



EIGHTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

(UNREVISED)

FIRST SESSION

TUESDAY 08 JULY 2025

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Dr. the Hon. Navinchandra Ramgoolam,
GCSK, FRCP

Prime Minister,

Minister of Defence, Home Affairs
and External Communications,

Minister of Finance,

Minister for Rodrigues and Outer
Islands

Hon. Paul Raymond Bérenger, GCSK

Deputy Prime Minister

Hon. Shakeel Ahmed Yousuf Abdul Razack
Mohamed

Minister of Housing and Lands

Hon. Rajesh Anand Bhagwan

Minister of Environment, Solid Waste
Management and Climate Change

Dr. the Hon. Arvin Boolell, GOSK

Minister of Agro-Industry, Food
Security, Blue Economy and Fisheries

Hon. Govindranath Gunness

Minister of National Infrastructure

Hon. Anil Kumar Bachoo, GOSK

Minister of Health and Wellness

Hon. Christian Harold Richard Duval

Minister of Tourism

Hon. Ashok Kumar Subron

Minister of Social Integration, Social
Security and National Solidarity

Hon. Gavin Patrick Cyril Glover, SC

Attorney-General

Dr. the Hon. Mrs Jyoti Jeetun

Minister of Financial Services and
Economic Planning

Hon. Patrick Gervais Assirvaden

Minister of Energy and Public Utilities

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

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MAURITIUS

Eighth National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 27 of 2025

Sitting of Tuesday 08 July 2025

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

The National Anthem was played

(The Deputy Speaker in the Chair)

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

BRP – PROPOSED INCOME SUPPORT – BENEFICIARIES & ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr G. Lesjongard) (*by Private Notice*) asked the Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity whether, in regard to the Basic Retirement Pension (BRP), he will state –

- (a) regarding the proposed monthly Income Support of Rs10,000 to citizens reaching 60 years as from 01 September 2025 and who will be ineligible for the BRP, the –
 - (i) estimated number of beneficiaries and sum earmarked therefor;
 - (ii) criteria taken into consideration to arrive at the threshold of Rs10,000, and
- (b) annual estimated expenditure therefor till 2030.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon, Minister!

Mr Subron: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, and thank you, hon. Leader of the Opposition. It definitely seems that I am in the good books of the hon. Leader of the Opposition for my third PNQ, but as a responsible Minister, I will answer all the questions.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a)(i) of the question, I am informed that within the next five years, around 80,655 citizens will reach 60 years and above, out of whom, 37,562 citizens will be eligible to benefit from the Income Support. The formula has been designed to focus on retirees, housewives, unemployed, self-employed, and low-income earners. Around Rs8.7 billion will be disbursed in respect of Income Support to eligible beneficiaries over a period of five years. The cost will be met from the Consolidated Fund.

For a single person, the monthly income will include his emoluments, income from business or profession, and contributory retirement benefits, but – and this is important – exclude any lump sum payable on retirement and will exclude other benefits (including Invalidity Allowance) provided by my Ministry.

For a married person, the monthly income will include emoluments, income from business or profession, and contributory retirement benefits, but will exclude in the computation, the lump sum payable on retirement and other benefits (including Invalidity Allowance) provided by my Ministry as well as the Basic Invalidity Pension, as I mentioned, the Income Support in lieu of the BRP or the BRP being drawn by the spouse. This would be my answer to the first part of the question.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a)(ii) of the question, these three proposals for Income Support were put forth to the Inter-Ministerial Committee: Rs5,000 Income Support, Rs7,500 Income Support, and Rs10,000 Income Support. And the Financial Advisors – I must stress – had recommended the amount of Rs7,500. However, Government having heard the people, having heard the difficulties surfaced through the recent weeks, has decided to provide the sum of Rs10,000 as Income Support. The eligibility threshold is the same as the existing threshold for the payment of the Equal Chance Allowance of the previous Government, that is, the monthly income of the couple should not exceed Rs20,000. For a person who is single, the threshold has been set at half the threshold, that is, at Rs10,000 per month. Had the quantum been more than Rs10,000, the coverage would have been less. So, we have opted, for the reasons set out, for the quantum to be Rs10,000 as Income Support.

In regard to part (b) of the question, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the annual expenditure for Income Support is as follows –

Financial Year	Estimated Cost
2025-2026	Rs1.1 billion
2026-2027	Rs1.0 billion
2027-2028	Rs2.0 billion
2028-2029	Rs1.8 billion
2029-2030	Rs2.7 billion

This makes a total of Rs8.7 billion for the next five years.

This will be my answer to the PNQ of the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, hon. Leader of the Opposition!

Mr Lesjongard: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Can I ask the hon. Minister to give explanations to the House as to why this measure has been announced nearly one month after the presentation of the Budget?

Mr Subron: As I said, the people have expressed concerns – I would say healthy concerns – on the measure taken on the change of age of eligibility of the Basic Retirement Pension (BRP). We have heard the people of our country, and we need to hear and take into consideration all the voices.

After considering the concerns, that is, the concerns of the housewives, of the self-employed, of those who do not have any job after 60 years – we have heard all these concerns –, we have decided to bring readjustment measures with the Income Support. This explains the reason why we have readjusted it. Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mr Lesjongard: If the Minister says that he has heard the concerns of the population and that it is for this reason that Government has taken one month to come with this measure, can the hon. Minister inform the House of the income threshold for a citizen or a household to be classified under the poverty line in our country?

Mr Subron: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as I said, we have based ourselves on the Equal Chance Allowance. The poverty line, which is enforced through the Social Register of Mauritius (SRM), is around Rs14,500. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is the answer that I have. There are different definitions of poverty. I am giving the threshold that we applied to the SRM families in my Ministry.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Equal Chance Allowance, which their government announced in the Budget Speech 2024-2025, I will read it for the benefit of the House and for the people of Mauritius to know.

The communiqué of the MRA on the Equal Chance Allowance reads as follows –

“As announced in the Budget Speech 2024/2025, with a view to support the most vulnerable and reduce inequalities, a monthly Equal Chance Allowance of Rs 2,000 will be paid for the period July 2024 to June 2025 to households earning a monthly income not exceeding Rs 20,000.”

This is where, in the first instance, the Rs20,000 come from.

“The Mauritius Revenue Authority (MRA) has been entrusted with the responsibility to pay the allowance.”

This is exactly what we are doing.

“Household

A household means a group of persons living under the same roof and who are either connected through blood, marriage or legal ties and consists of at least one dependent child or a bedridden next of kin.”

Our criteria are more or less the same. And even better!

Household earnings for the Equal Chance Allowance of the previous government –

“means the combined monthly income of each member of the household, and includes (...).”

(Interruptions)

Mr Lesjongard: My question is on the threshold.

Mr Subron: You wanted an answer; I am giving you an answer. This is your threshold.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay, carry on!

(Interruptions)

Mr Subron: This is where the Rs20,000 come from. You do not want to hear it?

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Minister!

Mr Subron: ...but the people need to know.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Minister, address the Chair! Give your answer, please! You address the Chair and you give your answer.

Mr Subron: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, these are relevant information on what determined the Rs20,000. The Rs20,000 come from the Equal Chance Allowance. I am reading it. If we do not want to take the time of the House, every Mauritian can refer to the website of the MRA for the communiqué dated 16 September 2024.

Secondly, the income threshold is based on the minimum revenue of an employed person. We have divided the Rs20,000 in two for a single person. For two persons, it is Rs20,000. For a single person, we have divided the sum into two.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I add that the coverage of the Income Support will cover, at least from 01 September, for all persons who will reach 60 years, 51.16% retirees for the first year.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is not my question.

Mr Subron: The retiree will benefit the Rs15,000 BRP as it was before the Budget.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition!

Mr Lesjongard: The one you referred earlier was a top-up allowance, hon. Minister.

How does the hon. Minister reconcile that the poverty line for an adult, as per Statistics Mauritius, published in February 2025, is Rs12,378 and the decision of the Government to allocate an Income Support of Rs10,000 to persons reaching the age of 60 years by September 2025? Aren't you creating a category of poor people, hon. Minister, when you promised to lift people out of poverty? And you have the guts to say...

The Deputy Speaker: Put your question! Put your question!

Mr Lesjongard: ...that you are fighting for the poor of this country!

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: *Kestion! Kestion!*

The Deputy Speaker: I can do my job! I do not need your assistance.

Mr Subron: I have read the report too. I must say that the figures stated cannot be taken in isolation with households. That is the first point.

The second issue...

(Interruptions)

Let me reply!

(Interruptions)

You want me to reply?

The Deputy Speaker: Look at the Chair when you reply to the question! Address the Chair! Address the Chair!

(Interruptions)

Mr Subron: The Rs10,000, as I have explained, come from the division into two of the minimum guaranteed salary. This is the answer.

Secondly, we have done the most that we can, given the budgetary constraint that we have. It was them who left the economy in a dire state. We have reacted to the voices of the people, and we have done the most that we can using compassion, empathy and the heart that we have for the people. But I must stress that the threshold for the Social Register, enforced through various governments, puts the threshold line to Rs14,500 to pay a person in absolute poverty under the Social Register.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition!

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister who claimed to be a *gauchiste*, how...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Put your question! Put your question!

Mr Lesjongard: May I ask him, how is it that a housewife in this country who has no other job apart from looking after a family,...

The Deputy Prime Minister: *To kone ki ete enn gauchiste?*

Mr Lesjongard: ...will be able to survive with an Income Support of Rs10,000 when we know that all basic necessities in this country *monte hogan ba?*

Mr Subron: We have the figures here, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Out of 17,079 persons reaching 60 from 01 September, 300 are single; 1,303 live in couple; housewives and other self-employed will consist of 7,134 eligible persons. The total beneficiaries will be 8,737.

This would reach 51.16% of the beneficiaries under this system and this will include the housewives.

Let me stress that if two persons in the same house, one who will receive the Income Support and the other one has applied for another Income Support, then the Income Support of one of the persons would not be factored-in in the computation of the Rs20,000. This is very important and this has been designed based on the figures, and especially, to cater for housewives in the family.

Secondly, if a person, let's say a person who is 63 years old now, is receiving the BRP at Rs15,000 right now, and then, the spouse of this person, reaches 60 on 01 September, then the Rs15,000 of the person who is 63 years old won't be computed in the determination of the Rs20,000 threshold. Maybe the hon. Leader of the Opposition didn't pay attention to this very, very important measure that has been included in this system.

Let me also add, that in addition to the Income Support, persons benefitting from the Basic Invalidity Pension of Rs15,000 will continue to benefit this invalidity pension for the next five years. Persons benefitting from Widow's Basic Pension will continue to benefit the Rs15,000 for the next five years. This amounts to a total of 3,182 for the coming year, as from September and this totals for persons who will receive Invalid's Basic Pension to 5,856 for the next five years. For those who will be benefitting from Widow's Basic Pension, it will be 6,929. This totals to 12,785. If we add up and analyse these figures, we will see, and the population must know, my fellow people in my constituency and in all the 20 constituencies must know –

1. 51% of the population will be covered by the Income Support;
2. If we add the 3,182, it might reach in between, at least we can safely say, more than 60% of the population will be covered; not in the case of Invalid's Basic Pension and Widow's Basic Pension, they will be covered with Rs15,000.

So, there will be at least 60% of the population who will be covered.

Let me add, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, for the benefit of the population, that the statistics that we have for the number of employed people registered at our Ministry who contribute to the National Pensions Fund amount to 27% average for the next five years. The first year, normally when someone is in between 60 and 61, the percentage that we have worked out is 39.66, that is, 40% of the persons who will reach 60 are employed. It is quite logical and normal that the more the years increase, the more the number of employed persons will

decrease. So, it reaches 15% when the group reaches 65 years old. So, we can safely let the population know that this government has devised an Income Support in addition to Basic Invalid Pension and to Basic Window's Pension that will safely cover more than 60% of the population.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay you have already... Thank you.

Hon. A. Duval!

Mr A. Duval: Does he not find it unfair that someone who is engaged in hard physical labour, like a mason, a cane-cutter, a fisher, a cleaner, who is no longer fit to work full-time at the age of 60, will now have to choose between giving up work to qualify for the Rs10,000 a month threshold or continuing to work at the cost of their health? And what about part-time workers who are earning between Rs10,000 and Rs15,000, and therefore, who do not qualify, who earn less than the Rs15,000 of the BRP that they would earn now before the Reform, should they not be given a chance to retire on their full BRP? Isn't that effectively penalising them and forcing them to choose between hardship or poverty?

Mr Subron: This methodology that we have come up with after the Budget, first, as I said, any person suffering from disability will be covered 100%, Rs15,000. So, if a mason suffers from disability, he will be covered. This is the reality. Secondly...

Mr A. Duval: We didn't say disability!

The Deputy Speaker: Let the hon. Minister answer!

Mr Subron: Work! He can't work...

Mr A. Duval: I said he works ...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Can you please...

Mr Subron: A person cannot work because of his disability; that's one of the reasons a person cannot work, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Address the Chair!

Mr Subron: That's one of the reasons!

(Interruptions)

Secondly, the Income Support has been designed for any person who can't work. Any person who cannot work will receive Rs10,000. With the measures that we presented to the Budget, this person wouldn't get anything until he reaches the gradual change in the eligibility of the BRP. So, any reasonable person, any person who thinks, any person who has supported this government and other people in this country now realise that this government has made a big effort so as to take onboard more than 60% of the population – 60% we are taking onboard.

Now, with regard to if somebody works as a mason and will be getting Rs15,000, it will be optional to the mason. But then this measure that we have taken will enable all those who are able to work, as I said 40% of the population are able to work in between 60 and 61, at least. Those who want to work, can continue to work and work part-time and in a sense, this will also relieve their health conditions and their living conditions. So, we have catered for it, and every time, I must say that all that we have done is based on the disastrous economic situation that they have left the country in.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition!

Mr Lesjongard: Yes. Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether, regarding the Cabinet Decision of 04 July – where mention is made to the conditions for somebody to benefit from the Income Support of Rs10,000 and, I refer here to paragraphs (c) and (d) of the Cabinet Decision on 04 July where mention is made of monthly income which will include 'contributory retirement benefits' – does this mean that the benefits from a private pension plan will also be considered as an income? And, in the same vein, will dividend be also considered in the revenue?

Mr Subron: The list of all the elements which will be included has been communicated ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Lesjongard : *Pou komie dimunn inn ...*

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Leader of Opposition, you have asked a question. Listen to the reply!

Mr Subron: ... to the House and it includes pension of any retiree.

Mr A. Duval: May I ask the hon. Minister – he should know that, for a person to ...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Ask your question!

Mr A. Duval: The question is ...

The Deputy Prime Minister: You don't know anything!

Mr A. Duval: ... is it not true that for someone to earn disability pension, he must qualify up to a certain threshold of disability?

A stone mason who suffers from sciatica, who cannot, for example, lift up stones and who would gladly retire on full BRP at the age of 60, will not earn his disability pension. Is that not true?

Mr Subron: That question should have been asked to your partners whom you allied with in the last elections. But I have replied to this question, to various questions on this issue in this House, and I am pleased to announce, today, that I will be making a statement on this particular issue.

As a Minister, I know how difficult the medical board is. Every MP present here comes across this on Wednesdays. And, despite the budgetary constraints, we, as a Government, do have a heart and we will address this issue because we know that any person reaching 60 will benefit from invalidity pension. So, the criteria and the assessment of determining the invalidity criteria will be taken onboard. I will address this in a statement in this House, today itself.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay, last question, hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Mr Lesjongard: I have two last questions. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir ...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: No, one last. The time is ...

(Interruptions)

You got only three minutes!

Mr A. Duval: It is a national issue!

Mr Lesjongard: Yes!

Mr A. Duval: It is a national issue!

Mr Lesjongard: Yes! It's a national issue ...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, you got only three minutes!

Mr Lesjongard: ... of great importance, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Again, how does the hon. Minister reconcile the fact that for a person to be eligible for that Income Support, his revenue should be less than Rs10,000 when we know that the minimum salary in this country is Rs17,100?

Mr Subron: I have already replied to this question. It's the same criteria that they used in determining the allowance that I read in the House.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, when I heard the hon. Leader of the Opposition and members of the opposition on this pension debate, I heard them saying that this Government could have afforded an increase in the quantum of Income Support. This is what you are just implying. We even heard a former Minister of Finance saying that *lakes zame vid!*

An hon. Member: *Defonse!*

Mr Subron: This, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, goes to show the level of irresponsibility of those who were making decisions on behalf of the Republic over the last ten years. If *lakes zame vid*, how come nearly Rs1 billion is still owed for COVID-19 vaccines?

Mr Lesjongard: This is not the question.

An hon. Member: *Incroyable!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Subron: If *lakes zame vid*, how come Mauritius risked suspension from SADC because they did not pay our membership fee of Rs800 million?

If *lakes zame vid*, how come Rs500 million overtime of employees of the health sector, mainly nurses and doctors, remained unpaid for years?

If *lakes* was *zame vid*, how come the previous government cooked the books and hid the harsh reality for the population?

(Interruptions)

This is the question! These are the issues that you must address to the population.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. Hon. Minister, time is nearly over yet. Can you finish your answer, please?

Mr Subron: I will just conclude. Let me say again.

The Deputy Speaker: Conclude your answer. Time is over.

Mr Subron: The Income Support will benefit more than 60% of persons eligible, depending how we add those with disability and Basic Widows' Pension; it can be higher.

Secondly, it will cost Rs8.7 billion and this Government has at heart our people, our elderly. It is this Government and it is the parties which are in this Government, who are the founder of the Welfare State, not them.

The Deputy Speaker: Time is over!

Now we go to questions addressed to the hon. Prime Minister!

Hon. Beehook, Second Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil!

LALLMATIE POLICE STATION – STAFF – ATTACHED VEHICLES & POLICING AREA

(No. B/576) **Mr R. Beehook (Second Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the Lallmatie Police Station, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the –

- (a) number of
 - (i) Male and Women Police Officers posted thereat, and
 - (ii) vehicles attached thereto, and
- (b) extent of the premises thereof.

The Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that Lallmatie Police Station falls under the Eastern Division and is responsible for policing in an area of 21 Km² with approximately 45,000 inhabitants.

With regard part a (i) of the question, I am informed that a total of 48 police officers is currently posted at the station comprising 36 male officers and 12 women officers.

As regards to part a (ii) of the question, I am informed that the current fleet of vehicles allocated to the Lallmatie Police Station comprises two double cab vans, one motorcycle, and two patrol bikes.

Regarding part (b) of the question, I am further informed that Lallmatie Police Station occupies a surface area of 115 m² which includes a charge room, an inquiry room, an exhibit room, administrative offices, and barracks. There is also parking space for three vehicles.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am further informed by the Commissioner of Police that in view of the growing policing needs of the region, action was initiated in 2021 with the Ministry of Housing and Land Use Planning to allocate a plot of land in the same region for the construction of a new police station. However, no suitable site had been secured and discussions have now started again to identify an appropriate location.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Hon. Third Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien!

OFFICIAL VEHICLES' ACQUISITION – PERIOD 2015-2024 – MAKE, MODEL & PURCHASE PRICE

(No. B/577) Mr C. Lukeeram (Third Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to official vehicles acquired for use by the former Prime Minister and former Ministers since January 2015 to November 2024, he will state the number thereof, indicating, in each case, the make, model and purchase price thereof.

The Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed that for the period January 2015 to November 2024, two official vehicles were bought for use by the former Prime Ministers. For the late Sir Anerood Jugnauth, a BMW 760Li 760 5972cc at the cost of Rs21,696,486 purchased on 21 November 2016. And, for Mr Pravind Jugnauth, a BMW 760Li 760 5972cc purchased on 14 October 2021 at the cost of Rs19,523,282.01.

(Interruptions)

Both purchases amounting, therefore, to a total of Rs41.2 million.

Mr Etwareea: *La caisse n'est effectivement pas vide !*

The Deputy Speaker: No comment!

The Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the list for former Ministers is a very long list. I will circulate it.

But let me just say, that a total of 42 official vehicles were acquired for use by former Ministers at a total cost of Rs120 million.

Let me also add, the House may wish to note, that no new cars have been purchased either for myself or for the Deputy Prime Minister since we took office, in spite of the fact, that these cars have broken down.

(Interruptions)

Mr Lukeeram: Would the hon. Prime Minister, by any chance, have the relevant information with regard to the former PPSs?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I have the information for the former PPSs, but as I said, the list is...

The Deputy Speaker: The question is related to Parliamentary Private Secretaries.

The Prime Minister: I intend to circulate it, if you agree, because it is quite a long list.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.

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

MINISTERS & JUNIOR MINISTERS – OFFICIAL OVERSEAS MISSIONS – TRAVEL ENTITLEMENTS & PRIVILEGES

(No. B/578) Mr A. Duval (Fourth Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to Honourable Ministers and Junior Ministers, he will state, when travelling for official overseas missions –

- (a) the *per diem* rates to which they are entitled when proceeding to –
 - (i) the United Kingdom;
 - (ii) European Union countries;
 - (iii) Switzerland, and
 - (iv) the United States of America, and
- (b) whether they are entitled to –

- (i) travelling in first or business class, and
- (ii) chauffeur-driven limousines in the course thereof at the cost of Government.

The Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the policies and procedures regarding official mission abroad are contained in Circular letter No. 10 of 2017 of the Ministry of Finance.

As of today, the rates applicable are actually the same when the hon. Member himself was Speaker of the National Assembly.

If you remember, for a period of 78 days, you undertook three missions: one to India, one to China, and one to Armenia for a total cost of Rs748,111.

The Deputy Prime Minister: *Ti jouisseur!*

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: Three missions, 78 days!

Mr A. Duval: *Reponn pou asterla!*

The Deputy Prime Minister: *Ti jouisseur!*

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (b) of the question regarding the class of travel in line, it is in line with the existing policy. Ministers are eligible to travel in first class and Junior Ministers in business class same as the Parliamentary Private Secretaries before.

As regards transport facilities, whenever same are not provided by the organisers or host countries, our overseas embassies and high commissions normally make appropriate arrangements for officials at the level of Ministers, Secretary to the Cabinet and Head of the Civil Service.

When such facilities are not available, then only cars are provided for official use to the eligible officials.

Mr A. Duval: May I ask the hon. Prime Minister, is it not time, in view of the economic urgency, to review the said rates?

You said it rightly so yourself! The rates have remained the same, and they should be lowered now because we are asking the population to...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Put your question! Put your question!

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Prime Minister: *Hypocrite !*

Mr A. Duval: ...tighten their belt!

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: He is a demagogue!

