a spirit of fairness, like I said earlier, the *guillotine* could have fallen on the same day, but the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance has been fair. He has given people ample time to buy their vehicle which they would have bought anyway.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Leader of the Opposition, your second question?

Mr Lesjongard: Thank you, Madam Speaker. When I mentioned consultations in my main question, I meant consultations with key stakeholders such as taxi associations, bus company owners, car rental operators, those who are directly affected by those measures. Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether he has met with those stakeholders?

Mr Osman Mahomed: Madam Speaker, the hon. Leader of the Opposition must surely be aware, since he has mentioned taxi drivers, taxi drivers already benefit duty-free facilities to some extent...

(Interruptions)

Still, this has not been reduced in any way and it still applies.

As regards the other operators that he has mentioned, as at now at the Ministry, we have 1,500 applications for licences for professional vehicles and contract cars and all. So, the demand is still there.

Madam Speaker: But the question was: did you meet them?

Mr Lesjongard: Yes.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Let me do my job!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Madam Speaker, like I said in my reply, I met those who have asked to be consulted by myself ...

(Interruptions)

... and the hon. Minister of Finance and the hon. Junior Minister during pre-budgetary consultations, stakeholders, and if you want to have the names of the stakeholders that we have met, we will be able to provide them to you.

Madam Speaker: Yes! Please do that. Third supplementary!

Mr Lesjongard: Can the hon. Minister inform the House what would be the percentage decrease with regard to sales of vehicles, that is, cars, trucks for the Financial Year 2025-2026, and if any projection has been made for the next three financial years?

Mr Osman Mahomed: I am sure the hon. Leader of Opposition will understand that this is a new budgetary measure that seeks to decrease the alarming rate of vehicles on our roads. I hope this will be the result of this because we are giving facilities to those purchasing second-hand vehicles locally. So, as to the exact figures, given time, I can provide it to him. He can put substantive questions because *guillotine* is falling today, the deadline is today.

Madam Speaker: Yes!

Mr Osman Mahomed: It is a bit difficult to predict.

Madam Speaker: Yes. So, fourth question!

Mr Lesjongard: So, we understand that this is a measure...

Madam Speaker: Do not comment! Question, please!

Mr Lesjongard: Okay. With regard to contract car owners, has the Ministry assessed the potential negative impact on the tourism sector, particularly regarding car rental rates?

Mr Osman Mahomed: Madam Speaker, last week, I replied to a PQ from hon. Babajee where I stated that over the last ten years, 7,000 contract car licences have been issued. Previously, the whole figure was 3,000. So, it has more than doubled within the last ten years. Surely, the hon. Leader of Opposition would appreciate that there is ample stock on the market. I have met with operators and they have submitted their applications that are being processed right now, but as regards a lack of vehicles on the market, I have not been told about this.

Madam Speaker: Fifth question, I think.

Mr Lesjongard: Yes. Now, with regard to the annual Motor Vehicle Licences, can the hon. Minister inform the House why the annual Motor Vehicle Licences for these types of vehicles, that is, double cab pickup owned by the following categories –

- planter;
- tea grower;

- bee keeper;
- fisherman;
- cattle, goat and sheep breeders;
- pig breeders;
- small enterprise;
- handicraft enterprise, and
- trade unions have all been increased?

And will he agree that this measure is a sledgehammer on those categories of vehicle owners?

Madam Speaker: Yes, Minister!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Madam Speaker, I have explained at length in my initial reply that the last time the *déclaration* was increased was 17 years ago.

Meanwhile, the cumulative inflation rates have reached 90%. Now, there are a lot of facilities that are being provided to the stakeholders that the hon. Minister has just mentioned, but, Madam Speaker, we have to meet the cost of operation, especially with the *bilan* that the former government has left us to deal with. And also, regarding our road infrastructure, there has to be investment in order to keep up with all kind of issues including road safety, which he canvassed himself during the first PNQ he had addressed to me. So, this is the philosophy of increasing *déclaration*, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: You have a paper that just arrived. Can that help?

Mr Lesjongard: This is the philosophy for...

Madam Speaker: One moment!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Sorry, I am also informed that they are already paying concession rate – in reply to your specific question.

Madam Speaker: Yes, sixth question!

Mr Lesjongard: This is the philosophy of Government with regard to small and medium enterprises.

Madam Speaker: Do not comment, hon. Leader of the Opposition!

Mr Lesjongard: With regard to the annual retention that Government intends to charge owners of vehicles who have opted to vary the registration mark of their vehicles from the current registration mark to an old or personalised registration mark, is he aware that the NLTA has already delivered 32,062 such registration marks from 01 October 2021 to 30 July 2024 and a total amount of Rs627 million have already been paid to the NLTA by the owners

of those vehicles? Does the Minister find it normal for those vehicle owners to pay an annual retention fee? May I ask the hon. Minister whether, this is legally in order?

Madam Speaker: Answer!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Madam Speaker, this measure will provide additional choice to potential vehicle owners going forward because new numbers will be unlocked. There will be more variety of numbers for them to pick from; like I had explained during my speech on the budget. And the new rates will apply to those new numbers.

Madam Speaker: Only to new numbers! Yes!

Mr Lesjongard: Can we have an indication of the new rates? How much will it be monthly?

Madam Speaker: Okay, can we have that?

Mr Osman Mahomed: Madam Speaker, this measure is currently being worked out at length with the Ministry of Finance. We will communicate the rates in due course.

Madam Speaker: Okay!

Mr Lesjongard: One last question. With regard to electric cars, will the hon. Minister – because he was very much involved in the project *Maurice Ile Durable* – agree that this decision to reintroduce excise duty on electric cars is a terrible step back on our engagement in COP21....