The Deputy Prime Minister: He is a hypocrite!

The Prime Minister: This is demagogy!

(Interruptions)

Mr A. Duval: May I ask the hon. Prime Minister...

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: Why did you not return your money? Return your money!

(Interruptions)

Mr A. Duval: May I ask the hon. Prime Minister...

(Interruptions)

May I ask the hon. Prime Minister...

(Interruptions)

May I ask the hon. Prime Minister...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order! Order!

Mr A. Duval: ...whether he finds it....

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, order!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Members: *Hypocrite! Démagogie !*

(Interruptions)

Mr A. Duval: May I ask the hon. Prime Minister...

The Deputy Speaker: Put your question, please! No comments! Put your question!

Mr A. Duval: I am asking!

The Deputy Speaker: Put your question, please!

Mr A. Duval: May I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he would now consider making hon. Ministers and Junior Ministers travel by business class? When we know that an air ticket to Turkey, for example, in first class...

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: *Lin jouir!*

Mr A. Duval: ...is Rs316,000.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Put your question! Put your question!

Mr A. Duval: May the hon. Prime Minister also consider...

Ms J. Béranger: *Mari toupe sa!*

Mr A. Duval: ... reducing the chauffer driven privilege at the tune of Rs50,000 per day, which is rented by Government for Ministers to travel when abroad? Is it not time for the hon. Prime Minister to review those rates?

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Put your question! Put your question!

(Interruptions)

Mr A. Duval: Will he also give the figures, as per the question asked?

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is typical of what a demagogue does!

(Interruptions)

He enjoyed all the privileges he is talking about!

Hon. Members: Démagogue ! La honte !

The Prime Minister: Now, he wants us...

(Interruptions)

Zot finn defons lakes!

Now, you want us...

(Interruptions)

What do you want?

(Interruptions)

What do you want?

Hon. Members: La honte ! La honte !

The Prime Minister: What do you want?

The Deputy Speaker: Next question!

(Interruptions)

Order! Order! Order!

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: You must have some dignity!

Hon. Members: La honte ! La honte !

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Next question! Hon. Third Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière!

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Prime Minister: *Jouisseur !*

Mr A. Duval: *Twa ki jouisseur !*

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: *Pli gran jouisseur ki twa pena!*

LINE BARRACKS, PORT LOUIS – DRIVING TESTS

(No. B/579) **Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to driving tests at the Line Barracks in Port Louis, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number thereof carried out since January 2025 to date, indicating the –

- (a) number thereof conducted daily;
- (b) time scheduled therefor, and
- (c) number of Police Officers deployed therefor.

The Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that from January 2025 to June 2025, a total of 11,331 driving tests have been conducted at the Line Barracks Driving Test Centre.

In regard to part (a) of the question, around 200 prospective drivers are convened daily for driving tests at Line Barracks Driving Test Centre.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: No cross talking, please!

The Prime Minister: However, an average number of 120 driving tests are carried out daily, taking into consideration requests for rescheduling at short notice and absentees.

As regards part (b) of the question, driving tests which comprise road test, parking test, reverse test are conducted from 07.30 hrs in the morning to 16.00 hours on weekdays and 07.30 hrs to noon on Saturdays. The appointments for the driving test during weekdays are scheduled in six batches of 30 candidates for cars, autocycles, motorcycles and other light vehicles.

Furthermore, as from 12.30 hrs, driving tests are scheduled in respect of some 20 heavy vehicles, such as lorries and buses.

In respect to part (c) of the question, a total number of 25 Police Officers are deployed on a daily basis for the testing at Line Barracks.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that driving tests are also carried out daily at two other driving test centres situated at Les Casernes, Curepipe and Argy, Flacq.

For the period of January 2025 to June 2025, the number of driving tests conducted at these two centres were 9,382 and 7,093.

I also wish to inform the House, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that we are bringing some fundamental changes for the issuing of driving licenses. A graduated licensing system is being envisaged. We will give details later.

The Deputy Speaker: Do you have one supplementary on this?

Mr Quirin: Oui, M. le président. J'ai eu l'occasion de m'entretenir récemment avec quelques moniteurs d'auto-école...

The Deputy Speaker: Put your question! Put your question!

Mr Quirin: But I must introduce my question!

The Deputy Speaker: No, whatever you have had with the...

Put your question to the hon. Prime Minister!

The Deputy Prime Minister: *Nou pa le konne kisanla tonn zwen.*

The Deputy Speaker: Let us go straight to the question!

Mr Quirin: Et aussi avec quelques candidats qui ont récemment passé leur examen de conduite. Ils sont tous unanimes à affirmer qu'il y a un manque d'examineurs et aussi un temps d'attente beaucoup trop long. De ce fait, je demande à l'honorable Premier ministre, est-ce qu'il a déjà pris connaissance de cela et est-ce qu'il compte demander au commissaire de police de faire le nécessaire afin de remédier à la situation ?

The Prime Minister: Perhaps, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, people maybe do not realise that you can actually apply for a provisional driving license online through the Police Department's website or the e-Government portal.

Mr Quirin: M. le président, rapidement, une dernière question avec votre permission. Mercredi dernier, le 2 juillet, un incident s'est produit à *Line Barracks* où une jeune dame candidate qui était venue passer son examen de conduite a été prise d'une crise d'épilepsie.

The Deputy Speaker: Your question!

Mr Quirin: Qu'on a dû transporter d'urgence à l'hôpital. Justement, par rapport, est-ce que le Premier ministre ne pense-t-il pas qu'il faudrait que chaque candidat produise un

certificat médical ? Fort heureusement, la personne en question ne conduisait pas à ce moment-là. Donc, on a pu faire le nécessaire et la transporter d'urgence à l'hôpital.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, your question!

Mr Quirin: Ne pense-t-il pas, M. le président, qu'il faudrait que chaque candidat qui aspire à obtenir son permis de conduire doit produire un certificat médical faisant état de la bonne santé de la personne en question ?

The Prime Minister: I just mentioned that we are bringing some fundamental changes. That will also include medical certificate.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. First Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue!

MONTAGNE LONGUE POLICE STATION – STAFF SHORTAGE – REMEDIAL MEASURES

(No. B/580) Ms A. Savabaddy (First Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the Montagne Longue Police Station, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to whether Police Officers posted thereat have recently been transferred therefrom, indicating whether measures have been taken to remedy the staffing shortage thereat.

The Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that Montagne Longue Police Station covers an area of 12 km² with some 18,000 inhabitants. Currently, it is staffed by 52 Police Officers of different ranks.

I am further informed that Montagne Longue Police Station is classified as a Class C Station having an authorised strength of 37 Police Officers. However, with the development and expansion of commercial and residential areas in the region, the number of Police Officers posted to the station had gradually been increased.

The personnel at Montagne Longue Police Station was increased from 45 in 2023 to 67 in 2024. The staffing position was rationalised this year. As from 03 July of this year, the number of officers was brought down to 52. Consequently, 14 Police Officers were transferred to other units based on the operation requirements of one officer required from the Police Force.

Notwithstanding the transfer of the 14 Police Officers, there is no shortage, according to the information I have, of personnel at the station which is adequately staffed, which is felt, and the present strength there is fully sufficient for effective policing.

However, Montagne Longue Police Station is also supported by other units, such as the other units, the Emergency Response Service, the Field Intelligence, the Central Investigation Division, the Anti Drug Smuggling Unit and the Traffic Police.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Fourth Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue!

OFFICIAL OVERSEAS MISSIONS (NOV 2024-JULY 2025) – MINISTERS & JUNIOR MINISTERS – DETAILS

(No. B/581) Mr A. Duval (Fourth Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to official overseas missions, he will state the number thereof undertaken by Honourable Ministers, including himself and Junior Ministers, since November 2024 to date, indicating in each case the –

- (a) purpose/s thereof;
- (b) composition of the accompanying delegation;
- (c) countries visited;
- (d) duration, and
- (e) total cost incurred, including cost of airfares, local transportation and *per diem* allowances.

The Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I am answering PQs B/581 and B/595 together as they more or less relate to the same subject.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as the House is aware, Ministers only attend overseas mission when invited.

As Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, I have myself been invited, believe it or not, to attend 55 overseas missions to date since I took office in November of last year. Let me give you a few some examples.

On the very day the results were being proclaimed, the Prime Minister of India, Shri Modi, rang me, spoke to me in person, wanted me to come to India for a State Visit in December of last year. I had to decline the invitation because I had just been elected. This is going to be programmed for later.

Again, President Macron rang me personally to invite me for the reopening of Notre Dame de Paris Cathedral on 07 December. This was attended by worldwide dignitaries including President Trump and other Heads of States of several European and African countries. That also I turned down, because I had just been elected; I did not feel I could go at that time.

Third, the Secretary-General of the OECD invited me to be the Speaker at the Global Anticorruption and Integrity Forum in France on 26 and 27 March. I declined that invitation also for the same reason.

I was also invited to attend the funeral ceremony of late Pope Francis and the ceremony for the election of the new Pope. I declined; I asked the hon. Attorney General to represent me for the funeral and the hon. Minister Assirvaden for the election of the new Pope.

As Minister of Finance, I did not attend the annual Spring Meetings of the IMF and the World Bank Group held in Washington from 21 to 26 April 2025.

In other words, out of the 55 invitations, I only chose to attend three of them. And let me say, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that my approval for Ministers is given only if those missions are considered to be of a strategic geopolitical or economic importance to our country.

I wish to inform the House that I myself led only three official missions as opposed to the 55 invitations. The first one was for the African Union Summit in 2025 held in Ethiopia from 15 to 16 February. That was important to attend. Secondly, the 5th Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Indian Ocean Commission held in Madagascar on 24 April 2025. The third one was the United Nations Ocean Conference in Nice to which Heads of State and Government were invited, which was followed by a bilateral meeting which President Macron had invited me. He took his plane from Nice to come to Paris for this official bilateral meeting and then went back to Nice. That was from 09 to 13 June 2025.

As for Ministers and Junior Ministers, a total of 40 official overseas missions have been undertaken from November 2024 to date. The total cost comparison of these missions amounted to Rs28,278,224.08. This is compared to Rs196,400,000 for the period 2015-2024.

Let me add, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that the total cost for the official overseas mission undertaken by the former Prime Ministers including air fares and *per diem* amounted to Rs14.2 million during the period 2015 to 2019 and to Rs16.3 million from 2020 to 2024, which makes a total of Rs30.5 million.

Regarding official missions of former Ministers and Members of Parliament, the total cost is Rs109.4 million for the period 2015 to 2019 and Rs56.5 million for the period 2020 to 2024, which makes a total of Rs165.9 million.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, your question, please!

Mr A. Duval: Will the hon. Prime Minister be able to provide the House with the list of details, as requested, that is, the purpose, the composition and the costs, including the cost of other members of delegation on the one hand, and secondly, can he also clarify when he is comparing the expenses spent ...

The Deputy Prime Minister: How many questions is this, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir?

Mr A. Duval: ... for a mandate with that of his Government for seven months, is that what he is doing?

The Prime Minister: You have asked two questions in one. So, which one do you want me to answer?

Mr A. Duval: If he will provide the composition and cost?

The Prime Minister: I can provide, but I am not going to go into that. Then I can compare from 2014 onwards; I will compare all.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: You have a question on this?

Mr A. Duval: ... with a detailed information, especially for me. Give it!

The Prime Minister: For you...

The Deputy Speaker: Your leader is asking a question, please!

Mr Lesjongard: The hon. Prime Minister stated that he goes on mission only when he is invited. Does that principle apply to all Ministers and Junior Ministers also?

The Prime Minister: Yes. I just said, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. If the hon. Leader of the Opposition had listened. I said that Ministers do not go because they decide to go to XYZ; they must be invited.

Mr Lesjongard: That's what I am saying.

The Prime Minister: I answered that question. We look at it; whether it is essential for them to go and what will be the benefit for Mauritius.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Second Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or!

MAUBANK LTD – PROPOSED SALE – TRANSACTION ADVISOR

(No. B/582) **Mr N. Beejan (Second Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the proposed sale of MauBank Ltd, by the outgoing Government, he will state whether the services of a Transaction Advisor were retained to oversee same and, if so, indicate the names thereof and the terms and conditions of the contract, including success fees or other remuneration structures and the quantum thereof paid out thereto, if any, as at to date.

The Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, MauBank Holdings Ltd had on 30 May 2022 appointed the consortium composed of GA Company SRL, Gibraltar Advisory, Priscus Finance and Verde Frontier Solutions Ltd as Transaction Advisor for the disposal of its shares and its subsidiaries.

I wish to highlight that Verde Frontier Solution Ltd is currently under investigation by the Financial Crimes Commission for suspected irregularities for the award of contracts from many public entities. They are also the ones who published fake poles on the eve of the election to say that they were going to win the election.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the contract between MauBank Holdings Ltd and the consortium was vetted by Mr Yerrigadoo and Ms S. Carrim, Barrister at law. As per the terms and conditions of the contract, the Transaction Advisor had to, among other things, shortlist qualified bidders, conduct due diligence in respect to the preferred bidder and prepare the sale and purchase agreement, and oversee transaction closing and the transfer of the proceeds of the sales. This is what they were supposed to do.

I am further informed that by the said contract, the Transaction Advisor was entitled to a fixed sum and a success fee.

I must say, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, no sale ever materialised, but nevertheless, the consortium was paid a fixed sum of Rs17,967,436.

This is the kind of thing they did that today we are in the economic mess that we are. Abuse of power, giving, dishing out money – this is the result today!

No doubt, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there was largesse unseen when it came to favouring Verde Frontier Solutions Ltd under the previous regime. But all is being investigated by the Financial Crimes Commission. His contract has been terminated on 12 May of this year.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix!

MRA & ADSU – CUSTOMS ANTI-NARCOTICS SECTION – DRUG SEIZURES

(No. B/583) **Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to drugs, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Customs Anti-Narcotics Section of the Mauritius Revenue Authority and the Anti-Drug Smuggling Unit, information as to the quantity thereof seized at the ports and airports, respectively, since December 2024 to date, indicating the –

- (a) value thereof in each case, and
- (b) number of cases in which controlled delivery thereof resulted in the arrest of the local counterparts.

The Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that as from December 2024 to 03 July 2025, 58 drug trafficking cases were detected at the ports and airports in Mauritius and Rodrigues.

This was through joint operations conducted by ADSU and MRA officers. These operations resulted in the seizure of 691.2 kg of dangerous drugs. In addition, other dangerous drugs in the form of pills, liquids, seeds and synthetic gummies were also seized. A total of 64 persons has been arrested in connection with these seizures.

In relation to part (a) of the question, I am informed that the total estimated street value of the drugs seized during this period amounts to Rs1,115,136,222. So, over 1 billion.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that between December 2024 and 03 July 2025, 17 controlled delivery exercise were conducted by ADSU with a view to identifying local collaborators. 13 of these operations were successful and led to the arrest of 19 suspects.

I would also like to reiterate the firm determination of this Government to fight the drug scourge. Equipping ADSU and MRA with the latest technological tools for combatting proliferation of illegal drugs, including synthetic drugs is a matter of top priority for this Government.

Provisions have been made in the Budget 2025-2026 for the procurement of specialised items such as drones, two scanners to be installed at Rodrigues, and one full body X-Ray scanner at Cruise Terminal for ADSU and MRA.

The Government has also just set up the National Agency for Drug Control which will bring together enforcement, rehabilitation and family support services under one roof. The Agency will collaborate with both ADSU and Customs Anti-Narcotics Section of the Mauritius Revenue Authority. The Agency is currently developing a master plan which will serve as the national strategic framework for drug use, including prevention, treatment, harm reduction and law enforcement. The master plan will adopt a comprehensive evidence-based and multisectoral approach to address the drug-related challenges.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Government is also strengthening its maritime security architecture through regional cooperation, bilateral partnership and strategic investments to prevent drug trafficking in the high seas. Collaborative initiatives such as the Safe Seas Africa Project, Cutlass Express and bilateral engagements with France and also with the support from Japan for upgrading coastal surveillance demonstrate a shared commitment to combat transnational threats, including drug trafficking to ensure the safety and security of our maritime domain.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, the hon. Second Member for Rivière des Anguilles and Souillac!

COVID-19 – PACK & BLISTER – DEFECTIVE VENTILATORS PROCUREMENT – INQUIRY

(No. B/584) Mr R. Jhummun (Second Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in

regard to the purchase of ventilators by the Ministry of Health and Wellness from Pack & Blister during the COVID-19 pandemic, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Financial Crimes Commission, information as to where matters stand regarding the inquiry initiated thereinto.

The Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me remind the House that during the COVID-19 pandemic, the State Trading Corporation had, on behalf of the then Government, procured 50 medical ventilators from Pack & Blister Distribuciones Farmacéuticas, located in Spain, against an outright payment of 1.8 million euros.

The equipment was delivered to the Ministry of Health in July 2020. Upon inspection, it was reported that the ventilators were defective and not according to specifications provided by Pack & Blister and as agreed between the parties. These ventilators turned out to be utterly useless.

So, the then Government had paid 1.8 million euros for defective ventilators while patients in dire need in Mauritius were dying during the COVID. This is what the Government, you once were part of, did.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, following several representations made to Pack & Blister, the equipment was returned to the supplier in Spain in December 2021. However, Pack & Blister refused to take ownership of the equipment and the consignment has been stored in a freeport zone in Barcelona, Spain. The monthly charges for storage of the defective ventilators are around 800 euros per month.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, after consultation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade and the Attorney General's Office, the Ministry of Health and Wellness enlisted the services of a Spanish law firm in March 2023 to start legal proceedings against Pack & Blister to recover the expenses incurred. Notices for non-compliance were served to Pack and Blister in July 2024 but the latter refused to receive the notices. Meanwhile, Pack & Blister declared bankrupt on 20 September 2024 and entered an insolvency procedure.

These expenses, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, incurred so far for the procurement of 50 ventilators including the action taken for their return to Pack & Blister and legal fees, has cost us Rs98 million. For 50 ventilators that people were dying during COVID here, they ordered, gave money and it was not working. Ask yourself who did this.

(Interruptions)

I wish to reassure the House that no stone will be left unturned to recover the amount and as such, a case is being lodged before the First Instance Court in Spain.

Also, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in regard to the Parliamentary Question of the hon. Member, I am informed by the Financial Services Commission that the defunct Independent Commission Against Corruption started an investigation on the procurement of the ventilators. It was a show because elections were near. They had to show. We were saying in Opposition what they were doing. So, they started investigation on 7 July 2020 and I am informed that so far, nothing happened to that inquiry. Now, the FCC is re-inquiring, already 13 further statements have been taken.

The Deputy Speaker: Time is over!

Hon. Members, the Table has been advised that the following PQs have been withdrawn: B/586, B/588, B/589, B/590, B/591, B/594, and B/596.

The Table has also been advised that PQ B/602 will be replied by the hon. Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change.

So, I now call upon the hon. Second Member for Rodrigues!

RODRIGUES – LAND DRAINAGE MASTER PLAN – UPDATE

(No. B/598) Mr F. François (Second Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure whether, in regard to the proposed development of a Land Drainage Master Plan for Rodrigues, he will state where matters stand.

Mr Gunness: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have to inform the House that in the Government Programme 2025-2029, we announced that the Land Drainage Master Plan for Rodrigues will be commissioned by the Land Drainage Authority.

I am pleased to inform my colleagues that the preparation of the master plan has already been initiated by the Land Drainage Authority in collaboration with the *Agence Française de Développement*. Following the usual procedure, the contract for the development of the Land Drainage Master Plan for Rodrigues was awarded to consultant HYDRATEC SETEC in March 2025 for an amount of 462,640 Euros, about Rs25 million. A kick-off meeting was successfully held in Rodrigues on 13 March 2025, which marked the official commencement of the study. The scope of services under the contract includes –

- (i) Mapping of natural and artificial drainage systems in Rodrigues;

- (ii) Development of a master plan for integrated runoff water management and flood risk management in Rodrigues, and
- (iii) Strengthening the capacities of technical services in hydraulic modelling and all stakeholders in the water cycle on climate change adaptation.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this plan is being prepared recognising the high exposure of Small Island Developing States like Rodrigues to climate change impacts. The Land Drainage Master Plan will consolidate Rodrigues furthermore towards being a resilient island in respect of the risks of flooding.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, consultant HYDRATEC SETEC submitted its inception report to the Land Drainage Authority on 17 June 2025. Same is actually being examined and the final report is expected by end of June 2026.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, hon. Member.

Mr François: Thank you, hon. Minister for this answer. May I ask the hon. Minister, in the meantime before the finalisation of this master plan, apart the three announced drains projects in Rodrigues, namely at Quatre Vents, Pistache and Baie Topaze for this financial year, whether NDU is working on the other LDA approved projects, mainly at – Grand Baie, Mourouk, Acacia, Rivière Coco, and others for their high priority implementation in Rodrigues thereat?

Mr Gunness: Certainly, it is in the Flood Management Programme. So, we are working on the other drain projects, depending on the availability of funds, as and when we are going to initiate the projects.

The Deputy Speaker: Do you have a question? Okay.

Mr A. Duval: Yes. May I ask the hon. Minister – will the flood prone map which is part of the master plan be made public for Rodrigues in line with the promise that Government made to make it public; the flood prone map for Rodrigues and for Mauritius as well? For Rodrigues, when can we expect same to be made public?

Mr Gunness: Let us wait for the report first. The report will be ready in June 2026 if you heard well.

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

**CONSTITUENCY NO. 13 – SPORTS COMPLEXES – UPGRADING &
MAINTENANCE**

(No. B/599) Mr R. Jhummun (Second Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the sports facilities and complexes in Constituency No. 13, he will –

- (a) state if consideration will be given for the upgrading thereof, including lighting works, and
- (b) obtain information as to the management and the maintenance of the Multi-Use Games Area Sports Complex.

Mr Nagalingum: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there are no sports facilities or complexes in Constituency No. 13 operating under the aegis of my Ministry. However, my Ministry operates two youth centres, namely at Bois Cheri and Souillac in Constituency No. 13.

The Bois Cheri Youth Centre houses an indoor table tennis and badminton facilities, while that of Souillac provides outdoor sport facilities such as volleyball, street football and *boulodrome*.

Concerning part (a) of the question, the two youth centres have recently been revamped and no upgrading civil works are required. However, I am informed that outdoor lightings at the Souillac Youth Centre were defective. Needful has already been done.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that the Mauritius Sports Council manages and maintains one Multi-Use Game Area, commonly known as MUGA, at La Flora, comprising a walking cum running track in addition to usual sports facilities normally available on those sites. I am further informed that the MUGA at La Flora is in good condition.

There is another MUGA located at Tyack, which has not yet been handed over to the MSC.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, hon. Jhummun!

Mr Jhummun: I would like to know where matters stand in relation to the MUGA at Tyack.

Mr Nagalingum: Just to enlighten the hon. Member, the MUGA initiative was originally spearheaded by the Mauritius Telecom Foundation and later transferred to the Mauritius Sports Council for management on a phase basis. The ten MUGAs under the control of the MSC are –

- La Source;
- La Tour Koenig;
- Triolet;
- Flacq;
- Bel Air;
- Beau Vallon;
- La Flora;
- Malherbes;
- Sainte-Croix, and
- Goodlands.

The following three MUGAs which have not yet been transferred to the MSC are –

- Phoenix;
- Tyack, and
- Poudre d’Or Hamlet.

The Deputy Speaker: One last question!

Mr Jhummun: May I know who will manage and maintain the complex at Tyack? Is it your Ministry or the Mauritius Telecom as it was before?

Mr Nagalingum: It is the Mauritius Sports Council.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. First Member for Savanne and Black River!

LA VALETTE & CAMELIA, BAMBOUS – HOUSING ESTATES – UNOCCUPIED UNITS & CAMERA SURVEILLANCE

(No. B/600) Mr B. Babajee (First Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the housing estates at La Valette and Camelia in Bambous, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Housing Development Company Ltd., information as to –

- (a) the number of unoccupied units thereat, and
- (b) whether consideration will be given for the installation of Safe City Surveillance Cameras thereat.

Mr Mohamed: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed that there are two housing estates at La Valette, Bambous. The first one, La Valette Integrated Village, comprising 199 housing units, was implemented by the National Empowerment Foundation and completed in 2010.

The second housing estate, comprising 223 housing units, also known as Résidence Camelia, was initiated by Government in the context of the rehabilitation of the La Ferme Dam, to relocate some 200 families residing in the vicinity of the dam. This project was implemented by the NHDC and completed in June 2024.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a), I am informed by the Ministry of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity and the NDC that there is no unoccupied housing unit at La Valette Integrated Village and Résidence Camelia, respectively.

As regards part (b), I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that 17 intelligent video surveillance cameras (VSC) and two intelligent traffic surveillance cameras have been installed in the region of Bambous. Three out of the 17 intelligent VSCs are located in La Valette, namely near Winners Supermarket, La Valette Industrial Park and the day care centre within La Valette Integrated Village.

The Commissioner of Police has also informed that, in the event of the implementation of the second phase of the Safe City Project, consideration may indeed be given to the installation of surveillance cameras at Résidence Camelia as well as in the other regions of La Valette.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, hon. Member!

Mr Babajee: I have been informed that there are several unoccupied houses over there. I will ask the Minister if he can carry an inquiry in regard to those houses as we have been informed that *il y a des barons de la drogue là-bas*. The houses are being used as their place of transactions in Résidence Camelia.

Mr Mohamed: I thank the hon. Member for the question. Now, if the hon. Member has information, first and foremost, I would like him to share it with me in confidence. I may understand that he does not want to put his life at risk by going to the Police himself, but I will. So, please, let me know and I will try to do the needful.

However, from the information that I have, none of the houses are unoccupied. But I will add again, maybe, they are being occupied by the people you say. I will look into it. Please, do not hesitate to give me the information. We will look into it.

On Wednesdays, when we receive our *mandants*, I have also received people from your own constituency who have requested that they be given the opportunity of using one of these houses because they feel that they should have obtained one of those houses. I have looked into it to try to do them justice. Unfortunately, I have been told that none of them are unoccupied. But I will keep on looking into it to try to do justice for these people.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, the Table has been advised that PQ B/602 has been withdrawn.

Hon. Second Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien!

MAHEBOURG WATERFRONT – JETTY & WALKING SPACE – RENOVATION & SAFETY MEASURES

(No. B/601) Mr T. Apollon (Second Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to the Mahebourg Waterfront, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to whether consideration will be given for the –

- (a) renovation thereof, especially, of the damaged and closed steel jetty, and
- (b) reserved walking space thereof to be secured against the hazards posed by cars and motorcycles driving through same.

Mr Woochit: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the hon. Member that the jetty located at Mahebourg Waterfront is owned by Landscape Mauritius Ltd. and is managed and maintained by the District Council of Grand Port, given that the esplanade and its auxiliaries, of approximate extent of 5 arpents, have been vested into the then Ministry of Local Government and Outer Islands.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, the steel jetty has been closed for a considerable period of time due to its deteriorated and unsafe condition. The District Council of Grand Port has proposed its permanent replacement using reinforced concrete substructure, which will cost significantly less compared to the alternative of rust-resistant inox materials. The estimated cost for this replacement project is approximately Rs25 million. We will liaise with the Ministry of Environment to obtain the necessary clearance for this proposed reinforced concrete replacement in line with the prevailing regulatory requirements.

As regards to part (b) of the question, I wish to reassure the House that temporary in-house safety measures were immediately implemented by the District Council to protect pedestrians from any hazard. These measures include the placement of bollards, galvanized pipes and chains along the esplanade to prevent trespassing by motorcycles and to ensure the walking space for public use.

I am further informed that these works started on 01 July 2025 and are expected to be completed by the end of July 2025, covering a length of approximately 50 metres.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as for the permanent works, the implementation of security features across the reserved walking space, which includes the maintenance of paving bricks and alleys, lighting, metal structures and handrails, drains and footpaths, has been estimated at Rs10 million.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is regrettable that despite a request for financial clearance submitted as far back as March 2023, no concrete action has been taken by the previous government to resolve this matter.

Our government is committed to deliver practical, sustainable and timely solutions. We will ensure that the renovation and security improvements at Mahebourg Waterfront are carried out efficiently for the safety, comfort and benefit of the public. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, hon. Member!

Mr Apollon: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Can I know from the hon. Minister, with regard to the steel jetty, when will the works start?

Mr Woochit: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I already mentioned that an estimated cost for this replacement project is approximately Rs25 million. So, we are liaising with the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change to have the clearance and then we can start.

BEAU PLAN – MORCELLEMENT LE HAMEAU – EIA LICENCES

(No. B/602) Mr K. Rookny (Third Member for Pamplemousses & Triolet) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the plot of land situated at Beau Plan, known as Morcellement Le Hameau, he will state if the promoter/s thereof has/have been issued with Environment Impact Assessment Licences in respect thereof.

(Withdrawn)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Second Member for Vieux Grand Port and Rose Belle!

**MAURITIAN ECONOMY – FATF’S GREY LIST & EUROPEAN COMMISSION’S
BLACK LIST – BAD PRESS & DAMAGES**

(No. B/603) Mr M. Seeburn (Second Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle) asked the Minister of Financial Services and Economic Planning whether, in regard to the placing in May 2020 of Mauritius on the Grey list of the Financial Action Task Force as “Jurisdiction under increased monitoring”, Black list of the European Commission as “High risk third countries” and list of “High risk third countries” by the United Kingdom on March 2021, she will state why the outgoing Government and the then Minister of Financial Services failed to take appropriate timely measures despite warnings to avoid the above listings and prevent the image of Mauritius from bad press and damages to the Mauritian economy.

Dr. Ms Jeetun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed that as a member of the Eastern and Southern Africa Anti-Money Laundering Group (ESAAMLG), Mauritius endorsed the revised international standards on combatting money-laundering and the financing of terrorism and proliferation issued by Financial Action Task Force (FATF) in February 2012. In this respect, Mauritius underwent a mutual evaluation of its Anti-Money Laundering and Combatting the Financing of Terrorism (AML/CFT) systems and procedures using the methodology for assessing technical compliance with the FATF Recommendations and the effectiveness of AML/CFT systems adopted by the FATF in February 2013.

The mutual evaluation process started in October 2016 and was completed with the publication of the Mauritius Mutual Evaluation Report (MER) in September 2018. The mutual evaluation which was conducted by ESAAMLG highlighted the areas of weaknesses in the AML/CFT legal and institutional framework of Mauritius. While Mauritius was rated largely compliant or compliant in only 14 of the 40 FATF Recommendations, on the other hand, Mauritius was rated partially compliant or non-compliant with 26 recommendations. Shortcomings were observed in relation to a number of FATF recommendations. In terms of effectiveness, the FATF adopted an approach focusing on a hierarchy of 11 defined outcomes. Mauritius was found to have either a low or a moderate level of effectiveness against the 11 immediate outcomes. The country achieved moderate effectiveness in 4 of the 11 immediate outcomes.

Following the publication of the Mutual Evaluation Report in September 2018, Mauritius was placed under enhanced follow-up process in line with the ESAAMLG procedures for mutual evaluation and follow-up process.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed that after the observation period of one year, from October 2018 to October 2019, the FATF International Corporation Review Group (ICRG), assessed the progress made by Mauritius and considered that since the completion of the MER in 2018, while Mauritius had made some progress on some of its MER recommended action to improve technical compliance, the ICRG determined that not all strategic deficiencies had been fully addressed. Mauritius was, therefore, placed on the FATF list of jurisdictions under increased monitoring in February 2020 with an agreed action plan to address the strategic deficiencies identified in its AML/CFT regime.

Mauritius was subsequently added to the European Union list of High Risk Third Countries on 07 May 2020, and in addition, to mirror the FATF list of jurisdictions under increased monitoring, the UK also included Mauritius in its list of High Risk Third Countries in March 2021. In fact, as stated in the Mutual Evaluation Report, published by the ESAAMLG, in September 2018, Mauritius was rated non-compliant or partly compliant on 26 out of the 40 FATF recommendations with significant shortcomings in risk assessment, supervision and beneficial ownership transparency.

Moreover, the Report concluded that the country has a low level of effectiveness in 7 out of 11 immediate outcomes, notably in the areas of understanding of money-laundering risk, financial supervision, investigation and prosecution and implementation of targeted

financial sanctions. These findings triggered the ICRG referral process with Mauritius entering a one-year observation period.

Regrettably, that one-year period was not optimally used. Instead of marshalling resources and driving through the necessary reforms, the previous government remained passive, allowing momentum to slip away and public trust to erode.

The international consequences were swift. As the European Commission explained in its official notice on 07 May 2020, Mauritius has strategic deficiencies in its anti-money laundering and counter-terrorism financing regime that pose significant threats to the financing system of the Union. Similarly, the UK in its 26th March 2021 Regulatory Update justified Mauritius' inclusion on its high-risk list by stating –

“This jurisdiction poses increased risk due to strategic deficiencies in their AML/CFT regime and has been identified by the FATF as requiring increased monitoring.”

These listings, unfortunately tarnished the reputation of the Mauritius International Financial Centre, created market uncertainty and placed investment clause and correspondent banking relationship under strain. The damage to our global image and economic prospect was real and avoidable, and the negative image is still prevalent globally until today.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I must add that since I assume duty as Minister of Financial Services and Economic Planning, one of my priorities has been to sustain the trust of our international partners. While we cannot undo the economic and reputational harm caused, we believed that with decisive leadership, Mauritius can and will uphold the highest international standards. And in response to the continuously evolving AML/CFT/CPF landscape by key drivers such as emerging risk and development at the level of FATF, my Ministry has embarked on the following measures aimed at strengthening the National AML/CFT/CPF Framework and ensuring sustain alignment with revised international standards –

- Firstly, participation in ESAAMLG meetings and attending the FATF plenary meetings to keep abreast of development at the level of FATF.
- Secondly, conducting comprehensive risk assessments to identify and understand emerging risk and take necessary measures to mitigate identified risk. In this respect, the Ministry is currently conducting the money-laundering and terrorism financing risk assessment of legal persons and legal arrangements. The terrorist

financing risk assessment are non-profit organisation and the first proliferation financing risk assessment of the country.

- We are also implementing capacity building programmes for competent authorities. For instance, my Ministry has recently organised an intensive 5-day assessors' training which was facilitated by experts from the ESAAMLG Secretariat. We are also undertaking...

The Deputy Speaker: Can you conclude, please. If you want to circulate the answer because there are a lot of questions.

Dr. Ms Jeetun: I have nearly finished, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Just one last paragraph.

The Deputy Speaker: It has been a long answer.

Dr. Ms Jeetun: I just want to add that in parallel, besides working on improving our systems, we are also undertaking a branding and promotional campaign to reinforce the brand image of Mauritius as a jurisdiction of substance and remove any negative perception about the reputation of the country.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: You have a question even with this clear answer? Yes, come on! Put your question!

Mr Seeburn: Now we know that Mauritius was downgraded by the European Commission in 2020 ...

The Deputy Speaker: Question! Question! Put your question!

Mr Seeburn: ... despite the advance warning given. Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether the grey listing had any adverse on the business activity in the sector?

The Deputy Speaker: Briefly! You have already replied to that but ...

Dr. Ms Jeetun: In terms of numbers, definitely, there was a drop in the number of new global business companies being incorporated during the period 2020-2021 when the numbers went drastically down.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: You have one question?

Mr Rookny: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Could the hon. Minister please advise when the next review of Mauritius is due and what are the strategic deficiencies that you referred to in your answer as mentioned by FATF?

Dr. Ms Jeetun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the next mid-term evaluation is in 2027 and the second National Risk Assessment Report that we have released recently, comprises a list of deficiencies that have been identified and on which my Ministry is working with all the competent authorities to make sure that the country is ready for the next mid-term evaluation.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.

Hon. Second Member for Flacq and Bon Accueil.

MAURITIUS TOURISM PROMOTION AUTHORITY – MR S.R. – OVERSEAS MISSIONS – COST INCURRED

(No. B/604) Mr R. Beehook (Second Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil) asked the Minister of Tourism whether, in regard to the official overseas missions funded by the Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority (MTPA) since 2014 to 2024, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the MTPA, information as to the number thereof in which Mr S.R. participated, giving a breakdown of the cost incurred in relation thereto in each case.

The Minister of Energy and Public Utilities (Mr P. Assirvaden) : M. le président, avec votre permission, je vais répondre à cette question. On m’informe que de 2016 à 2024, il y a eu une collaboration très étroite, voir exclusive entre la MTPA et Maradiva et Mauriplage dont Monsieur S.R et ses proches parents sont actionnaires.

An hon. Member: Who is S.R?

Mr Assirvaden : S.R. Monsieur Sanjiv Ramdane !

Cette proximité, M. le président, a permis à Maradiva, Mauriplage et Dhyanavartam de bénéficier d’un traitement de faveur et de privilège indue de la part de la MTPA. Par exemple, M. le président, Maradiva et Mauriplage, en partenariat exclusif avec la MTPA, ont participé à plusieurs événements coûteux à l’étranger où des fonds publics ont été dépensés sans aucun bénéfice pour la MTPA ni pour la destination mauricienne.

An hon. Member : Incroyable !

Mr Assirvaden: Ces événements comprennent, M. le président – tenez-vous bien – le Royal Ascot qui est un événement hippique, destiné à l’élite au Royaume Uni. On se rappelle

encore du fameux, Monsieur S.R, habillé comme le Duke anglais, à nos frais, cigare en main, s'il vous plaît !

La MTPA, avec l'approbation de son conseil d'administration, a participé avec Maradiva-Mauriplage à cet évènement en 2016, 2019, 2022, 2024.

Des accords ont même été signés pour le partage des dépenses de participation entre la MTPA et Maradiva.

Ms Anquetil: Les détails !

Mr Assirvaden: Mais le hic, M. le président, c'est que sauf pour 2022, la part de coût à la MTPA a été versée à Maradiva plutôt qu'à l'organisateur !

(Interruptions)

Pourquoi Maradiva ? L'ancien directeur de la MTPA devra s'expliquer. Je dépose, M. le président, une liste de ces paiements qui s'élèvent à ...

(Interruptions)

Ms Anquetil : Donne les détails !

Mr Assirvaden: Je laisse durer le plaisir...

R 5,665,591.75 et l'honorable membre de l'opposition posait des questions ce matin sur ce qui est vrai...

Il est choquant !

(Interruptions)

Ms Anquetil : Quel culot !

Mr Assirvaden: Il est choquant de constater qu'à ce jour, la MTPA ignore totalement – je répète la question pour ceux qui ont manqué – il est choquant de constater qu'à ce jour, la MTPA ignore totalement si Maradiva a versé ces R5 million et quelques à l'organisateur !

Elle ignore également si Maradiva a honoré son engagement concernant les 50% restant, la seule preuve documentaire disponible à la MTPA et la confirmation par Maradiva de la réception du montant que la MTPA lui a versée.

(Interruptions)

Ms Anquetil : Honteux ! Honteux !

Mr Assirvaden : M. le président, la Chambre notera également, qu'en 2024, l'année dernière, juste avant les élections, la MTPA a envoyé le paiement de son représentant permanent au Royaume Uni. Cependant, pour des raisons inconnues, le paiement de 25,000 livres sterling a ensuite été reversé à Maradiva !

Ms Anquetil : Scandaleux ! Révoltant !

Mr Assirvaden: M. le président, ...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Let's listen to the answer, please. Very interesting one.

Mr Assirvaden: M. le président, l'édition 2024 de la Coupe du Monde de Snow Polo – je ne savais même pas qu'il existait un Coup du Monde de Snow Polo – qui s'est tenue en Suisse du 26 au 28 février 2024 est un autre événement qui s'est déroulé en partenariat exclusif avec Maradiva.

Selon la MTPA, ...

The Deputy Prime Minister: *Maranissa!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Assirvaden: Selon la MTPA, l'ancien directeur avait, sans l'approbation de son conseil d'administration, réservé un espace pour participer à l'évènement au nom de la MTPA et de Maradiva, également.

Cependant, ils se sont retirés de l'évènement au dernier moment. L'organisateur poursuit actuellement uniquement la MTPA pour non-paiement de R 2.7 millions.

M. le président, la liste est longue ; je suis également informé que l'ancien directeur de la MTPA avait versé la somme d'un peu plus de R360,000 pour sa participation et celle de monsieur S.R, M. Ramdane, à la conférence et aux événements du Financial Time Global qui s'est tenu le 05 février 2020, à partir de la carte de crédit mise à sa disposition par la MTPA.

Ce paiement étant non-autorisé est ...

Ms Anquetil: Profiteur !

Mr Assirvaden: ... notamment pour le compte d'une tierce. La Financial Crimes Commission a ouvert une enquête à ce sujet !

Ms Anquetil: Normale !

Mr Assirvaden: Ce n'est pas fini, M. le président, malheureusement. Comment la Chambre peut-elle oublier la 13^{ème} édition – ça aussi je ne savais pas – de la Maradiva White Party?

(Interruptions)

Et tout cela...

Mr Jhummun: *Ek sa bann pe fer nou leson la ein !*

Mr Assirvaden: ... c'est l'argent de la population !

(Interruptions)

Mr Jhummun: *Pa ti dir pa pe kapav pey pension.*

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. Carry on with your answer!

(Interruptions)

Mr Assirvaden: De la Maradiva White Party, qui s'est tenue en octobre 2024, juste à la veille des élections générales...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mr Assirvaden: ...au cour de laquelle, la MTPA a dépensé R 450, 000 pour faire venir quatre *coco-girls* danseuses !

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order! Order!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Members: *La honte! Shame!*

The Deputy Speaker: Order! Carry on, hon. Minister!

Let's listen to the answer, please!

Mr Assirvaden: La MTPA a dépensé R 450000, je vous disais, M. le président, pour faire venir quatre *coco-girls* danseuses de l'Europe de l'Est !

Mr Mohamed: Habillées en orange !

Mr Assirvaden: De plus, l'identités et cela je n'arrive pas à comprendre –l'identités de ces danseuses ont été falsifiées...

(Interruptions)

Et elles ont été présentées comme des journalistes influenceurs médiatiques.

(Interruptions)

Outre ce qui précède, M. le président, au-delà de ce qu'on entend, il faut bien le dire, M. le président, c'est l'argent de la population, l'argent du peuple qui a été gaspillé. Outre ce qui précède, les *coco-girls*, ça a frôlé la prostitution.

(Interruptions)

Mr Assirvaden: En 2021, la *MTPA* a également financé des billets d'avion pour un voyage de presse au nom de *Maradiva* encore une fois.

An hon. Member: *Ankor!*

Mr Assirvaden: La Chambre souhaiterait peut-être noter que toutes les dépenses susmentionnées, qui sont hautement douteuses et contestables, font actuellement l'objet d'une enquête de la *Financial Crimes Commission*.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Only one question before we break for lunch.

Mr Beehook: I thank the hon. Minister for his extensive reply. *C'est clair que la MTPA était l'agence de voyage personnel de Monsieur S.R.* I would like to know, if he has the details, whether the *MTPA* has paid for Gala Tickets at the Saint-Moritz Snow Polo Tournament which includes Perrier champagne – *je ne bois pas trop* – cigar lounge and unlimited champagne bars?

Mr Assirvaden: M. le président, ce n'est pas mon ministère. On parle de l'édition 2024 de la Coupe du monde de *snow polo* qui s'est déroulée en Suisse. Le renseignement de l'honorable membre est sûrement vrai. Merci.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay, thank you.

I suspend the Sitting for one and a half hour.

At 1.08 p.m., the Sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 2.39 p.m. with the Deputy Speaker in the Chair.

The Deputy Speaker: Please be seated!

The hon. First Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue!

CONSTITUENCY NO. 4 – PIPE LAYING IMPACT – ROADS REINSTATEMENT

(No. B/605) Ms A. Savabaddy (Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the pipe laying works undertaken in Constituency No 4, Port-Louis North and Montagne Longue, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Water Authority, information as to when the roads damaged in the course thereof will be reinstated, indicating the timeframe set therefor, if any.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Minister!

Mr Assirvaden: M. le président, je suis informé par la *Central Water Authority* que des travaux de pose de tuyaux ont été entrepris dans quelques régions de la circonscription no. 4, à savoir Port Louis Nord-Montagne Longue, dans les régions de Montagne Longue, Notre Dame, Cité La Cure, Sainte-Croix, Roche Bois, Vallée des Prêtres.

M. le président, je suis également informé que la réintégration permanente est en cours sur ces routes. D’abord, à Montagne Longue, 6.6 km sur un total de 8.6 km ont déjà été refaits. Les 2 km restants, principalement des déroutés de la RDA, devraient être terminés d’ici fin septembre 2025. À Cité La Cure, Sainte-Croix, Roche Bois et Vallée des Prêtres, la réfection permanente des routes devrait être achevée d’ici fin juillet 2025.

M. le président, en fait, dans la région de Sainte-Croix, il reste environ 200 m de tuyaux sur les 4.8 km à réaliser d’ici la fin de ce mois. Concernant la réfection des routes, 2.2 km sur 3 km de routes municipales ont déjà été réalisés. Les sections restantes devraient être achevées en octobre 2025.