Madam Speaker: You are asking for his opinion! You are asking for his opinion!

Mr Lesjongard: Yes, but when we know, Madam Speaker, that the trend worldwide is for electric vehicles.

Madam Speaker: It is not proper for you to ask for his opinion. Ask him for facts!

Hon. Minister, try and give us a good answer.

Mr Osman Mahomed: I will try my best.

Madam Speaker: Good!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Madam Speaker, the hon. Leader of the Opposition was Minister of Energy and Public Utilities...

Madam Speaker: Do not repeat that every time! We know that. Tell us what you feel and how...

Mr Osman Mahomed: I said it, because this is a report that has remained at his Ministry unimplemented. It dates back to January 2020, just before he was nominated as Minister.

Madam Speaker: Which report?

Mr Osman Mahomed: And over and above, there was a committee at his Ministry, Electric Vehicle Implementation and Monitoring Committee, which had to also come out with a National Battery Plan also, since we are talking about environment and renewable energy, but nothing has been done at the level of the ministry and we do not even know the outcome of that Committee for which the Cabinet of Ministers at that time had given him the responsibility to chart across.

Madam Speaker: Yes?

Mr Lesjongard: May I ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware or he can confirm that the sale of electric cars back in 2019 was 110, while today, it stands at almost 2,000 electric vehicles?

Mr Osman Mahomed: Madam Speaker, what is the consequence of this? The consequence of this is that ten years ago, our grid was producing 23.4% of renewable energy. Under his ministerial watch, this has become 17% today. So, the grid has become even more polluting. That is why our air quality has deteriorated from being second in the world when I was in charge of *Maurice Ile Durable* to being sixth today worldwide. So, electric vehicles, Madam Speaker, are not clean in Mauritius because our grid users are called to charge those same electric vehicles.

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

Mr A. Duval: May I ask the hon. Minister whether he is prepared to review – what we consider – the nonsensical measure to impose an obligation to pay second hand cars by bankers' cheque? Especially, as the Minister knows, people will have to wait days for a banker's cheque. How is that going to work when you are going to pay a deposit? Will that then have to be refunded by the purchaser who has cashed it? Because the purchaser says 'essentially by banker's cheque'?

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: *Chut!* I can't hear!

Mr A. Duval: So, may we know the details of how it will work? And if we will be able to deduct the deposit, etc.?

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Did you understand?

(Interruptions)

Mr Osman Mahomed: It is a bit all over the place, but I will try to figure out what he has said.

Madam Speaker, we are a responsible government. As far as possible, we try to comply with international regulations, and one of them will be the anti-money-laundering legislation.

Mr A. Duval: ... internet banking!

Mr Osman Mahomed: We do not do things without any reason. You are saying it is nonsensical? If you go and read, maybe you will understand the philosophy behind it.

Mr A. Duval: Internet banking!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Are you done? A last one!

Mr Lesjongard: Madam Speaker, in view of the fact that the measures in this year's budget will greatly affect the majority of vehicle owners, for example –

- for a 1,500cc hybrid car, there will be 50% increase;
- for a 1,500cc convention car, there will be 70% increase.

Madam Speaker: Yes, question!

Mr Lesjongard: So, will the hon. Minister consider aborting completely these measures or review at least the rate of increase?

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Minister!

(Interruptions)

Stop telling him what to do, please!

Yes, hon. Minister!

Mr Osman Mahomed: The hon. Leader of the Opposition is talking about percentage, but when you look at the figures, they are not much. They start from Rs 1,000 and then Rs 2,000.

Mr Lesjongard: It is not...

Mr Osman Mahomed: Well, for some of them.

But then, like I said earlier...

Mr Lesjongard: The figures are wrong!

(Interruptions)

Mr Osman Mahomed: ... the philosophy...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Let me...

Mr Osman Mahomed: No, I am giving...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: One moment! One moment!

Mr Jhummun, do you want to come and sit here?

Mr Jhummun: No! Not at all!

(Interruptions)

He is commenting!

Madam Speaker: Let me do my job! I hope I do not have to tell you again today!

Leader of the Opposition, please, do not comment!

Hon. Minister!

(Interruptions)

Mr Osman Mahomed: Madam Speaker, like I said...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Nobody is respecting you! We talked of respect today! Nobody is respecting you!

(Interruptions)

Please, let the Minister speak!

An hon. Member: He is!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: *Chut!*

Carry on, hon. Minister!

Mr Osman Mahomed: So, what do you suggest that I do?

Madam Speaker: No, you speak now!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Okay!

Madam Speaker, the hon. Leader of the Opposition has understood the point that I have raised earlier, that between 17 years ago and now, the cost of operation has increased because the inflation rate has increased by 90%. So, this is the philosophy behind this.

Since he has pinpointed hybrid vehicles, let me remind him again, under his ministerial watch, he was given specific responsibilities for electric and hybrid vehicles, which he has not delivered.

So, today, he wants to claim the question of eco-friendliness for the problem of batteries. At the end of the lifecycle of a battery of a hybrid vehicle, you need to do something about it – whether you recycle it. How do you dispose of it? But his committee has not delivered!

So, today, we are in a *flou* with the good intention behind hybrid vehicles.

Madam Speaker: Okay, that was the last question. Thank you very much, everyone.

PUBLIC BILL

Third Reading

On motion made and seconded, the Appropriation (2025-2026) Bill (No. XIV of 2025) was read a third time and passed.

ADJOURNMENT

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Friday 04 July 2025 at 3.00 p.m.

The Deputy Prime Minister rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Madam Speaker: The House stands adjourned!

At 2.35 p.m., the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Friday 04 July 2025 at 3.00 p.m.