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

CLUNY & BANANES – FOOTBALL PITCHES REINSTATEMENT

(No. B/606) Mr A. Ramdass (Third Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle) asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to the football pitches in Cluny and Bananes, he will state if consideration will be given for the reinstatement thereof and provision of lighting facilities thereat.

Mr Woochit: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Cluny Football Ground, covering approximately 3600m², is being upgraded under a contract amounting to Rs1,725,000,

inclusive of VAT. The contract was awarded to Sonallal & Sons Building Contractor Ltd on 10 January 2023.

The scope of works includes –

- levelling;
- compaction;
- top soil placement, and
- grass planting.

The initial completion date was set up for 07 August 2023, but was extended to 29 May 2024 due to implementation short comings. The District Council of Grand Port did not accept the works because of defects and requested remedial actions.

Although the project was finalised in April 2025, further levelling and grass replanting were still required. Subsequently, liquidated damages are being imposed at Rs2500 per day up to a maximum of 10% of the contract value. The contractor has been instructed to complete outstandings works by end of August 2025.

As for lighting, the National Development Unit (NDU) installed the system during 2020-2021. However, the main distribution panel was vandalised on 24 July 2023 and all the electrical fixtures and fittings were stolen. The District Council is reinstating the lighting system through in-house labour at an estimated cost of Rs75,000 with completion expected by mid-August 2025.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, similarly, the Bananes Football Ground, covering approximately 6400m², is being upgraded under the same contract as Cluny at the cost of Rs1,725,000, inclusive of VAT.

The works involve –

- soil levelling and compaction;
- placing four inches of top soil, and
- grass planting with proper spacing.

Maintenance includes –

- watering;
- fertilising, and
- replacing dead grasses.

Due to similar shortcomings in levelling and grass planting, remedial works were required and the contractor has been asked to complete these by end of August 2025. The lighting system at Bananes Football Ground was installed by the District Council of Grand Port in 2020. Following financial clearance from the NDU, additional civil works and bleachers were completed in year 2019 and 2022 while lighting facilities exist.

Lack of proper maintenance by the council has been an issue. Bulk replacement is being carried out by in-house teams and will be completed shortly.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to highlight that poor maintenance of such amenities by councils continues to cause undue hardship to our citizens. To address these issues/shortcomings, a circular letter will be issued to all Chief Executives of the local authorities urging urgent resolution of maintenance issues.

Furthermore, the former government bears responsibility for delays in project completion due to its fragmented approach. Instead of entrusting a single contractor for comprehensive upgrades, contracts were split between the NDU and the local authorities resulting in lack of coordination and prolonged incompletion. Thank you.

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

WORKSHOPS (MOTOR VEHICLES) – HEALTH & SAFETY INSPECTIONS (2014-2024)

(No. B/607) Mr N. Beejan (Second Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of Labour and Industrial Relations whether, in regard to workplace inspections carried out at the premises where repairs of motor vehicles and motorcycles are effected over the period December 2014 to November 2024, he will state the –

- (a) number thereof annually and table the list thereof, and
- (b) names of the employers prosecuted for breaches of the Occupational Safety and Health Act 2005, indicating in each case, the relevant section under which each one was prosecuted.

Mr Uteem: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the officers of the National Occupational Safety and Health Department that they carry out visits at places of work, including workshops where mechanical repairs are carried out for motor vehicles and motor cycles, to ensure that the health and safety standards are met in accordance with the provisions of the Occupational Safety and Health Act 2005.

Following visits carried at places of work, appropriate recommendation is issued to the employers in accordance with Section 24 (5) of the OSH Act 2005. Follow-up visits are thereafter carried out to verify compliance. In case of repeated non-compliance, contraventions are established and the employers are prosecuted in accordance with Section 26 of the Act.

With regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that for the period December 2014 to November 2024, 434 visits were undertaken by officers of the National Occupational Safety and Health Department. 191 out of 230 premises are registered with NOSH as factories where activities in connection with repairs of motor vehicles and motor cycles are carried out.

I am tabling the list of the inspections carried out for each year, from 2014 to 2025.

As regard to part (b) of the question, I am further informed that as at date, eight employers involved in repair of motor vehicles and motor cycles have been prosecuted for breaches under relevant sections OSH Act 2005, namely sections 5, 10, 23, 85, 87, 88 and 105. I am also tabling the list of the employers who have been sanctioned under the Act.

The Deputy Speaker: Do you have a supplementary question?

Mr Beejan: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Could the hon. Minister inform the House what additional measures will be taken to ensure the safety and health of employees in this sector, especially given that there has been a significant rise in the number of vehicles for the past ten years?

Mr Uteem: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have to confess that I am also not satisfied with the number of visits carried out by the inspection of my Ministry because over the past 10 years, approximately less than 20% of workshops are inspected every year. But unfortunately, we have a constraint of labour inspectors and in the Enforcement Department. We have asked for additional staff and we will try our best to conduct more inspections of workshops.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Second Member for Flacq and Bon Accueil!

BUS ROUTES 53, 26 & 221 – IRREGULARITIES – REMEDIAL MEASURES

(No. B/608) Mr R. Beechook (Second Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil) asked the Minister of Land Transport whether, in regard to bus routes 53, 26 and 221, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Land Transport Authority, information as to

the remedial measures undertaken or envisaged to ensure regular and reliable public transport services along same.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I informed by the NLTA that bus route 26, Belmont Traffic Centre to Central Flacq via Roche Noire, and route 53, Belmont Traffic Centre to Central Flacq via Amaury and Laventure are served by buses owned by individual bus owners.

Previously, 19 buses were licensed to operate along these two routes. However, in 2006 one bus was transferred to route 106 which is Flacq-Port Louis while a second bus which had remained off the road since May 2020 had its road service licence lapsed. Thus, the fleet along these routes were reduced to 17 buses.

I am apprised that with a view to addressing this shortfall, two short-term RSL licences were granted in October 2023 and August 2024, respectively. As at present, buses are released every 20 minutes from both terminals to serve both routes, alternatively, throughout the day. The fleet also caters for seven school trips and two short services on school days. Furthermore, buses on these routes also transit via Poudre D'Or Hospital at designated time of the day.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the NLTA that the routes 26 and 53 have indeed been subject to recurrent complaints particularly when scheduled trips are missed due to one or more buses being off-road due to breakdowns and unavailability of spare buses for replacement or simply, due to operators opting not to provide the service which is a recurrent happening. It is to be pointed out that a high number of these buses are more one 17 years old and are thus often prone to mechanical problems. As a result, strict compliance with timetable of operation cannot be observed. Thus, drawing strong complaints from commuters and management educational institutions.

I have seen, with much concern, the video posted on social media by the hon. Member on Sunday, 29 June 2025 as regard line 26 whereby the last bus did not turn up at the Flacq Bus Station and 16 passengers were, consequently, left stranded. The Disciplinary Committee of the NLTA has been constituted under the chair of Attorney, Ms Aratee Prayag. I will ask the Authority to investigate on this incident as a priority and to ensure that severe action is taken against all those liable. To this effect, regular monitoring is ongoing by the regulator, the NLTA, although it is constrained by significant shortage of inspectorate staffs. Furthermore, I wish to reassure the House that the licensing of two additional buses along the

said routes is also being contemplated in order to enhance the level of service and to cater for emergencies resulting from breakdown of buses.

Coming to route 221 which is part of the question, Haute Rive Traffic Centre, Rivière du Rempart to Central Flacq via Roche Noire, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the NLTA has apprised that this route was created to serve the inhabitants of Plaines des Roches who converged to Flacq for their social, recreational and economic activities as well as for students attending educational institutions in Flacq. This route is served daily by individual buses, on a roaster basis, of a fleet of 71 buses operating along routes 106, 109, 111, 176 and 112 – Flacq to Port Louis. These buses are released at intervals of 20 to 30 minutes during peak time and 60 to 70 minutes during off-peak.

The service along this route has also been subject to repeated complaints from the travelling public due to dishonest operators failing to run their buses during off peak time. Checks are being carried out during the morning and peak time by the inspectorate to ensure the observance of timetable.

Moreover, I am made aware that the NLTA will soon have a meeting with the bus operators for reviewing the existing established timetable in order to better meet the need of passengers.

Finally, I wish to reiterate with much belief and confidence that malpractices will soon come to an end with the forthcoming introduction of Fleet Management System. At long last, we have a budgetary provision for this in the last budget.

Meanwhile, I have asked the NLTA to have one of the 11 Management Support Officers to be posted at the Flacq Station to ensure close monitoring. In fact, these 11 MSOs have been entrusted a special assignment to strengthen the NLTA inspectorate pending the recruitment of Road Transport Inspectors as I had extensively explained during my speech on the Budget this year.

Finally, I would invite the hon. Member, and his other colleagues of the constituency to work in close collaboration with the NLTA for the benefit of the commuters and to feel free to liaise with the MSO if need be.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, hon. Member!

Mr Beechook: I thank the hon. Minister. I will seek your indulgence, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, because the problem of line 26 and 53 affects strongly students. One child in

one month was subject to 14 lateness and very often people who live in areas like Poste La Fayette and Débarcadère, Poste de Flacq miss the first and last bus to their work.

The Deputy Speaker: Put your question!

Mr Beehook: The question to the hon. Minister is that the bus owners also face acute shortage to recruit bus drivers. Can the hon. Minister, please, consider the request of allowing the bus industry to recruit foreign bus drivers, instead of going through the painful and lengthy work permit process, be prioritized and be eligible to the occupation permit delivered within weeks by the EDB which will solve the labour problem?

Mr Osman Mahomed: We are doing our level best to facilitate. In fact, I just spoke to my colleague.

The Deputy Speaker: I think it is a question concerning your colleague more than you.

Mr Osman Mahomed: But just for the sake of clarity, if the salary is more than Rs23,000, this route can be contemplated.

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

ELECTRIC BUS PROJECT – CONSULTATION SERVICES – CONTRACT

(No. B/609) Ms S. Anquetil (Second Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Land Transport whether, in regard to the Electric Bus Project, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Transport Corporation, information as to the name of the consultant whose services have been retained therefor, indicating the –

- (a) selection process adopted for the appointment thereof, and
- (b) terms and conditions of the contract.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the National Transport Corporation that in line with the street renewal strategy and the planned deployment of its electric fleet, the consultancy services of Aequalis Consulting Engineers Co. Ltd were enlisted on two occasions namely, a first time in 2023, for a feasibility study on consultancy for design and charging system and infrastructure for electric buses across six NTC depots, and a second time in 2024. In the interest of time, I am tabling the full scope of work for the initial feasibility study.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I wish to inform the House that for the first contract, an invitation for bids was sought by mail on 02 June 2023 through a restricted bidding exercise from nine companies. Again, in the interest of time, I am tabling the full list of the nine companies.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, at time of closing on 15 June 2023, that is, 13 days later, only one bid was received which was evaluated and recommended by the Bid Evaluation Committee. The then management submitted its bid to the Board of the NTC for approval on 19 June 2023, that is, four days later.

The next day, on 20 June 2023, a Letter of Award was subsequently issued to Aequalis Consulting Engineers Co. Ltd for the sum of Rs1.725 million VAT inclusive. I am informed that these 18 days it took to invite for bids, evaluate, approve and award, is a record indeed at the NTC for procurement of such nature.

The House may wish to note that works as per above contract was deemed completed by the then management of the NTC and payment was effected to Aequalis Consulting Engineers Co. Ltd on 07 September 2023, that is, some two months later.

As regard the second contract, I am informed that following the recommendations of the then management, the NTC Board approved on 29 July 2024 that for continuity of consultancy services, Aequalis Consulting Engineers Company Ltd be resorted, *inter alia*, for additional services in respect of preparation of bidding documents, quantity surveying services, evaluation of bids and commissioning of works for the setting up of charging infrastructure for electric buses. As at date, a sum of Rs225,000 has been paid to the consultant for the second contract out of a total of Rs685,000 which I am informed, was the ceiling provided under the procurement laws for extension of contract.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (b) of the question, for the first contract, I am informed that the conditions were as per the Letter of award. For the second contract, I am informed by the NTC that the second order bearing No. 83275 was issued on 23 August 2024 to Aequalis Consulting Engineers Company Ltd to carry out consultancy services as per quoted price of Rs685,000.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as regards the hon. Member's specific question on terms and conditions, I am afraid I cannot possibly provide any more details as I am informed that the then management under former General Manager, Mr Rao Ramah did not sign any contract with the said consultant for the extension, that is, the second extension.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, because of this awkward situation of the NTC inherited from Mr Ramah, there is today, a problematic situation where the design of Aequalis Consulting Engineers Company Ltd and that, being proposed by the contractor appointed by the Indian side which is Switch Mobility from India are not attuned because they diverge. This has led to a huge delay in the process to the point that I had to chair a meeting on 3 July 2025, during which I had given an ultimatum to Aequalis Consulting Engineers Company Ltd to complete its part of the contract, that is, the extension that awarded on a mere service order. Aequalis Consulting Engineers has undertaken to complete all the works, all the documents by the end of this week.

As a last note, this delay has already caused a setback in the operations of the 100 electric buses by the National Transport Corporation. Thank you.

Ms Anquetil: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir!

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, one supplementary.

Ms Anquetil: So important, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

I thank you very much, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. It would appear that the extension of the original contract deviates seriously from the good governance practices. Will the Minister inform the House – clarify – how the NTC intends to proceed without a proper signed contract outlining the terms and conditions? Thank you.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Yes, it is a bit too much too late because the contract was not signed but I had called them at the office on 3 July and I have asked them for national interest they have to complete this project because the 100 buses from India, 10 of them have already arrived and the rest are awaiting the completion of these works to be able to shift and balance of 90.

Ms Anquetil: A last one please!

The Deputy Speaker: Go ahead.

Ms Anquetil: I thank you very much, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Would the Minister inform the House the actions being taken to charge the electric buses with renewable energy? Thank you.

Mr Osman Mahomed: I thank the hon. Member for this very pertinent question. Indeed, electric vehicles are more polluting in Mauritius, I said it during the PNQ. I have started discussions with the Global Environment Fund in order to secure funds and facilities

to install solar photovoltaic panels on the rooftop of the NTC depot so that we can mitigate the environmental impact.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Hon. Third Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière!

MAURITIUS SPORTS COUNCIL – BOARD COMPOSITION – ALLOWANCES & BENEFITS

(No. B/610) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the Mauritius Sports Council, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the names of the Chairperson and other members of the board thereof, indicating in each case, the –

- (a) monthly allowances and benefits drawn, and
- (b) experience thereof in the field of sports.

Mr Nagalingum: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the present Board of the Mauritius Sports Council was constituted on 17 January 2025. I am tabling the composition thereof along with the monthly allowances and benefits drawn by each member. The document also indicates the experience expressed by the respective members.

Mr Quirin: M. le président, l'honorable ministre peut-il dire à la Chambre si parmi les membres du *Board du Mauritius Sports Council*, il y a des politiciens engagés activement ? Si oui, si tel est le cas, de nous donner leur nom et nous dire les fonctions politiques qu'ils occupent.

The Deputy Prime Minister: *Mo mem mo kav dir li. Li pa ti politisien li! Vermine la !*

Mr Quirin: *Ki vermine? Pran to koze al to lakaz do ta!*

Mr Nagalingum: If you want to know...

(Interruptions)

Mr Quirin: *Ki ariv twa! Ki vermine? Respekte to prochain.*

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. Listen to the Minister!

Mr Quirin: *Vermine! Incroyable!*

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Quirin, do you want to...

(Interruptions)

Let us listen to the answer. You asked a question, let us have the answer!

(Interruptions)

Mr Quirin: *Ki be be be? Ki? Mo per twa mwa to krwar?*

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Prime Minister: *Get twa dan laglas!*

Mr Quirin: *Ey twa ki bizin al get twa dan laglas! Si to ena kouraz al get twa!*

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mr Quirin: *Si to ena kouraz al get twa dan laglas!*

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Quirin!

Mr Quirin: Yes?

The Deputy Speaker: No cross talking please! Listen to the answer!

Mr Nagalingum: Yes, he put a question. The Chairman appointed by the Minister is Mr Iqbal Calcateea, Chairperson of the Mauritius Sports Council. He is an active politician, yes.

Mr Quirin: M. le président, la *Sports Act* interdit aux dirigeants de fédérations de faire de la politique active. Le ministre peut-il dire à la Chambre pourquoi cette règle n'est pas applicable dans le cas du *Mauritius Sports Council* où justement il vient de le dire, siège M. Calcateea qui occupe la présidence ? Peut-on savoir ? On est en train de politiser le sport.

The Deputy Speaker: Put your question!

Mr Quirin: Oui

The Deputy Speaker: What is the question?

Mr Quirin: Il aurait dû écouter, M. le président. Le ministre peut-il dire à la Chambre pourquoi cette règle qui consiste à interdire aux dirigeants des fédérations de faire de la politique active, pourquoi cette règle n'est pas applicable au *Mauritius Sports Council* ?

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. Hon. Minister?

Mr Nagalingum: Yes, you listen well. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my Ministry has sought legal advice from the Attorney General's Office on this matter as far back as 2 April 2025.

The advice was as follows: section 16(c)(iii) of the Local Government Act provides, *inter alia*, that –

“No person shall be qualified to be elected, or nominated, as a Municipal City Councillor, Municipal Town Councillor (...) where he –

(c) is the holder of, or is acting in, an office of emolument –

(iii) a statutory corporation or an organisation wholly funded by the State other than as the chairperson or member of the governing body of that corporation or organisation wholly funded by the State;”

In the light of the above provision, the Chairperson and members of the Mauritius Sports Council are eligible to stand as candidate for the forthcoming elections, that is, a Councillor can be nominated as Chairperson for the Mauritius Sports Council.

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

M1, M2 & M3 MOTORWAYS – GRADE-SEPARATED JUNCTIONS CONVERSION – PROJECT DETAILS

(No. B/611) Mr L. Caserne (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure whether, in regard to the roundabouts on the M1, M2 and M3 motorways, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Road Development Authority, the list thereof earmarked for conversion into Grade-Separated Junctions to alleviate traffic congestion thereat, indicating in each case –

- (a) the scope of works;
- (b) the estimated cost, and
- (c) where matters stand as to the implementation of the project.

Mr Gunness: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is a known fact that previously roundabouts were being provided along motorways and main roads to allow conflicting movements across junctions. These roundabouts have served their purposes over the years.

However, over time due to increasing volume of traffic, several of these roundabouts are now operating beyond capacity, leading to extensive congestion, long queues and increasing travel times. Accordingly, the Road Development Authority, in line with the present policy to replace roundabouts and junctions with flyovers or Grade-Separated Junctions and interchangers, has identified a list of roundabouts which have reached a critical

stage and needful is being done to replace them in a phased manner. It should be highlighted that many developed countries do not have roundabouts along their highways, motorways. I am informed by the RDA that a traffic analysis survey including an assessment of the volume of traffic and turning movement of vehicles at roundabouts is normally carried out on the basis of which a decision is taken as to whether the roundabout warrants any upgrading.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the RDA that as at date, six roundabouts have already been replaced by Grade-Separated Junctions or flyovers, namely at –

- Quay D;
- Wooton;
- St Pierre Bypass;
- Terre Rouge on motorway M2;
- Motorway M1 at La Vigie, and
- Interchange construction and improvements along M3-A14 corridor at Ebène.

Additionally, the RDA has identified four more projects, which are currently at preliminary stage, namely –

- Flyover at Camp Fouquereaux;
- Flyover on Motorway M2 at Baie du Tombeau roundabout, Roche Bois;
- Flyover on Motorway M1 at Swami Vivekananda Avenue, Curepipe, and
- Flyover on Motorway M1 at Nouvelle France.

These projects are expected to be implemented in the coming financial years.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that the scope of works for the grade-separated junctions and flyovers generally involves –

- technical surveys and investigations;
- rerouting and protection of existing services;
- relocation of monuments;
- design and construction of the flyover with provision of add-grade slip lanes;

- construction and upgrading of drainage and retaining structures.

With your permission, I am tabling the details regarding parts (a), (b) and (c) of the question.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Second Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka!

DISTRICT COUNCILS – GYMNASIUM INSTRUCTORS – RECRUITMENT & ALLOWANCE

(No. B/612) Dr. Ms B. Thannoo (Second Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to the District Councils, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the Councils having retained the services of zumba, yoga and gym instructors, indicating the number thereof in each case, further indicating the hourly rate at which they are paid, since when and whether consideration will be given for a revision thereof.

Mr Woochit: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the hon. Member that gymnasium instructors, on a part-time basis, are recruited through the Local Government Service Commission both at the level of District and Municipal Councils.

According to the Pay Research Bureau (PRB) Report 2021, the monthly allowance payable to part-time gymnasium instructors was revised from Rs14,895 to Rs16,610, provided the incumbent performed 27 working hours weekly.

The staffing position in the grade is being tabled.

Furthermore, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, local authorities also retain the services of gymnasium instructors on a sessional basis. The instructors are enlisted through an expression of interest with the sessional arrangement typically for a duration ranging from one and a half hours to two hours.

Following the publication of the Pay Research Bureau Report 2021 and further to requests made by the local authorities, the Ministry of Public Service and Administrative Reforms was approached to revise the quantum of allowance payable to instructors of yoga, zumba, self-defence and gym enlisted on a sessional basis.

On 31 October 2022, the Ministry of Public Service and Administrative Reforms revised the allowance from Rs425 for a session of one and half hours to two hours to Rs475 for a session of one and half hours for instructors enlisted to teach aerobics, badminton, kickboxing, tai chi, yoga, and Zumba, where the terms and conditions of employment are similar.

I am tabling detailed returns regarding employment of part-time gymnasium instructors in the local government service, indicating the number of established posts along with the number of officers in post as at 31 May 2025. The table also includes the instructors retained on a sessional basis to teach Zumba and yoga.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, any revision of these rates will be subject to recommendations made in the forthcoming Pay Research Bureau Report.

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

PUBLIC HOSPITALS – CT SCAN & MRI MACHINES – OPERATIONALITY

(No. B/613) Mr L. Caserne (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) and Computed Tomography (CT) Scan Equipment, he will give the list of the public health institutions equipped therewith, indicating in each case –

- (a) the number thereof presently not operational and the expected date of coming into operation thereof, and
- (b) when all public health institutions will be equipped therewith.

The Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation (Dr. A. Ramtohul): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I will reply to PQ B/613, addressed to the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

I am informed that the Ministry has four Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) apparatus operating at the following public health institutions. I will go by the common names –

- Dr. A.G. Jeetoo Hospital, Port Louis;

- SSRN Hospital, Pamplemousses;
- SAJ Hospital, Flacq, and
- NCC, Solferino.

On the other hand, CT scan machines are available at the following health institutions –

- 1 at Dr. A.G. Jeetoo Hospital, Port Louis;
- 1 SSRN Hospital, Pamplemousses;
- 1 Jawaharlal Nehru Hospital, Rose Belle;
- 2 at Victoria Hospital, Candos;
- 1 at ENT Hospital, Vacoas, and
- 1 at NCC, Solferino.

With regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that out of the four MRI equipment in public hospitals, the one at SSRN Hospital and the one at the National Cancer Centre are both functional, whereas that of Dr. Jeetoo Hospital is out of order since 12 May 2025. Spare parts to effect repairs have already been ordered and delivery is expected by end of this month. The repairs will then be completed within one week of the receipt of the spare parts.

As regards the MRI at SAJ Hospital, the MRI equipment has been delivered on 06 June 2025, and installation is in progress. Training and commissioning will be done, and the machine will be operational as from August 2025.

With regard to the CT scan machines, I am informed that there are seven of them. Out of the seven, only two are fully functional – one at Dr. Jeetoo Hospital and one at Victoria Hospital, whereas those at JNH and ENT Hospital are partly functional.

The status regarding the other three CT scan machines is as follows. It is not a long response, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Please, allow me to go through it –

- At SSRN Hospital, the equipment encountered problems on 13 May 2025. Troubleshooting actually revealed issues with some spare parts, which have now been ordered, and it will be received by end of this month. It will take one week for the machine to be up and operational.
- At Victoria Hospital, the CT scan equipment was also faulty. Repairs have been completed. As we speak, calibration is scheduled. The equipment will be fully operational very soon.
- At the NCC, the contract has been allocated for a comprehensive maintenance. Today, again, it is being done. Repairs, as per the problems that are there, will be effected within one month after allocation of a contract which is due today.

With regard to part (b) of the question, the procurement procedures have already been initiated for the procurement of a CT scan apparatus for SAJ Hospital. Procurement, here, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is transparent. It is not being done as it used to be done under the MSM regime. Moreover, provision has been made in the Budget 2025-2026 for the acquisition of two additional MRI equipment and two CT scan machines.

On an average, as a benchmark, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, for a population of 1.2 million, we are currently below standard. We are substandard. This is why people who are already suffering and are having to wait for long time, are being transferred from one hospital to another so that they can benefit from the services that these equipment deliver. That is just for their own health.

Therefore, there was really no focus by the MSM government with regard to the health of the nation. What they did was more of a money illusion instead of investing that money in the health of the public. Let me just exemplify. It is very quick, totally related to the question.

The Deputy Speaker: The question (b) is simple: “when all public health institutions will be equipped therewith?” Just tell us the lifespan, how many months or how many years, if you can.

Dr. Ramtohol: Yes.

The Deputy Speaker: I know you are not the substantive Minister.

Dr. Ramtohul: No, I am good with that. I just wanted to add this last bit to conclude.

The Deputy Speaker: Conclude!

Dr. Ramtohul: In the first year, we have already ordered equipment so that there is a 50% increase in the MRI equipment and 30% increase in the CT Scan equipment so that we can deliver better health services, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Dr. Ramtohul: So, this shows how much we care about the nation's health.

Just to conclude, with a view mitigate the time frame for the CT scan and MRI reports in case of breakdown of equipment, the patient is actually currently being referred to other hospitals. This is for us to ensure that the medical services are being deployed.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. Minister.

Hon. Second Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka!

ZEP SCHOOLS – MEAL PROGRAMME – QUALITY ASSURANCE

(No. B/614) Dr. Ms B. Thannoo (Second Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resource whether, in regard to the Supply and Distribution of Enhanced Meals to *Zones d'Education Prioritaire* Schools, he will –

- (a) give the list of the suppliers thereof, indicating in each case, the terms and conditions of contract, and
- (b) state the current measures implemented to ensure quality control of the meals supplied and distributed.

Dr. Gungapersad: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, at the very outset, let me apprise the House that the Enhanced Meal Programme in *Zone D'Education Prioritaire* Schools, is not only a humane exercise, it is also a powerful tool to address educational equity and social empowerment.

I am informed that my Ministry provides Enhanced Meals to 5,292 pupils in the 24 ZEP Schools. With regard to part (a) of the question, I am tabling the list of suppliers who are involved in the provision of these Enhanced Meals along with the terms and conditions of their contractual obligations.

As for part (b) of the question, I wish to inform the House that there are several measures to ensure quality control over the meals being served to the 5,292 pupils in the 24 ZEP Schools. For example, each ZEP school has a Monitoring Committee, composed of both teaching and non-teaching personnel responsible for overseeing the quality of the meals provided. Distribution of meals to pupils takes place only when the headmaster has personally certified the standard of the food.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, however, while the vision is clear, I must acknowledge that the execution of those quality control measures has not always kept pace with ambition. An Internal Audit Report dated 08 October 2024 revealed serious lapses in the performance of certain service providers, these included –

- repeated breaches of contract;
- complaints over meal quality, and
- unjustifiable delays in delivery,

failures that are wholly unacceptable.

It is also to be noted that over the past years, the Ministry has on various occasions been unsuccessful in finalising a comprehensive bidding exercise for the supply of the enhanced meals to all the four Education Zones. Pending the conclusions of a fresh procurement exercise, contracts are presently being extended on a month-to-month basis without price adjustments. An interim measure that has regrettably exposed the system to declining service quality due to inflationary pressures.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, these deficiencies were not only flagged internally, but were also echoed loudly at the recent *Assises de l'Education*. Let me assure the House that this Government will not condone mediocrity, certainly not when the well-being of our children is at stake.

Accordingly, decisive corrective action has been already taken to control the quality of Enhanced Meals. A fresh open-national bidding exercise was launched last month for the

supply of Enhanced Meals across the four Zones for both the third term of the academic year 2025 and the full academic calendar of 2026. The evaluation of bids is on-going for the four Zones. Unlike in the past, this new procurement exercise is underpinned by rigorous performance benchmarks –

- updated menus;
- revised food preparation, and handling protocols;
- a strict distribution guidelines, and
- reinforce monitoring frameworks have all been embedded.

Furthermore, all personnel deployed in these schools must present a valid Certificate of Character and a Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point Certificate or ISO 22000 Certificate. I am tabling the terms and conditions of these new procurement exercises for 2025.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, since 2019, there was no significant increase in the budget for Enhanced Meal Programme. However, in the 2025-2026 Budget, provision has been made to increase the budget from Rs80 million to Rs120 million so that we do not compromise on the quality of meals provided to our 5,292 children in 24 ZEP Schools.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Third Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière!

PUBLIC CONCERTS – EVENT ORGANISERS & ARTISTS – TERMS & CONDITIONS

(No. B/615) **Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière)** asked the Minister of Arts and Culture whether, in regard to the holding of public concerts by event organisers and artists, he will state the terms and conditions applicable thereto, indicating the restrictions, if any, on the publicity/promotion campaign thereof.

Mr Gondeea: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, at the outset, I wish to inform the hon. Member and the House that my Ministry is not responsible for processing permits or granting clearances for the holding of public concerts by event organisers and artists.

That said, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the organisation of public concert is governed by a number of laws and regulations, namely –

- The Public Gathering Act 1991;
- The Public Health (Prohibition on Advertisement, Sponsorship and Restriction on Sale and Consumption in Public Places of Alcoholic Drinks) (Amendment) Regulations 2021;
- The Environment Protection (Environmental Standards for Noise) Regulations 2022, and
- The Environment Protection (Control of Noise) Regulations 2022.

Clearance is issued solely by the Commissioner of Police, upon an application submitted at least seven days prior to the event with supporting approvals from relevant authorities including –

- the Local Authority;
- the Beach Authority if applicable;
- the Fire Services;
- the Ministry of Health and Wellness, and
- the Mauritius Society of Authors.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, upon approval terms and conditions are imposed by the Commissioner of Police.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me also highlight that under the previous government, the procedure for organising public concerts were fragmented, overly bureaucratic and discouraging. Event organisers and artists were left on their own to navigate a maze of approvals, resulting in delays, frustration and frequent cancellations of events. The process hindered creativity and suppressed the growth of our cultural economy. Thankfully under the visionary leadership of the hon. Prime Minister, Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, this Government is committed to bring things differently.

As announced in the Government Programme 2025-2029, my Ministry will establish a cultural desk that will act as a one-stop shop for concerts organisers and artists. This new structure will be equipped with a dedicated online platform inter-linking all relevant authorities, thereby simplifying the application process, providing step by step guidance on

legal and regulatory requirements, helping applicants compile necessary documents and coordinating with the relevant institutions to minimise delays and eliminate red tape.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, while legal obligations will remain, the process will become simpler, faster and more transparent. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with this measure, we are replacing bureaucracy with facilitation, confusion with clarity, and hesitation with action so that our artists, event organisers and audiences can all thrive.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, hon. Member!

Mr Quirin: M. le président, l'honorable ministre peut-il dire à la Chambre quels sont les lieux qui ont été identifiés pour la tenue des concerts ?

Mr Gondeea: As I said, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my Ministry is not concerned with these issues right now. Just after we established the Cultural Desk, then afterwards, I can tell you what we are going to do. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes.

Mr Quirin: Si je comprends bien l'honorable ministre n'a aucune information à ce qui concerne l'organisation des concerts mais je lui pose une question au cas où il serait au courant, s'il y a eu des demandes qui ont été rejetées depuis l'arrivée du nouveau gouvernement ? S'il le sait, quelles en sont les raisons ?

Mr Gondeea: As I said, I don't know because these applications do not come to my Ministry.

The Deputy Speaker: It is the Commissioner of Police who gives the instruction. You have said that. Thank you.

The hon. Member for Vieux Grand Port and Rose Belle!

FERNEY-DEUX FRÈRES COASTAL ROAD – REINSTATEMENT – EXPECTED START & COMPLETION DATES

(No. B/616) Mr A. Ramdass (Third Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure whether, in regard to the coastal road at the level of Ferney to Deux Frères, he will state if consideration will be given for the reinstatement thereof and, if so, indicate the expected start and completion dates thereof.

Mr Gunness: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to refer the hon. Member to the reply I made to PQ B/223 on 25 March 2025 wherein I informed the House that the B28 Road had been severely damaged further to the pipe laying works being carried out by the Central Water Authority.

I also informed the House that the CWA would implement the required works to reinstate the road.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am now informed by the CWA that the reinstatement works concern some 13.1 km of road following the replacement of approximately 30-year-old Ductile iron pipes. The reinstatement is being carried out in two stages.

Firstly, temporary reinstatement undertaken by the contractor carrying out the pipelaying works which consist of back-filling and applying a 30-millimetre layer of asphaltic concrete along the trenches.

And secondly, the permanent reinstatement to be undertaken by a separate Grade A contractor following a bidding exercise. This involves asphaltting the damaged road to a thickness of 50 millimetre.

As at date, temporary reinstatement works from Ferney to Anse-Jonchée, over approximately 6.7 km are ongoing and are expected to be completed by August 2025. As regards the road from Anse-Jonchée to Bambous Virieux and Petit Sable, temporary reinstatement works have already been completed in April 2025.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am further informed by the CWA that a separate contract for the permanent road reinstatement works is expected to be launched under the Open National Bidding procedures by mid July 2025. The works are expected to start by October 2025 and would be completed by February 2026.

Additionally, provisions have been made under the current financial year to carry out the permanent road reinstatement works from Ferney to Petit Sable.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to highlight that the RDA has raised concerns over the CWA's failure to comply with the conditions of wayleave namely, at L'Escalier, Chemin Grenier, St-Julien-d'Hotman and Hermitage, where no proper temporary reinstatement works were carried out despite several notices sent.

According to the RDA, the practice of awarding separate contracts for pipelaying and permanent road reinstatement results in significant delays, adversely affecting road users due to insufficient temporary restoration.

To address this, the RDA is proposing to take over permanent road reinstatement works once pipelaying is completed and commissioned by the CWA. In this regard, the RDA will hold discussions with the CWA for the signature of a Memorandum of Understanding, outlining payment terms and responsibilities to be agreed upon between both authorities.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. First Member for Savanne and Black River!

NLTA – PUBLIC SERVICE VEHICLE (CONTRACT CARS) LICENCE – REQUIREMENTS & CONDITIONS

(No. B/617) Mr B. Babajee (First Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Land Transport whether, in regard to the Public Service Vehicle (Contract Cars) Licence, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Land Transport Authority, information as to the –

- (a) requirements and conditions for the issue thereof, and
- (b) names of the persons having been issued therewith over the past five years, indicating if they are still holders thereof.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, I wish to inform the House that I had provided detailed information thereto in my reply to Parliamentary Question B/574 put by the same hon. Member, Mr Babajee, during our Sitting of 24 June 2025.

However, I am tabling the information on the requirements and conditions as provided by the National Land Transport Authority as follows.

Coming to part (b), Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am apprised by the NLTA that a total of 4317 contract car licenses has been granted during the last five years, as follows –

- 2020 – 518;
- 2021 – 296;
- 2022 – 412;
- 2023 – 75;

- 2024 – 2907, and
- 2025 – 09.

However, only 3650 such licences are valid as at date while 657 have still not been implemented, as yet.

Finally, as regards part (c) of the question, I wish to inform the hon. Member that the list of names of persons having been issued contract cars, PSVs, over the last five years, have been compiled. I invite him to come to the Ministry or the NLTA to have access to same. He can eventually touch base with my office for necessary arrangements accordingly.

As a last note, there has been several questions on the fleet of contractor cars on our roads. Let me, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, mention that as at now, there are 11,153 contract cars on our roads, 7,781 having been issued from 2015-2024, representing 70% having been granted over the last ten years.

The NLTA is of the view that there could be more than what the market needs at the moment.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, hon. Member!

Mr Babajee: As you just said, there were 2,907 in 2024 and according to my information, these have been done to facilitate money laundering. And, those applicants who applied for it, they are not holding the permit right now. Those permits have been sold. And, according to that information, one permit allows you to buy three cars.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. Now, put your question!

Mr Babajee: The question is whether those people eligible to hold those permits, according to those criteria.

And, according to my information, there is one company – Pankaja Co. Ltd, in Mare D'Albert, and everyone knows – he was, at that time, the right hand of Mr Bobby Hurreeram. He holds 14 of those permits. And, in the West, I won't give those names,

The Deputy Speaker: Alright! Alright! Put your question!

Mr Babajee: Can we have those details if they are eligible to hold those permits? If they are not applicants; they can buy those permits. Is it legal?

Mr Osman Mohamed: Well, the hon. Member, like I said, I will open the books to him at the NLTA. If he finds anything fishy, we are duty-bound to refer those to the FCC, should there be *maldonne*, as he stated.

Mr Babajee: For the public interest, can we have those names tabled and will inquiry be done accordingly?

Mr Osman Mahomed: Well, okay. Section 44 of the Data Protection Act of 2017, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, stipulates –

“No exception to this Act shall be allowed except where it constitutes a necessary and proportionate measure in a democratic society, *inter alia*, an [...] objective of general public interest.”

Since the hon. Member has invoked public interest, I will table it.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. First Member for Piton and Rivière du Rempart!

RIVIERE DU REMPART – WOMEN EMPOWERMENT CENTRE – RE-OPENING

(No. B/618) Dr. S. Prayag (First Member for Piton & Rivière du Rempart) asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the Rivière du Rempart Women Empowerment Centre, she will state –

- (a) the reasons for the closure thereof in 2020, and
- (b) whether consideration will be given for the re-opening thereof and, if so, when and, if not, why not.

Ms Navarre-Marie: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that the Indira Gandhi Women Empowerment Centre at Rivière du Rempart was closed in March 2021 for reasons known only to the previous government.

With regard to part (b) of the question, in view of financial constraints, I wish to inform the House that priority is being given to reopen and operate women empowerment centres in government-owned buildings.

With regard to Rivière du Rempart, actions have already been initiated to find a solution so that women of the region are not penalised.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, hon. Member!

Dr. Prayag: Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether discussions are being entertained with the Local Government Authority Ministry so as to take on the building at the New Market at Rivière du Rempart for the same?

Thank you.

Ms Navarre-Marie: Yes, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. First Member for Port-Louis North and Montagne Longue!

REPUBLIC CUP 2024-25 – FOOTBALL MATCH – VENUE SELECTION

(No. B/619) Ms A. Savabaddy (First Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the football final match of the Republic Cup 2024-25 held on 22 June 2025 between La Cure Waves and Chebel Citizens, he will state why the Auguste Vollaire Stadium was selected therefor, indicating the policy of the Ministry for the selection of venues for football matches of such level and importance.

Mr Nagalingum: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the scheduling of sports events comprising leagues or other specific competition rests solely with Sport Federations which are autonomous bodies.

This principle applies to all Sport Federations, operating within the Republic of Mauritius, whether Olympic or non-Olympic disciplines, there are around 50 of them. There is no specific policy as such at the level of the Ministry.

In respect of football competition specifically, I am informed that a fixture and venues for the season which comprises the Super League, the Republic Cup and the MFA Cup are drawn by the Mauritius Football Association prior to their start thereof.

Thereafter, the MFA makes appropriate bookings with the Mauritius Sports Council, and the latter puts its stadium at the disposal of the MFA subject to certain conditions.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the National Managing Committee of the MFA, held on 16 June 2025, resolved that the final match of the Republic Cup 2025 opposition La Cure Waves SC to Chebel Citizens SC be played on 22 June 2025 at the Auguste Vollaire Stadium in Flacq.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to draw the attention of the House that the organisation of the holding of sport events in the country is governed by the Sports Complex and Stadium Regulation 2003. It covers 40 federations, 13 stadiums and 27 sports complexes.

I am tabling a copy of the regulations.

The Deputy Speaker: Do you have a supplementary?

Ms Savabaddy: I have two supplementary. Thank you.

Merci pour la réponse. L'honorable ministre peut-il confirmer que ce match était initialement programmé pour être discuté au Côte d'Or *National Sports Complex* et nous dire qui a pris cette décision injuste de changer le stade pour la finale de la *Republic Cup* ? Merci.

Mr Nagalingum: I have answered to that question. It is the MFA who is fully responsible of the events.

Ms Savabaddy: Second question!

The Deputy Speaker: Your next question!

Ms Savabaddy: Yes, thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: No, I was talking about your next question.

Ms Savabaddy: My next supplementary?

The Deputy Speaker: B/620!

Ms Savabaddy: I have another supplementary.

The Deputy Speaker: But he has said *c'est la fédération des sports qui organise le football*.

Ms Savabaddy: No, I have two supplementary!

The Deputy Speaker: I will give you one supplementary, not two. Only one. Because the hon. Minister has said he has no control on who organises the stadium. It is *la fédération*. Now, if you want, one last question!

Ms Savabaddy: Il y a eu une discrimination à ce sujet, M. le président.

The Deputy Speaker: One last question, please!

Ms Savabaddy: For hon. Nagalingum?

The Deputy Speaker: Yes!

Ms Savabaddy: Okay, thank you.

Pourquoi a-t-on brutalement empêché les joueurs de Cité La Cure et de Chebel de fouler le stade Côte d'Or en les qualifiant de 'fouteurs de désordre' ? Cette décision va totalement à l'encontre de tout ce qu'on avait promis durant notre campagne, je cite « *Ki zot problem ek Cité La Cure ?* »

The Deputy Speaker: Put your question!

Ms Savabaddy: I am putting my question right now.

Alors, par rapport à cette décision, le ministre peut-il informer à la Chambre s'il y a eu ou non, ou est-ce qu'il y aura une enquête pour situer les responsabilités de cette décision ? Est-ce que le responsable sera appelé à présenter ses excuses à ses équipes ? Merci.

Mr Nagalingum: I am not aware of what the hon. Member is saying. But I am repeating myself, it is the MFA who organises and schedules for matches to be played on any stadium.

The Deputy Speaker: Next question!

Hon. First Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue!

UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY – MALAGASY STUDENTS – ENROLMENT ISSUES

(No. B/620) Ms A. Savabaddy (First Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Tertiary Education, Science and Research whether, in regard to the University of Technology (UTM), he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to whether there are enrolment procedural issues of Malagasy students thereat and, if so, give details thereof, indicating, in the case of Miss R. F. F., when –

- (a) her application was submitted to the UTM;
- (b) the UTM submitted her visa application to the Passport and Immigration Office, and
- (c) the Student Visa was issued.

Dr. Sukon: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the University of Technology Mauritius that no application for admission has been received in the name of Ms R.F.F., Malagasy national.

However, the UTM has informed that one Malagasy student, Ms R.N.F., enrolled in MA Communication and Public Relations for the April 2025 intake, had travelled to Mauritius on a tourist visa which expired on 25 June 2025.

Subsequently, the UTM intervened with the Passport and Immigration Office. On 26 June, the PIO has granted a residence permit to the student. The student is now continuing her studies at UTM.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes!

Ms Savabaddy: Thank you. The hon. Minister will surely agree that this is a heart-breaking case which is in contradiction with the policy of education hub.

Will he use his good office to ensure that Malagasy nationals do not have to endure such hardship, especially when they come to study in public tertiary institutions such as UTM? Thank you.

Dr. Sukon: Thank you. In fact, we are having a committee looking at the entire process for all students from all countries.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Third Member for Pamplémousses and Triolet!

CONSTITUENCY NO. 5 – WATER SUPPLY COMPLAINTS

(No. B/621) **Mr K. Rookny (Third Member for Pamplémousses & Triolet)** asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to water supply, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Water Authority, information as to the number of complaints filed by residents of Constituency No. 5 in relation thereto, indicating the number of unattended cases thereof and in each case, the –

- (a) date of filing of complaint, and
- (b) nature thereof.

Mr Assirvaden: M. le président, la CWA m'informe qu'un total de 3,293 plaintes relatives à l'approvisionnement en eau ont été enregistrées pour la circonscription no. 5 entre le 1 janvier 2025 au 26 juin 2025.

On estime qu'environ 15 % de ces plaintes sont les mêmes appels qu'on reçoit. Ce qui représente environ 2,800 cas valides. Ces plaintes concernent des tuyaux cassés, des fuites et des interruptions d'approvisionnement en eau.

Parmi celles-ci, je suis informé que la CWA a déjà traité 1,728 plaintes, soit 62 %. M. le président, les plaintes récurrentes de la circonscription no. 5 sont principalement attribuées à l'état vieillissant de son réseau de tuyaux composé de tuyaux en amiante, ciment et fonte galvanisée. Dans cette circonscription, environ 30 km de tuyaux défectueux ont été identifiés nécessitant un remplacement urgent, notamment dans les zones clés comme Baie du Tombeau, Pointe aux Piments, Balaclava, Trou aux Biches et Arsenal, entre autres.

Dans le cas de la ligne de crédit indienne, la CWA prévoit de renouveler 4 km de tuyaux prochainement à Trou aux Biches. Entre-temps, la CWA a renforcé ses effectifs et ses ressources au sein de ses équipes d'intervention pour assurer les réparations.

The Deputy Speaker: Do you have a question?

Mr Rookny: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, could the hon. Minister advise if upon resolution of these issues, the water supply of Solitude, notably at 7ème Mille, will be resolved?

Mr Assirvaden: Oui, je l'espère.

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

BELLE ROSE AVENUE, QUATRE BORNES –TWO-WAY TRAFFIC CONSIDERATION

(No. B/622) Ms S. Anquetil (Second Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Land Transport whether, in regard to the Belle Rose Avenue, in Quatre Bornes, he will state if consideration will be given for same to be reverted to a two-way traffic outside school hours in respect of the Baichoo Madhoo Government School located thereat and during week-ends and school holidays.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit of my Ministry that the Belle Rose Avenue consists of the following road segments –

- (i) Two-way road from its junction with Victoria Avenue up to its Junction to d'Epinay Avenue;
- (ii) One way road from its junction with d'Epinay Avenue up to its junction with Draper Avenue with traffic flowing in the direction of Port Louis-St Jean along A1 Road, and

- (iii) Two-way road from its junction with Draper Avenue to its junction with A1 Road.

Now, the whole stretch of Belle Rose Avenue up to its junctions with the A1 Road, that is, the one-way stretch is built up on both sides with high pedestrian activity, irrespective of timing within or beyond peak school hours and holidays. Also, there are many educational institutions along the one-way segment of Belle Rose Avenue, namely –

- Gaetan Raynal State College;
- Baichoo Madhoo Government School, and
- Royal Rock School.

Two speed traffic calming devices have been installed along Belle Rose Avenue in front of Gaetan Raynal State College. All road markings and traffic signs associated with the traffic calming devices have been designed taking into consideration the one-way traffic flow.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am further informed by the TMRSU that the width of the one-way segment of Belle Rose Avenue varies from 4.5 metres to 5.3 metres, with the presence of footpath on one side of the road. Due to the narrowness of Belle Rose Avenue along this stretch, it is not adequate to cater for a two-way traffic and warrants that it remains a one-way traffic, because you need at least 5 metres for a two-way traffic to flow.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, additionally, it is worth mentioning that it is not recommended to convert Belle Rose Avenue from its junction to d'Epinay Avenue up to its junction with Draper Avenue, because it is not practical to adjust the road markings and traffic signs associated with the traffic calming measures on a daily basis to cater for a temporary two-way traffic movement.

The one-way segment of Belle Rose Avenue may, however, be permanently converted into a two-way traffic provided land is acquired by the highway authority, namely the Municipal Council of Quatres Bornes in this case, for subsequent widening of the road where necessary.

The sworn land surveyor of the TMRSU has already surveyed Belle Rose Avenue, highlighting all existing features that will entail, I am told, demolishing existing block walls of people living there. In the meantime, the Municipal City Council has installed pavements, etc.

This survey plan will help for the Municipal Council of Quatre Bornes to determine the extent of land required to widen the Belle Rose Avenue to cater for a safe and efficient two-way traffic movement on a permanent basis.

The Deputy Speaker: You have a question, yes.

Ms Anquetil : Je vous remercie, M. le président. M. le président, je suis en possession d'une pétition signée par les habitants de la région de Belle Rose, qui demandent que cette portion de route sur l'Avenue Belle Rose à côté de l'école de Baichoo Madhoo soit réaménagée en double sens uniquement les week-ends et pendant les vacances scolaires. Le ministre peut-il indiquer à la Chambre, si son ministère serait disposé à envisager à titre expérimental, sachant qu'au préalable cette route était déjà en double sens dans le passé, un tel aménagement afin d'en évaluer les effets sur la fluidité du trafic ? Je vous remercie.

Mr Osman Mahomed: The hon. Member is right. About 10 years ago, it was a two-way traffic, and then, people of the locality had requested that it be converted in one way arrangement. But then, on a pilot basis, for certain specific time/days – weekends, public holidays and school holidays – I think we can envisage conducting a site visit and explore the possibilities.

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

HILLCREST AVENUE TO PORT LOUIS – PERSISTENT TRAFFIC CONGESTION – REMEDIAL MEASURES

(No. B/623) Ms S. Anquetil (Second Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Land Transport whether, in regard to the persistent traffic congestion occurring during peak hours from Hillcrest Avenue and surrounding residential areas towards the motorway leading to Port Louis, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Road Development Authority, information as to the remedial measures being envisaged in relation thereto.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Road Development Authority – the question is whether I can check with the Road Development Authority. The Road Development Authority is under the aegis of my colleague, the Minister of National Infrastructure; in its capacity is as the highway authority, the latter has the following two projects in the pipeline which would contribute towards reducing traffic congestion and travel time along the motorway M1, Hillcrest Avenue and St Jean Road, as

well as enhance accessibility by providing an alternative route from Quatre Bornes to Ebène and vice versa –

1. Construction of the link road between motorway M1 at Hillcrest Avenue and motorway M3 at Trianon, the project consists of the construction of the dual carriageway from the Hillcrest interchange to a new interchange onto motorway M3 at Trianon;
2. Construction of the Pellegrin Trianon link road. The link road comprises of the construction of a single carriageway of approximately 150 metres long from motorway M3 to Petit Camp Branch Road. It will eventually connect the newly constructed dumbbell junction on motorway M3 to development in Trianon for improved connectivity.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am further informed by the TRMSU of my Ministry that despite the construction of a great separated junction in August 2021 by the previous regime at the cost of Rs276 million plus, excluding VAT. Hillcrest Road in Sodnac continues to suffer from severe traffic congestion particularly during morning peak hours. This is not just an inconvenience; it is a significant impediment to daily commuters and overall traffic flow in the region.

The TRMSU has identified two main impediments –

1. The signalised intersection at Tulips Avenue interrupting flow on Hillcrest which were installed by the Road Development Authority during the upgrading works at Hillcrest Road;
2. A dangerously inadequate motorway acceleration lane, very short in fact that forces police to manually meter traffic causing severe queues to spill back into Hillcrest.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in fact, I have made a visit there before, on request of my honourable colleagues and yourself. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, even with the great separation traffic on Hillcrest Road is not free-flowing. In fact, the traffic lights at the junction with Tulips Avenue are primary cause of this interruption. Every time the lights turn red, traffic stops and queues quickly build up. Therefore, during peak time the intersection simply cannot handle the volume leading to frustrating delays and congestion that stretch far beyond the traffic lights themselves.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the most arguably critical issue is the acceleration lane that was constructed in 2021 by the previous regime for joining the motorway is simply too short. Around 75 metres and it is, therefore, very unsafe.

The recommended acceleration lane on motorway should be at least 150 metres long for vehicles to gather cruising speed. Drivers cannot safely merge into fast moving motorway traffic without sufficient space to accelerate. This dangerous design flaw forces our police officers to step in during peak hours acting as manual meter as I said just now. They have to hold back vehicles, releasing them in small batches to prevent accidents. While this ensures safety, it severely limits how many cars can get into the motorway. Long queues are formed on the rent, extending all the way back onto Hillcrest Road. This spill-back directly chokes Hillcrest Road making the congestion even worse especially around the Tulip Avenue intersection.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, according to TRMSU, consideration should be given for linking the Hillcrest roundabout with motorway M3 through an internal road network of Petit Camp, Pellegrin and also linking Marbella Road with Hillcrest roundabout.

Lastly, this will provide an additional alternative route for traffic along Hillcrest Road to proceed in the region of Trianon to join motorway M3 to ultimately proceeds toward the Cyber City and Port Louis or the North of island. Motorway linking Marbella Road with Hillcrest roundabout will also contribute to decrease the traffic loading at St Jean interchange as traffic generated by three malls will have an alternative route toward Quatre Bornes, and ultimately, motorway M1 through Hillcrest roundabout. The Road Development Authority should include this project in the road decongestion problem.

Ms Anquetil: Just one question.

The Deputy Speaker: Just one question, I hope.

Ms Anquetil : Je vous remercie, M. le président. M. le président, le Dr. Arvin Boolell, vous et moi, nous savons qu'aux heures de pointe, un embouteillage monstre se forme chaque jour sur l'axe ralliant Hillcrest à l'autoroute.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay, ask the Minister for the remedial measures.

Ms Anquetil: En attendant les travaux, le ministre peut-il indiquer à la Chambre si son ministère envisage de mettre en place un système de déviation afin de désengorger Hillcrest et ses environs ? Je vous remercie, M. le président.

Mr Osman Mahomed: During the site visit that I effected, I mentioned earlier, about two months ago actually, I was told that bringing traffic to St Jean Road will make it even worse because St Jean Road is already choked and, as you know, the Metro line is exactly in the middle.

So, the real solution lies at the doorstep of my colleague, the hon. Ajay Gunness, because if you link road linking that road to M1 is constructed, this will be the solution but like I said, we have tried all the possible avenue but we will do it again on request of the hon. Member.

The Deputy Speaker: The Hon. Second member for Grand' Baie & Poudre D'or!

NATIONAL PENSION FUND – DISMANTLING & REPLACEMENT – IMPACTS

(No. B/624) Mr N. Beejan (Second Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity whether, in regard to the dismantling and replacement of the National Pension Fund (NPF) by the outgoing Government, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to –

- (a) the balance of the then NPF at time of dissolution;
- (b) whether the assets thereof were transferred to a successor entity, redistributed or repurposed, and
- (c) whether same impacted the beneficiaries thereof and long-term pension sustainability.

Mr Subron: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that the National Pension Fund was established under section 37 of the National Pensions Act 1976 and is administered by Ministry of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity.

Contribution to the Fund were made by both employers and employees in the private sector at the rate of 6% and 3%, respectively. These contributions were capped based on a ceiling applied to the basic salary which stood at Rs18,740 in August 2020 when the then government decided to change the system.

With regard to what is stated in the introductory part of the question, I wish to clarify that the Fund is still in existence and operational. It was the contribution of employers and employees that were discontinued by the June 2020 Budget of the previous government.

In fact, it was the operation of the National Pension Scheme that was effectively dismantled as from 01 September 2020. The National Pensions Fund, although not formally dismantled, was placed in a path of gradual extinction.

I also wish to inform the hon. Member that the National Pensions Act was amended through the Finance (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2020, abolishing the payment of contributions to the NPF and introducing the *Contribution Sociale Généralisée (CSG)* as from 01 September 2020. With the introduction of the *CSG*, contributions are now collected by the Mauritius Revenue Authority (MRA).

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, regarding part (a) of the question, I am informed that when contributions were stopped in 2020, the funds value stood at approximately Rs139 billion. Since then, the funds have been dispersing about Rs4.5 billion annually in the form of contributory retirement pensions, contributory widows' pensions, contributory invalidity pensions, contributory orphans' pensions and industrial injury benefits. Over the past four and a half years, a total of around Rs23 billion have been disbursed.

Regarding part (b) of the question, the answer is no. The assets of the fund remain under the name of the National Pensions Fund which continues to exist.

Regarding part (c) of the question, as the assets remain under the control of the National Pensions Fund, actual and future beneficiaries will continue to receive their pensions in accordance with the provisions of the National Pensions Act.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Do you have a supplementary question?

Mr Beejan: Yes. Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Minister provide or even table further information and facts on the decision of the former Government to stop NPF contributions in 2020? Thank you.

Mr Subron: In the name of time, I can either table the response or I can answer it. It is up to the Deputy Speaker, Sir, to decide.

The Deputy Speaker: If it is long, you better table it.

Mr Subron: Okay, thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I will table the rest of the answer.

The Deputy Speaker: We have got five minutes to go. Hon. First Member for Piton and Rivière du Rempart!

FORBACH-POUDRE D'OR HAMLET – SPEED DETERRENTS – YELLOW BOX & TRAFFIC LIGHTS – TRAFFIC CENTRE UPGRADE

(No. B/625) **Dr. S. Prayag (First Member for Piton & Rivière du Rempart)** asked the Minister of Land Transport whether, in regard to the Forbach Road, extending from Forbach to Poudre d'Or Hamlet, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to –

- (a) the speed deterrents and other measures being envisaged along Cottage, Esperance Trebuchet and Poudre d'Or Hamlet, and
- (b) where matters stand as to the –
 - (i) proposed implementation of a yellow box and traffic lights at the Esperance Trebuchet Junction, in the vicinity of the filling station, and
 - (ii) proposed upgrading of the Poudre d'Or Hamlet Traffic Centre.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the road segment under consideration covers an approximate length of 5.4 km, starting at the Forbach roundabout on motorway M2, passing through Cottage and Forbach Road B181 and extending till the junction of Forbach Road B42 with Poudre d'Or B16 Road. The posted speed along these roads is 60 km/h.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, along the 5.4 km stretch of road, the following road safety features already exist –

- (i) Traffic lights at the junctions of Forbach Road B42 at Beau Plateau Road B43 and at the entrance of Cottage;
- (ii) Two raised speed tables near community health centre and Quincaillerie St Benoit at Cottage;
- (iii) A speed camera near Big Splash Sports Club in the region of l'Esperance Trebuchet along Forbach Road B42.

Moreover, the following additional measures will be implemented in the forthcoming Framework Agreement Contract 2025-2027 to further improve road safety along these stretches of the road –

- Installation of raised pavement markers known also as cats' eyes;
- Construction of raised speed table in the vicinity of pre-primary school at Forbach;
- Provision of pedestrian crossing near Meena Bazaar at Cottage;

- Creation of a 14 km speed zone along the built-up area at Cottage Village;
- Construction of a raised speed table at Restaurant Le Manguier at Cottage along B42 road;
- Construction of a raised pedestrian crossing in l'Esperance Trebuchet near an existing bus layby along B42 road;
- Construction of two raised speed tables in the vicinity of the village hall and LAD Hardware shop at Poudre d'Or Hamlet;
- Provision of traffic lights at the junction of Forbach B42 road with Poudre d'Or B16 road near the temple at Poudre d'Or Hamlet.

With regard to part (b)(i) of the question, the yellow box at the junction of the petrol filling station at l'Esperance Trebuchet has already been implemented by the TMRSU. Furthermore, the TMRSU will investigate whether the l'Esperance Trebuchet junction can be controlled with traffic lights while maintaining safe in and out movements at the petrol filling station which is located at the corner of Forbach Road B42 and Royal Navketan Road.

Regarding part (b) of the question lastly, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have checked with the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit and was told that it has not been made aware of the Poudre d'Or Hamlet Traffic Centre. However, site visits were held in the past for a proposed traffic centre at the junction of Forbach B42 Road and Poudre d'Or B16 Road near the temple.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay, the Table has been advised that the following PQs have been withdrawn: B/627, B/628, B/629, B/630, B/631, B/633, B/634, B/636, and B/640.

Time is over!

MOTION

SUSPENSION OF S.O. 10(2)

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

Mr Mohamed rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, statement. Hon. Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity!

STATEMENT BY MINISTER

(4.05 p.m.)

INVALIDITY PENSION SYSTEM – PROPOSED REVIEW

The Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity (Mr A. Subron): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I wish to make a statement on the proposed review of the Invalidity Pension system, following the one made by the hon. Prime Minister at the last Sitting of the National Assembly on Income Support, Invalidity Pension reform and the setting up of a Committee of Experts on the pension system and the revamping of the National Pensions Fund (NPF).

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in its Government Programme 2025-2029 ‘A Bridge to the Future’, this Government committed to implementing fundamental structural reforms aimed at creating a more inclusive society for persons living with disabilities, one of the most vulnerable segments of our population. It is imperative that our public policies reflect our commitment to providing them with the support they rightfully deserve. As for the proposed constitutional amendment on the inclusion of disability as a criterion for non-discrimination, same will be considered by the forthcoming Constitutional Review Committee.

In regard to the Invalid’s Basic Pension (BIP), it is important to note that it is currently accessible to individuals below the age of 50, provided they are certified to have a disability of 60% or above. With the present ongoing reform of the Basic Retirement Pension (BRP), the eligibility age for the Invalid’s Basic Pension will be extended from 60 to 65. It is estimated that approximately 1,500 additional persons will benefit from the Invalid’s Basic Pension for each year between the ages of 60 and 65. In parallel and in addition to this measure, Government is undertaking a comprehensive review of the entire invalidity pension determination system in Mauritius. The current system is outdated and in need of reform to provide a more human and inclusive approach.

I attended the Global Disability Summit held in Berlin on 2 and 3 April 2025 with the main objective of gaining insights of international best practices and the evolving global approach to disability-related public policies. One of the main takeaways from the Summit is that the Republic of Mauritius is lagging behind in the way disability assessments are conducted.

Presently, disability assessment in Mauritius is based solely on a person's medical condition, and typically, on a single condition. This approach disadvantages individuals suffering from multiple medical conditions as it excludes the consideration of social and functional factors.

We are, therefore, proposing to transition to a hybrid model wherein a person's ability to function in daily life, for example, his capacity to travel, feed himself/herself or solve problems independently would be evaluated. Additionally, instead of limiting assessments to a person's single medical condition, multiple ones will be considered.

We are also proposing to move away from the current "all-or-nothing" model of financial support. Presently, only individuals assessed with a disability of 60% or more qualify for the full Invalid's Basic Pension of Rs15,000 per month. Those assessed below the 60% threshold often receive no support or a limited, meagre Disability Allowance of Rs2,500. Therefore, we are proposing to introduce a graduated support model whereby individuals with a disability of less than 60% will receive some form of financial assistance.

Furthermore, my Ministry will also be working towards the implementation of specific assessment models for children with disabilities, recognising that their needs differ from those of adults. We are actually proposing to take rare diseases as a functional factor for assessment.

Another proposed major reform will be a revamp of the assessment panels. At present, the responsibility to assess and determine eligibility for the pension lies with the medical board, usually composed of two general practitioners. We are proposing to introduce a multi-disciplinary panel that will include medical specialists, psychologists, occupational therapists, trauma therapists, and others. We are also considering the inclusion of representatives of persons with disabilities in the panels to ensure that the perspective persons with disabilities are present.

After all, the global guiding principle for the rights of persons with disabilities is: "Nothing about us, without us." The assessment panel will also be multi-dimensional and will enable assessment of different types of disabilities related benefits at one go.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I believe that in the context of the present reform of the whole pension system, it was essential to communicate to the population the vision of my Ministry and of the Government on the proposed Invalid's Basic Pension reform.

In the context of the above, my Ministry is preparing a Cabinet Memorandum to be submitted shortly to the Cabinet of Ministers, which, of course, will take into consideration the present budgetary constraint.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes!

PUBLIC BILL

Second Reading

THE LEGAL AID AND LEGAL ASSISTANCE BILL

(NO. XIII OF 2025)

Order for Second Reading read.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Attorney General!

(4.12 p.m.)

The Attorney General (Mr G.P.C. Glover, SC): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I move that the Legal Aid and Legal Assistance Bill (No. XIII of 2025) be read a second time.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, amongst the reforms I have introduced in this House so far, this Bill holds for me a special place. As a law practitioner of four decades now, I have seen the workings of our judicial system up close, and especially, the effects it can have on the lives of our citizens. The confusion and loneliness which one can feel when confronted by rules and procedures one does not understand.

The helplessness of knowing that one may have a legal right – but that to defend it would be beyond one's means is more often than not unbearable. Justice in this country has, over the decades, earned its reputation of quality and integrity. But it also carries with it,

increasingly, unfortunately, the perception that it is a system that only works well for you if you can wait for it and if you can pay for it. This cannot go on.

This morning itself, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in the *L'Express* newspaper, we have read about the plight of single parents who struggle to overcome financial, legal and administrative obstacles.

As the article right puts it, I quote –

« (...) la seule solution reste le tribunal – avec des délais longs, des coûts élevés et un épuisement émotionnel garanti. »

My colleague, the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare, is tackling this particular issue, as explained in the article. Thus, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the challenge of making access to justice easier and more affordable remains as crucial as ever.

The Bill before the House today tackles a question that is fundamental: whether our justice system still serves the many, or increasingly only the few. It invites us to consider what it truly means to say that we are all equal before the law.

The legislation which we propose to replace dates back to 1973. That was a different time, a different society. In the fifty years since, our courts have modernised, our population has grown, our economy has evolved. But the legal aid framework has barely moved. What we bring before the House today, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is not a mere amendment, but a comprehensive reform. It seeks to restore legal aid to its rightful place as a living, relevant instrument of fairness and the rule of law.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the purpose of the Bill is simple and vital. It is to ensure that those who cannot afford legal representation are not left without recourse. Whether before the courts or at the police station, whether in civil disputes or criminal proceedings, the State should step in to ensure that legal representation is available for people who are in financial need.

To that end, this Bill –

- (i) Raises the eligibility thresholds of legal aid for both income and assets, reflecting present-day economic realities;

- (ii) Broadens the scope of offences for which legal aid and assistance may be granted;
- (iii) Imposes obligations on both the courts and police officers to inform individuals of their rights to apply for legal aid and legal assistance, respectively, and
- (iv) Simplifies the process through a unified application of the system.

It also provides, for the first time, a comprehensive definition of assets, and strengthens the guarantees of fair legal representation at both trial and pre-trial stages.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let us begin with the basic figures. Under the current law, an adult earning more than Rs15,000 a month is generally excluded from legal aid. For legal assistance during a police enquiry, the limit is even lower, it is Rs 10,000. These figures have not been revised since 2018. Yet, in the same period, the minimum wage has gone from Rs9,000 to Rs17,110, and the prices of basic commodities have soared by 30 to 100 percent, as detailed in the Prime Minister's Report on the State of the Economy earlier during our mandate.

The result is obvious. Someone earning minimum wage today is too poor to pay a lawyer, but considered too "rich" to qualify for legal aid. That is not a small flaw. It is a breakdown of the system's whole purpose.

This Bill sets a new income threshold: Rs25,000 of average monthly household income, but calculated on a net basis. I will explain this. Yes, we are including in the calculation the income of one's spouse if one is married. But crucially, this sum will be the net income that someone can actually use and spend, that is, what is left after deducting from his earnings his average household expenses and the repayment of his debts.

For instance, a couple may be earning salaries of Rs30,000 each, gender equality, amounting to a total of Rs60,000 for both of them. But they may have expenses such as the housing loan of say Rs20,000, utilities bills of Rs5,000, regular groceries bills of Rs15,000 a month, and spend Rs5,000 on their children's school van. In total, their average monthly income for the purpose of this law would not be Rs60,000 but Rs60,000 minus the Rs45,000 which I have just detailed, that is Rs15,000. They would therefore fall under the threshold of this Bill and qualify for legal aid.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as everyone will understand, this reform will bring about a substantial expansion in the number of people eligible for aid. It is nothing less than a reinforcement of the Welfare State.

In this Government's opinion, it is obviously an acceptable price to pay for justice to be fair. Of course, this exercise of scrutinising the finances will be monitored by the Courts to prevent any false or exaggerated declarations of expenses. But we will prefer here to err on the side of generosity, which is why there is no list of what type of expenses are allowed. The reason, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is that experiences taught my colleagues and me at the Bar that almost no one who can easily afford to pay for their own lawyer, will instead choose a court-appointed one instead, not when their legal rights or their freedom is at stake.

This is why we are confident that this new law will not open the floodgates to unmeritorious applications.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the spouse's income will however not be counted in divorce or separation matters, which is only just and reasonable.

The maximum value of assets to be eligible would also increase from Rs500,000 to Rs1 million, excluding as law will have it, clothing, work tools, and the subject matter of the case. This again reflects the rising cost of living.

The Bill also provides for a broader definition of "assets", to include not just cash and bank deposits, but also investments with non-bank institutions, shares, bonds, stakes in companies etc... whether in Mauritius or abroad.

Despite these stated thresholds, the Court is given a margin of discretion in cases where a person of low income may still own assets worth than Rs1 million because there can be times when, for instance, it would be unfair to ask someone of low means to sell an inherited plot of land just to defend a case against him, especially if that land is still on a *division*.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, these are practical, sensible reforms. But they are also moral choices. We bring them not because they are popular. They do not provoke public interest, debate or outcry. The example is here for all to see, the Opposition have not even deemed it fit to intervene on this very important piece of legislation.

Mr Mohamed: Shame!

The Attorney-General: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there is no electoral dividend in expanding legal aid. Which is probably why the previous Government, so keen on printing money to increase allowances it could not afford, did nothing to change the legal aid thresholds.

No, we, on this side of this House, do not do this because it is popular, but because it is the right thing to do.

The Bill further widens the scope of offences for which legal aid may be obtained. Currently, the offences for which a person may obtain legal aid are restricted, and some offences still listed in the current law, no longer even exist. A person will now obtain legal aid for any offence before any Court, save and except for those District Court offences that are not punishable by penal servitude. In other words, only the most minor criminal offenses are excluded from this scheme.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, access to justice begins not in court, but at the police station. That is where this Bill goes further than any of its predecessors.

Legal Assistance, as opposed to legal aid, which is the right to be advised and represented during police enquiry or bail hearings, has until now been available only for a narrow list of serious offences. The new Bill removes that restriction. Legal assistance will now be available for any offence that may lead to an arrest.

Moreover, police officers will be under a legal duty to inform any person under arrest, in a language they understand, of their right to legal assistance, particularly before any statement is taken under warning. This aligns our legal framework with the best traditions of due process and protects both the rights of the accused and the integrity of our criminal justice system.

These changes will also benefit the legal profession and the administration of justice more broadly.

By widening the base of legal aid recipients, the Bill ensures a more diverse flow of cases for Court-appointed counsel. This is particularly valuable for the younger members of the Bar.

As many hon. Members will know, there is a growing number of junior barristers who struggle to gain meaningful court experience. Legal aid cases – be they in family, civil or criminal matters – offer real exposure and real responsibility.

Barristers and attorneys assigned under the scheme are required to accept such briefs, unless disqualified by conflict of interest or manifest lack of competence and expertise. They may not claim or receive any sum from the recipient of legal aid but they are paid a modest fee by the Court. For instance, an attorney and a barrister receive a Rs10,000 each for a case entered by plaintiff summons before the Supreme Court, Rs8,000 for Intermediate Court and Industrial Court cases and Rs5,000 for a District Court matter. A barrister appointed for a bail hearing or assistance at the Police Station is paid Rs5,000 and only Rs15,000 for representing a client at the Assizes.

The relationship is governed by professional duty, not market transaction. This is why the practice of law is not a business. And that is why we are not traders and this Bill ensures that it remains so.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, allow me to walk the hon. Members today, briefly through the structure of the Bill –

• **Part I – Preliminary (Clauses 1 to 3)**

That part sets out the short title, definitions, and scope of application. It clarifies, for example, that the Act does not apply to disciplinary proceedings, and limits its application in certain minor criminal cases.

• **Part II – Legal Aid in Civil and Criminal Proceedings (Clauses 4 to 9)**

That part establishes the right to legal aid and sets out the eligibility criteria: a monthly household income below Rs25,000 and assets below Rs1 million. It outlines the application procedure, permits legal aid in criminal appeals, and grants special protection to juveniles, ensuring they, the juveniles, are automatically eligible regardless of their means.

• **Part III – Legal Assistance during Police Enquiry and Bail Applications (Clauses 10 to 14)**

This section enshrines the right to legal assistance upon arrest and for bail applications. It sets out the application process before the District Court and guarantees protection for juveniles, including where no parent or guardian is available to act on their behalf.

• **Part IV – Assignment of Counsel and Fees (Clauses 15 and 16)**

Here, the Court is empowered to assign a barrister or attorney. Lawyers must not request or receive any remuneration from clients under legal aid. The costs awarded in such cases accrue to the State, and any abuse of the scheme may lead to penalties.

• **Part V – Miscellaneous Provisions (Clauses 17 to 22)**

This final part, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir provides for exemptions from court-related fees, empowers the Chief Justice to make rules for the purposes of this Act and for my Office to amend the Schedule by regulations, and includes, of course, transitional arrangements. The Act will come into force by Proclamation, with the possibility of staggered implementation.

• The **Schedule** sets out a standardised form of affidavit to be used for applications under both Legal Aid and Legal Assistance, streamlining the process and improving transparency.

This Bill, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, will therefore improve the lives of many who find themselves at their most vulnerable, before a magistrate, or a police officer, or in the quiet loneliness of legal proceedings they cannot afford.

The measure of a legal system is not only how it treats the powerful; it is also how it treats the powerless. This Bill is a meaningful step in the right direction. Justice should be for everyone, regardless of their means.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this government has a mandate to better the life of the nation as a whole and part of this is precisely rendering access to justice easier.

I therefore commend it to the House.

The Deputy Prime Minister rose and seconded.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Narsinghen, you have the floor for 15 minutes!

(4.29 p.m.)

The Junior Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade (Mr H. Narsinghen): M. le président, merci de me donner la parole.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I find on the list of orators – eight orators. This is a very important Bill and I think the Attorney General has rightly pointed out that this is not only a cosmetic amendment, not a cosmetic change; it is a fundamental change for the poor people

and we, on this side of government, are in favour of the poor people and it is for the population to take note of this absence.

As we are speaking about access to justice, I am sandwiched whether to intervene in English or French. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would have asked you the permission to speak in Creole but unfortunately, I know that you will not accede to my request.

The Deputy Speaker: I can't grant it for the time being.

Mr Narsinghen: Then, I would prefer to intervene in the language of Molière because first and foremost, we are addressing the poor people. Donc, permettez-moi, M. le président, de commencer par une question essentielle à toute démocratie, et Maurice est une démocratie. Comment ce projet de loi actuel sur l'aide juridique et l'assistance garantit-t'il véritablement le droit d'accès à la justice pour tous ?

D'abord, je suis dans une démarche, je dirais, beaucoup plus pédagogique que technique comme l'Attorney General. J'essaie d'expliquer c'est quoi un état de droit et ce principe d'accès à la justice.

Dans un état de droit, M. le président, la justice ne peut être un privilège réservé à ceux qui en ont les moyens. Elle est, d'abord, un droit fondamental, accessible à chaque citoyen, en particulier, aux plus vulnérables de cette société. Ce principe, sacrosaint, constitutionnel et international, est connu par les juristes en droit humain comme accès à la justice. Maintenant, c'est quoi au juste le principe d'accès à la justice ?

C'est un principe fondamental dans un état de droit et dans une démocratie. En attendant la constitutionalisation formelle de ce principe, bientôt avec l'avènement d'une nouvelle Constitution j'espère bien, il existe déjà une façon implicite et je dirai supra-constitutionnelle dans notre Constitution. Quand le principe de la démocratie est bien inscrit et consacré, en anglais on dirait '*entrenched*', ou pour être plus précis, je dirais sacralisé dans l'article 1 de la Constitution. Et, donc, il n'est nullement un principe philosophique ou politique.

M. le président, d'après ce principe, l'état doit mettre en place des mécanismes, des lois, des institutions, des initiatives, des programmes conçus pour fournir des services juridiques à des gens qui pourraient avoir des difficultés à avoir des conseils et aussi avoir des représentations juridiques, comme bien précisé par l'Attorney General. Sans accès à la justice, les gens, surtout les pauvres et les démunies de cette société, ne peuvent aspirer à la justice, la vraie justice. Alors, la justice ne sera que pour les riches et les fortunés et serait très

illusoire. L'état de droit, M. le président, et la démocratie, ne sont que des rhétoriques vidées de leurs sens.

La loi actuelle est complètement dépassée et je dirai, ridicule. Pendant les décennies, la loi sur l'oeuvre juridique de 73 bien qu'innovante à cette époque, est restée trop étroite, trop complexe et trop centralisée et souvent inadaptée aux besoins actuels. Elle a laissé, malheureusement, trop des citoyens à côté, en particulier, les plus pauvres. Et malheureusement, et là, je mets bien l'emphasis sur ce point, malheureusement, l'ancien gouvernement n'a rien fait pendant dix ans, absolument rien. Tenez-vous bien, M. le président – dix ans ! Ils prétendent pourtant souvent, défendre les pauvres mais ils les bernent avec des rhétoriques creuses, malheureusement.

Donc M. le président, aujourd'hui avec ce projet de loi, nous entamons une réforme ambitieuse et nécessaire. Ce texte donne à l'aide juridique une nouvelle dimension ; celle d'un droit humain concret au service de la justice, de l'égalité et la dignité comme bien souligné par l'Attorney General. Quels sont le point clés de cette réforme ? Permettez-moi de vous présenter les point clés de cette réforme, M. le président.

D'abord, comme explique par le ministre de la Justice, on a augmenté le seuil, c'est-à-dire le plafond, dérisoire, je dirai, de R 10000 à R 25000. Et, comme bien expliqué, une personne peut avoir un salaire de revenu beaucoup plus de R 25000 et elle sera toujours qualifiée par ce seuil. On a aussi relevé le seuil patrimonial de R 500,000 à R 1 million. Certaines personnes, évidemment, pourtant peut-être bien intentionnées, diront que ce n'est pas suffisant. Je concède, mais cependant, comme vous savez, on fait face à une situation économique catastrophique léguée par l'ancien régime et pour le moment, on ne peut pas faire mieux. J'espère d'ailleurs que dans trois ou quatre ans, avec une amélioration de la situation économique, on pourra augmenter ce seuil à R 30000 voir R 35000 et le seuil patrimonial à R 1.5 million.

D'ailleurs, pour les cas d'appels, le magistrat ou le juge peut ignorer ce critère. Donc, on voit aussi, que le projet élargit considérablement le choix de l'aide juridique. Il ne se limite plus aux affaires pénales, il couvre désormais les droits de la famille, les conflits de travail, les violences domestiques. Donc, cela signifie que les femmes victimes de violences, des travailleurs précaires – on en a beaucoup à Maurice – les enfants en danger pourront enfin être défendus dans ce pays. Donc, il y a aussi une couverture élargie.

Et, avec le nouveau projet de loi, il y aura une ouverture élargie des infractions pénales. La loi de 73 couvrait des délits punissables par servitude pénale, or que le nouveau projet de loi va couvrir des délits passibles d'arrestation. Donc, vous aller convenir avec moi que c'est une avancée considérable.

On voit aussi, autre point très important – une décentralisation et une supervision de la cour. On est en train de créer une autorité de l'aide juridique, c'est-à-dire, il incombera à la cour de district ou à la cour d'appel ou une autre cour qui est décentralisée au niveau de chaque district. Maintenant, il n'y aura pas une simple unité administrative comme dans le passé pour la prise des décisions. Auparavant, le Legal Aid Unit était engorgé et c'était une unité administrative et certainement trop centralisée. Il y avait des retards conséquents. Donc, maintenant, avec un service décentralisé, il y aura certainement plus de rapidité pour traiter les cas. Cela garantie plus de professionnalisme, de rapidité et de transparence sous la responsabilité, sous la supervision d'un magistrat ou un juge.

Troisièmement, ce nouveau projet de loi va simplifier les procédures ; fini les longs délais, les démarches complexes, Désormais, il n'y aura pas des délais et retards, j'espère. La procédure devient plus simple avec des formulaires simples à remplir qui sont inclus dans l'annexe. Cependant, je dois dire que l'Attorney General et le gouvernement ont fait leurs travaux, mais il faut un personnel aussi adéquat et dévoué pour faire ce travail. Donc, on vient à une autre idée où il y a une sorte de révolution. Si le mot révolution est trop fort, je dirai du moins innovation.

Le projet de loi impose un devoir légal, cette fois-ci, aux policiers et aussi aux tribunaux, d'informer toute personne arrêtée de son droit à l'aide juridique et aussi à l'assistance dans leur langue – c'est très important – et immédiatement. On reprend d'ailleurs certaines dispositions de la constitution similaires qui sont consacrées dans l'article 10 de la constitution pour les mettre dans une loi ordinaire à l'encontre d'une loi constitutionnelle.

C'est cela l'accès à la justice, et non les rhétoriques creuses qui émanaient de l'ancien gouvernement. Qui en bénéficiera le plus ? Les pauvres, les oubliés, les enfants placés, les réfugiés, les personnes handicapées, certainement. Ceux qui jusqu'ici n'avaient pas les moyens de se défendre, M. le président, ne seront plus jamais seuls cette fois-ci face à la justice. Aussi, une emphase particulière a été mise sur les mineurs.

La nouvelle loi protège les mineurs. Les critères d'éligibilité ne s'appliquent pas nécessairement. Ils vont bénéficier d'une aide presque, je dirai, automatique. Donc, ceux âgés

de 14 à 18 ans auront, ce qu'on appelle, une protection renforcée. Dans un État démocratique, c'est très important. Même en absence des parents, les mineurs pourront bénéficier de l'aide juridique et de l'assistance.

L'aide aux mineurs n'était pas automatique sous l'empire de l'ancienne loi. Aussi, pour qu'il n'y ait pas d'abus – d'ailleurs, l'*Attorney General* a bien mis de l'emphase sur ce point –, on a pris certaines précautions, en vertu de l'article 12 de ce projet de loi qui prévoit des sanctions plus sévères.

Par exemple, il y a une amende de R 1 million et trois ans de prison pour des fausses informations. La loi est aussi plus stricte contre la définition des *assets* sous l'empire de ce nouveau projet de loi, ce qui est un point très important pour qu'il n'y ait pas d'abus par certaines personnes sans scrupules.

Autre point que je remarque, M. le président, et honorables membres, ce projet de loi s'inspire également des meilleurs principes internationaux. Je vous invite à lire l'*United Nations Principles and Guidelines on Access to Legal Aid*, un document très important. Je pense que d'ailleurs, l'honorable *Attorney General*, votre bureau s'est inspiré de certains de ces principes.

Maurice rejoint un mouvement mondial pour humaniser les droits. C'est très important d'humaniser les droits et de les mettre au service des démunis et des pauvres de notre société. Mais on ne doit pas dormir sur nos lauriers. Honorables membres, pourquoi ? Parce que l'essentiel reste à venir. Il faut mettre en œuvre cette loi. Elle doit être accompagnée par des moyens humains, surtout financiers et aussi institutionnels. Les policiers, les magistrats, les avocats doivent être formés. Le public doit être informé, point capital, je dirai, important.

Les résultats doivent être suivis, évalués et aussi publiés. Le gouvernement et le ministre de la Justice ont certainement fait un travail remarquable.

Je suis en train de conclure, M. le président.

The Deputy Speaker: Merci.

Mr Narsinghen: Il faut veiller à ce que la cour fasse son travail et veiller à ce que les avocats ou les avoués fassent aussi leur travail. Qui pourra évaluer si l'avocat désigné *pro bono* a bien fait son travail ? Ce n'est pas parce que c'est *pro bono* qu'il faut bâcler le travail, M. le président. Il faut aussi des règles qui émanent de l'autorité judiciaire pour sanctionner, je dirai bien, les quelques brebis galeuses de la profession légale.

C'est beaucoup plus qu'une réforme. C'est un engagement démocratique. Ce gouvernement ne se sert pas seulement des rhétoriques sans agir. Engageons-nous pleinement, honorables membres, pour faire vivre cette loi. Faisons en sorte qu'à Maurice, la justice ne soit ni un privilège, ni une archée, mais qu'un droit réel est garanti pour toutes et tous. Il faut, avec le temps, faire disparaître la pratique de droit à deux vitesses ou du moins cette perception du droit à deux vitesses.

Personne n'est au-dessus de la loi. Même pas, d'ailleurs, les magistrats, les juges et les employés dans le judiciaire. Ensemble avec eux, on doit éradiquer cette réalité décriée ou du moins cette perception. Ce gouvernement, avec une série de législations récentes, prouve qu'il va au-delà des rhétoriques creuses comme l'ancien gouvernement, malheureusement, qui se tient avec honneur dans le corps des démunis de ce présent gouvernement.

Un gouvernement socialiste – oui, socialiste, je dirai, modéré, mais aussi responsable. On peut être un grand socialiste, mais responsable. Les deux leaders de cette alliance croient dans la consolidation de notre démocratie et les élus de cette alliance y croient aussi.

Merci pour votre attention, M. le président.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. Seeburn!

(4.44 p.m.)

Mr M. Seeburn (Second Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Today, I rise to support the introduction of the proposed Legal Aid and Legal Assistance Bill. This Bill is an initiative that reflects the strong political will and commitment of our Government to strengthen the rule of law.

This Bill upholds one of the most fundamental principles of our democracy, our Constitution and our shared values as Mauritians. By modernising our legal aid system, the Bill has demonstrated a deep awareness of the everyday struggles faced by our citizens, particularly those who have long been left behind due to financial constraints.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, access to justice is a right. A right that is enriched in our Constitution, but that right remains out of reach for too many citizens of our country today. Too many people from vulnerable groups, low-income households from different walks of life are effectively denied access to justice simply because they cannot afford legal

representation. In both civil and criminal matters, these people face the court alone, often confused and disadvantaged. This is not justice.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the former Chief Justice Lord David Neuberger of the Supreme Court of the United Kingdom and also the President of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council has repeatedly emphasised that access to justice is a corner stone of the rule of law. He warned that lack of legal aid funding with rising court fees and complex procedures risk is turning justice into a privilege for the wealthy rather than a right for all.

He argued that justice must be affordable. Justice must be available to everyone, regardless of income. Government has a duty, not only to create the laws, but to ensure that ordinary people can afford their rights. He went on to say that without meaningful access to the courts, the rule of law is weakened and the public confidence in justice is undermined.

In short, Chief Justice Lord David Neuberger emphasised that access to justice is essential for the functioning of a democracy and for fairness in any modern society. He said that legal aid is the glue that holds the rule of law together.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in Mauritius, judges, legal professionals, the Bar Association and the civil society have repeatedly, over the years, raised concerns over the limitations of the current legal aid system with insufficient remuneration to the current legal aid, with insufficient remuneration for legal aid lawyers, and their narrow scope of eligibility. But what did the previous government do? As the hon. Attorney General said earlier, nothing. They ignored the calls, they ignored the people, they ignored their duty.

During all that time, too many citizens were denied legal representation simply because they could not afford it. Too many cases were delayed or abandoned by persons from vulnerable groups. Women stayed in abusive relationships. Too many children suffered in custody disputes and too many elderly and other citizens were left without recourse to justice. That is not neglect. That is injustice. Here, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the previous MSM government had a duty to ensure equal access to justice. But unfortunately, they failed to address the issues during the past ten years in power.

Justice has been delayed. As the former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, William Gladstone, said –

“Justice delayed is justice denied.”

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, our hon. Attorney General was right in his public address to describe the justice system in Mauritius as 'slow, intimidating and out of reach', and in affirming his commitment to infrastructure upgrades, digital tools, expanding courts capacity, and reform in legal aid laws.

Today, he rightly said that this Bill occupies a special place in his four decades of practice. Unlike the previous government, we are taking immediate steps to make legal aid fair, functional and accessible. By introducing this Bill, we are widening the scope of eligibility to the people of Mauritius.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this Legal Aid and Legal Assistance Bill is a modern legislation that seeks to reform and revitalise our legal aid system which has served our people for decades but is now, more than ever, in urgent need of review to meet the realities of today. It has an objective to make legal aid and legal assistance accessible to all those who cannot afford legal representation in civil criminal proceedings before any court of law by widening the range of offences and increasing the ceiling of monthly earnings.

Section 4 of the Bill imposes an obligation on the court to inform a person of his rights to legal aid before the start of proceedings to which that person is a party. The Bill also provides a right to legal assistance under section 10 and imposes an obligation on a Police Officer who is in charge of a Police Station to inform a suspect, upon arrest, that he may make an application for legal assistance during the recording of a statement under warning, and also, for bail application.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this Bill affirms the idea that justice should never be reserved for a few but be made accessible to everyone. Section 8 of the Bill empowers the court to grant legal aid to all applicants who meet the criteria under section 5 of the Act. It further empowers the court with a discretionary power to grant legal aid to the applicants even if their assets exceed Rs1 million after having regard to all the circumstances of the case, and in the interests of justice.

In fact, the Bill proposes a modern, fair legal aid system that will qualify more low-income individuals for free legal assistance in criminal and civil matters and make sure that the system is transparent and efficient. Section 9 and section 14 of the Bill ensures that legal aid and legal assistance are available to juveniles through their parents, legal guardians or other persons. It further ensures that if no one is available to represent the juvenile, the court will go ahead to grant the legal aid.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Bill provides that upon application through sworn affidavit, it is the court that shall assign a barrister or an attorney or both. Barristers and attorneys who have been assigned shall not refuse assistance without furnishing good reasons to Chief Justice and payment will be done to the lawyers from the Consolidated Fund as specified in section 15 of the Bill.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to make the system more effective, the Bill further provides that if there is an award for costs in favour of the applicant who was granted legal aid, then the said award for cost shall be deemed to be in favour of the government unless specified otherwise and shall be recovered by the Attorney General and deposited in the Consolidated Fund as stated in section 16 of the Act. The Bill further makes provision under section 17 to exempt those who were granted legal aid from payment of stamp duty, registration dues, usher fees, witnesses fees and court fees.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this Bill gives a wide range of powers to the Chief Justice to act independently and make such rules as he or she thinks fit for purpose of the Act. In fact, the Bill demonstrates a thoughtful balance between legal expertise and social responsibility and a clear sign that our legal institutions are evolving to meet the real needs of our people. This effort is to modernise and expand legal aid and to make it more inclusive and accessible. This is a significant milestone in the pursuit of a more just and equitable society.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Rosalie Abella, a puisne judge from the Supreme Court of Canada says that there is no justice without access, it is as simple and as complex as that. And goes on to state that access to justice is the most basic human right and without it other rights are meaningless. Justice must be accessible in practice not just in principle.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are building a justice system that treats everyone with dignity, with fairness, no matter how low the income or background is. In Mauritius, the law says that everyone is equal before the law but in real life we know that not everyone has the same ability to access justice. Many Mauritians cannot afford a lawyer; many Mauritians do not know their rights. Others do not know the complex procedures of the court. This means that for many Mauritians going to court whether for a family matter, a land dispute or a criminal charge is frightening, expensive and sometimes impossible. This Bill is about changing that and reinforcing that right.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, legal aid is an investment in the strength and credibility of our justice system. Countries around the world have shown that where legal aid is accessible and

efficient, wrongful convictions are decreased, public trust in institutions rises, as such it is a vital part of any democratic society to ensure that everyone has access to a fair and effective justice system not in theory but in reality.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, before I conclude, I would like to take this opportunity to show my appreciation and thanks to the hon. Attorney General and his dedicated State Law Office team for their outstanding work, for coming up with this modern and progressive piece of legislation that reflects not only a deep understanding of the legal challenges faced by the vulnerable communities in Mauritius but also a firm commitment of upholding the principles of fairness, access and justice for all.

This Bill is a commitment to the people we have been elected to serve. It is a Bill that prides itself on the equality, dignity and social justice. We must ensure that access to justice is for everyone. Let this Parliament be remembered for restoring the people's faith in justice and see this Bill as a declaration of our shared humanity and commitment on equity. We must work together, the government, the civil society, legal professionals and citizens to ensure that justice must not only be done, it must be seen to be done and felt in every corner of our society.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with these words, I commend the Bill to the House.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. I think it is the right time to suspend. I suspend the sitting for half an hour.

At 4.55 p.m., the Sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 5.32 p.m. with the Deputy Speaker in the Chair.

The Deputy Speaker: Please be seated! Hon. Ms Collet!

Ms M. R. Collet (First Member for Rodrigues): Merci, M. le président. Donc, ce projet de loi s'inscrit dans le programme gouvernemental 2025-2029 intitulé '*Bridging the Gap*', qui cherche à réduire les inégalités et à rendre la justice plus proche des gens.

Vous vous souviendrez, M. le président, de ma question parlementaire de mars dernier, sur les mesures envisagées par ce gouvernement pour garantir l'accès à la justice pour les citoyens vulnérables de notre république. D'ailleurs, la *Judiciary Newsletter* de mars de cette année contient un article consacré à ce sujet qu'est le *legal aid and legal assistance*. D'emblée, je tiens à remercier l'*Attorney General* et son bureau, ainsi que le gouvernement pour cette initiative responsable et utile compte tenu des réalités économiques que notre

peuple fait face en ce moment. C'est une réforme importante, attendue depuis longtemps qui va permettre à plus de citoyens d'avoir accès à un homme de loi et une représentation légale adéquate, à être défendus peu importe leur situation financière.

Au risque de répéter ce que mes collègues ont déjà mentionné, je tiens néanmoins à exprimer mon plein accord avec les points qu'ils ont soulevés. Ce projet de loi vise trois grands objectifs. En premier lieu, ce projet de loi vise à mettre à jour une loi qui date de 1973, avec des critères qui ont plus d'une cinquantaine d'années, une loi révisée pour la dernière fois en 2012. En second lieu, ce projet de loi vise à faciliter l'accès à une justice équitable pour les familles modestes compte tenu de la cherté de la vie et des changements de notre société et l'éloignement de Rodrigues de la capitale judiciaire qu'est Port Louis, là où se concentre la majorité des hommes de loi, ainsi que le palais de justice.

En troisième lieu, M. le président, ce projet de loi vise à renforcer les droits des citoyens dès le début des procédures judiciaires avec des premières étapes qui s'avèrent souvent complexes et techniques et décisives pour les procès. Comme l'a fait ressortir l'*Attorney General*, ainsi que mes collègues l'honorable Narsinghen et l'honorable Seeburn, les conditions pour obtenir l'aide légale ont été élargies. Les seuils d'éligibilité ont été ajustés de manière raisonnable dans le but de faciliter le recours à la justice pour un plus grand nombre de citoyens aux frais de l'Etat. Désormais, les biens pris en compte incluent les maisons, voitures, compte en banque, cryptomonnaie et parts dans les entreprises.

M. le président, au sein de notre république, toute personne accusée a le droit d'être défendue. C'est un droit inscrit dans notre loi suprême, la Constitution, mais ce droit doit être réel, tangible. Avec cette loi d'actualité, ce gouvernement s'engage à rendre le droit d'être défendu accessible à tous, même pendant une enquête policière ou une demande de caution. Les mineurs entre 14 et 18 ans recevront automatiquement de l'aide, même sans devoir passer par leurs parents.

Pour la continuité, M. le président, ce projet de loi donne au chef juge les moyens de créer des règles adaptées pour bien faire fonctionner le système les règles existant sous la loi de 1973 ayant été révisées il y a cinq ans de cela, et ceci dans un souci d'encourager les hommes de loi – *attorneys, barristers* – à s'engager et à offrir leurs services *in forma pauperis*.

J'ai pris note qu'à Rodrigues, les professionnels qui se déplacent pour offrir des services *in forma pauperis* jouent un rôle essentiel dans la garantie de l'accès à la justice pour

les plus démunis. Il est donc crucial de prévoir des solutions logistiques adaptées, l'hébergement adéquat, afin de soutenir l'engagement de ces hommes de loi sur le terrain. Et les policiers, les magistrats, les juges et les hommes de loi devront informer les potentiels bénéficiaires dans une langue qu'ils comprennent. Bien évidemment, à Rodrigues, c'est le créole.

À Rodrigues, beaucoup de gens ne savent pas encore qu'ils ont droit à cette aide juridique ou ils n'osent pas demander de l'aide juridique. Ce projet de loi vient répondre à cette réalité, M. le président. Cette aide légale va couvrir non seulement les affaires civiles comme les problèmes familiaux, les litiges de terrains, mais aussi des affaires pénales, *zafair lapolis*, comme on dit souvent dans le jargon.

M. le président, ce gouvernement veut alléger les charges financières de nos concitoyens en supprimant certains frais de justice, ce qui va vraiment soulager les familles modestes.

Ce projet est là pour aider –

- un conjoint délaissé qui veut se défaire d'une union civile qui ne fonctionne et qui ne fonctionnera jamais ;
- un père ou une mère démun(e) qui veut avoir accès à son enfant ;
- un jeune accusé à tort, entre autres, qui mérite un avenir prospère. Il pourra avoir de l'assistance légale pendant l'enquête judiciaire ainsi que de l'aide légale pour être libéré sous caution.

Mais pour que tout cela fonctionne, M. le président, chacun doit faire sa part. Nous avons tous notre rôle à jouer. J'apprécie que les professionnels du droit, les officiers de justice, les magistrats et les policiers auront un rôle crucial. Qu'ils soient et restent les gardiens de l'équité. Qu'ils soient flexibles, justes et humains.

M. le président, les citoyens doivent aussi savoir que l'aide juridique est non seulement un droit, mais aussi une responsabilité. Il faut coopérer, faire une application, être honnête et respecter les procédures. Cette réforme était non seulement nécessaire, mais urgente.

Connaître le véritable bien de la communauté, c'est ce qui constitue la science de la législation. « L'art consiste à trouver les moyens de le réaliser (...). » Je crois en cette philosophie de Jeremy Bentham, M. le président. Comme Bentham, que je viens de citer, je pense que cette loi doit servir le bien commun. Et ce projet de loi va dans ce sens.

Avec ce texte de loi, nous rendons la justice plus proche, plus accessible et plus juste. J'invite, donc, mes collègues à soutenir ce projet avec responsabilité et engagement. Ensemble, construisons une justice qui sert tout le monde.

Sur ce, je sou mets ce projet de loi à l'examen de cette Assemblée. Merci beaucoup.

The Deputy Speaker: Merci.

Hon. Dr. Prayag!

(5.47 p.m.)

Dr. S. Prayag (First Member for Piton & Rivière du Rempart): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, distinguished Members of the House, I wish to thank you for giving me the privilege to address this august Assembly on this important legislation, that is, the Legal Aid and Legal Assistance Bill.

As a doctor who has witnessed the human consequences of delayed or denied justice, I rise to address the proposed repeal and replacement of the Legal Aid and Legal Assistance Act at a time that lies at an intersection, an intersection of human rights, fairness and dignity, as rightly pointed by the hon. Attorney General.

Please, allow me to be clear, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Today, legal is not an easily accessible privilege, and it has not been one for the last decade. Due to the devaluation of our rupee together with the previous eligibility criteria, many are those who did not know on which door to knock when they suddenly had to face legal charges and get legal counsel overnight. The new threshold of not exceeding Rs25,000 and define assets value not exceeding Rs1 million makes legal aid accessible again to the needy. I congratulate the hon. Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister and the Attorney General for this endeavour.

The old law had made almost all relevant provisions, but in practice, it was not applied as it should. The new law should make provisions so as it does not remain an academic legislation without any real impact on access to justice.

This new reenacted Bill has an objective –

- to make it more accessible for persons with low income, and
- those who cannot afford legal representation: to have access to justice in civil and criminal proceedings before any court in Mauritius.

This legislation will ensure that justice does not remain in the domain of the wealthy, but becomes a lived reality for all Mauritians regardless of income.

I am not a barrister and I humbly stand to be corrected by fellow learned members of the legal profession. Yet, the truth is our current system pertaining to legal aid and legal assistance is falling behind. Let us agree that one of the key issues today is the bureaucratic and outdated process.

Les dossiers traînent, les retards s'accumulent et la frustration s'installe. Ces délais découragent beaucoup de personnes d'exercer leur droit à l'aide juridique. Quelques fois, les gens se perdent littéralement dans le système à cause de cette lourdeur bureaucratique.

M. le président, time is justice, delay is denial. Whilst reflecting about the process, I also feel the necessity to highlight the need for digitalisation and streamlining of the legal aid application process. Let us not be the architects of that old system, where divorce through private counsel takes two to three months today, while through legal aid, it drags for a year. I, somehow, now feel that Clause 6 of this new Bill, more specifically Clause 6 (2) (b), must be clearly defined by a prescribed time limit so as not to delay justice.

In addition, for such a legislation to work, I find it essential that Police Officers, especially those of senior rank, be empowered and trained to conduct real-time means testing and merits testing, particularly during weekends or after hours when courts are closed. We cannot allow someone to be detained overnight simply because no one was present to assess his or her eligibility. As a comparison, I wish to refer the House to the current UK procedure, where a duty solicitor is on call, readily available to represent an accused at any time of the day or night, subject to eligibility.

Unfortunately, under the draft before, the burden was being placed on the accused to prove their eligibility via an affidavit sworn before a District Court. But what if someone is arrested at 8.00 p.m. on a Saturday night? The court is closed at that time and an affidavit cannot be sworn. Then, what happens? Does this mean the person remains in detention without a voice? Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is neither fair nor just. If we are reforming this law, we must build clarity, accessibility and fairness into its procedures.

As we are aware, it is already the practice in Mauritius for a Superintendent or Assistant Superintendent of Police to remain on duty after office hours in every Police Division across the island. I shall propose that this designated officer is given proper training in legal aid screening and be empowered to receive a sworn statement of proof on eligibility. In the past, in Mauritius, I can recall that a Superintendent of Police had the legal power to grant bail.

I hereby wish to mention that it is both reasonable and practical that such officers be entrusted with initial decisions on legal assistance as well. This measure would immediately bring fairness into the room. It is hereby time to see the practicalities of such a legislation. This new legislation will work, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The previous Act did not impose an obligation on the statement-recording Police Officer to inform the person that he may make an application for legal assistance during the recording of the statement.

However, I still personally don't find it sufficient. We need to correct the mischief. The mischief of the law enforcing officer to escape the imposition of such an obligation of him or her. The same mischief – the hon. Attorney-General will agree with me – that has unfortunately been played for years and years. It is to my opinion that the information of access to legal aid must be imperatively added as part of the official police caution.

To make my point, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I need to say that the right to legal representation is not merely theoretical, it must be stated clearly and immediately upon arrest; this is the norm in some jurisdictions, for example: the United States of America. It goes without saying that police abuse will decrease by imposing on the law enforcing officers to inform the accused of the right to legal aid upon caution.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, when police officers know that detainees are aware of their rights, they tend to be more diligent in the delivery of their duties, and especially, when those

rights are actually exercisable. We must also take practical steps to ensure public awareness. I propose that clear notices on legal aid rights be affixed in all police stations, in all court houses, even in all Citizen Advice Bureau, and that also, in English, French as well as Creole. Many Mauritians still do not know what they are entitled to. This simple visible step can change lives.

Another significant point is that prompt payment to Attorneys and Counsels is vital. If we expect them to take up sensitive cases, including those of rape, drugs, assault, eviction, often on short notice, we must honour them with timely payment otherwise participation in the system will dwindle and we will be left with an empty shell of law. To me, this is a clear way to increasing the true value of the service and I believe it is a matter that mandates urgent action.

As the law is being repealed and replaced, the new Act should clearly list the types of cases eligible. I have been informed that in practice legal aid currently covers property related matters, evictions, family law matters, and criminal cases as well as appellant cases across the various courts in our jurisdiction but this should not be left to guess work, clarity brings confidence, that is why I would request your permission, and take a moment here to brush a picture of victims of medical negligence.

As founder and President of the Medical Protection Society of Mauritius, I have witnessed cases where patients suffer in silence, lacking both voice and recourse. Yes, in addition to extending legal aid to more women by, for example: partage post-divorce and licitation, we have had debates on this matter these few weeks. Legal aid must recognise and respond to the needs of those who have suffered due to medical malpractice and negligence. This is a category of litigation that is growing; we cannot leave these victims behind. Medical negligence cases are often complexed, emotionally charged and financially crippling. The very individual who suffers from misdiagnosis, surgical errors or systemic failures in our healthcare institutions, are the least likely to afford quality legal representation.

Are we, as law makers, prepared to tell them that justice is a privilege that they cannot afford? Take for instance the case of a young mother from a modest background who lost her newborn due to a delayed emergency caesarean section, an avoidable tragedy, later confirmed by a medical review. Devastated, she was determined to seek accountability but without the means to hire a lawyer, she was left without being able to afford a legal recourse. My personal assessment is that such legislation, if properly applied, can bring more confidence to

the person approaching the court. The delay of two years to pursue government institutions according to the Public Officers Act, makes it difficult for low income-earners to find money during this period of time, hence, making it impossible to seek justice and repair.

As a Doctor, I can assure the House that such measures will bring more diligence in the noble work of medical and paramedical personnel and ultimately, better care in our health care institutions. *On ne peut plus accepter de continuer à voir les victimes dépourvues ou laissées pour compte. J'ai témoigné à maintes occasions des victimes finissant par accepter toute sorte de remède à la fin.*

Before drawing my conclusion, I wish to state that if this Legal Aid and Legal Assistance Act, were to be embedded under a main overarching framework, such as the model of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act in the United Kingdom as announced on several occasions by the hon. Prime Minister, it would carry more structural authority and legal weight. Housing this legislation under a primary Act that governs procedural fairness and rights, during arrest and investigation, would ensure greater coherence, consistency and enforceability across all related processes. It would also reflect our seriousness in placing access to justice at the core of our criminal justice system.

In conclusion, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let us be clear-eyed, this is just not a legal document we are debating, it is a gateway to justice for the voiceless. We must ensure that access to justice is practical, prompt and protective. This new Legal Aid and Legal Assistance Act must be bold enough to correct the mischiefs of the past, compassionate enough to understand the realities of the present and wise enough to future proof the rights of generations to come. Justice delayed is justice denied, but justice denied because of poverty is injustice institutionalised. Let us all not allow that to happen.

In conclusion, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I must commend this Bill to the House. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. Lobine!

(5.55 p.m.)

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

Let me first of all, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, thank the hon. Attorney-General for bringing this Bill to the House. It is clear that careful thinking has gone into the drafting of this legislation and I also thank the officers of the State Law Office for this very clear drafting with regards to this particular piece of legislation.

The hon. Attorney-General spoke earlier on about consolidating the Welfare State. This is one aspect as to how this government is consolidating the Welfare State, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. And unfortunately, when we are debating such an important Bill, again, the other side, only three Members, all of them are absent. It is a very important piece of legislation, they are not participating but at least they should be here, present to show compassion as to the consolidation of the Welfare State because we are talking about accessibility to justice to the most vulnerable people of our society. So, again, history will judge those Members of the Opposition who are always absent and who are always not here to participate in debates with regard to this important piece of legislation, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Why legal aid matters, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? It goes beyond words because it goes to the very foundation of our Constitution. Section 10 of our Constitution is the foundation that guarantees that one should not be denied access to justice because of lack of means and that every accused person must receive a fair trial including the right to legal representation when necessary to secure justice.

This principle, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is at the heart of our legal aid framework. It ensures that access to justice is not just a privilege for the wealthy but a constitutional right for all Mauritians. Here, I would take the words of hon. Ms Collet when she rightly pointed out that we are bringing a new law after more than 50 years. The previous Legal Aid Act was in 1973. It was brought by the then Labour Government establishing and consolidating the Welfare State and it was amended again in 2012 under a Labour Government, again, to consolidate the Welfare State.

And, this was again done Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, after a report of Lord Mackay of Clashfern. Again in 1998, the then Labour-led government, we had a report from Lord Mackay, 'Access to Justice, Reform to the Justice System and Legal Aid Reform. And those reforms were already mentioned, and it is as per those recommendations that in 2012, amendment was brought and the amendment expanded the scope from legal aid alone to

include legal assistance. This was done in 2012, covering advice and support earlier in the process like police inquiries and bail.

This was a step forward for access to justice, especially, for juveniles but beyond that single reform, the system remained largely frozen, thresholds stayed outdated. There was no clear statutory duty to inform people of their rights. And, here, as rightly pointed out by hon. Dr. Prayag, there should be more clarity. But this particular piece of legislation, in this Bill, clarity is provided, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to Clause 4 – The Right to legal aid.

Now, it is an obligation on our Court of justice to ensure, to tell anyone who is being accused or standing trial that before the start of the proceeding to which that person is a party, inform him in a language in which he is conversant that he may make an application for legal aid under this Act. This is now in the law.

And it goes further, again, the right to legal assistance, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, at Clause 10 – it is also the duty of a police officer in charge of the police station to inform that person that he may make an application for legal assistance during police enquiry, including legal advice. So, this is also now being enacted; it will become a law.

However, as pointed out by hon. Dr. Prayag, in practice, how will it work? How do we communicate? What is the timeframe that will be set up to look at all these applications? What about the status of the number of personnel that will be allocated in different courts of justice to process those applications? Whether those people who do not know the law or who are not able to access information as to whether they are eligible for legal aid? Who will go and inform these people?

Here, hon. Dr. Prayag had mentioned that we should, in the court of justice or even in public places, have clear billboards informing people. This is done in the UK, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir – in the UK, people are informed and pamphlets are also given at the Court of Justice. What are your rights? What can you be doing? What you cannot do?

So, for legal aid as well, I think there should be a campaign of dissemination to inform the public at large what they can do and what they cannot do and who are eligible. And again, with regard to the report of Lord Mackay, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the report spoke about the creation of an independent legal aid authority, creating an independent body responsible for administering legal aid, ensuring transparency, efficiency and impartiality. So, maybe when the hon. Attorney General will sum up, he might give us some indications whether in the near future, they would consider setting up a legal aid authority, as recommended by Lord Mackay

and as also being opined by the Law Reform Commission, way back in 2011, whereby the Commission said – it is an Opinion Paper of the Law Reform Commission, in February 2011, I quote –

“[The Commission is of the opinion] that the current legal aid system is certainly in need of reform [legal aid should include legal advice (and should not be restricted to legal representation) and a Legal Aid Board or Commission should be established].”

In the current system, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, again, I am humbly voicing out my opinion because I have been speaking to various colleagues of the profession and I salute the legal profession, hundreds of attorneys and hundreds of counsels, barristers who are working in this system of the legal aid, who are giving *pro-bono* services. And, I salute their efforts because most of those barristers and attorneys are compassionate and they deliver against all public perceptions that they might have against the legal profession. Most barristers do not charge a single cent for most of the cases from government from the Legal Aid Unit. They do it *pro bono*, seriously and compassionately and they take the case as if it is their own case which has been paid by an independent person that would come and knock at the door. So, I salute the legal profession, I salute all attorneys and barristers who are working within the system.

Again, however, there are certain issues that I wish to raise with regard to separation of powers, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. We are giving unfettered powers to the Chief Justice to determine fees to be paid to barristers and attorneys from the Consolidated Fund. Maybe, it is not the right time for us – we are consolidating democracy, whether is it not high time also to open the debates, whether the legal profession should be independent, not just in the sense of the word, ‘independent’ in the way we operate. The legal aid system should not be under the umbrella of the court and of the Chief Justice. There should be an independent legal aid authority – independent, impartial, that would look at all the procedures and put in place this very beautiful piece of legislation.

So, I would invite the hon. Attorney General to consider same and also consider the timeframe as being proposed by the hon. Dr. Prayag at Clause 6 of this Bill – Application for legal aid. There should be a certain time limit to process because we know how it functions and we know the bureaucracy that it involves in those people looking where to go to search for legal aid and how their applications are being processed.

So, these are my contributions as to the debate on this particular piece of legislation which is a beautiful piece of legislation, which is also something that we should commend, especially ...

An hon Member: Beautiful!

Mr Lobine: These are the debates; we can't have everything good in a piece of law.

So, the strength of this new Bill is that it updates eligibility threshold. This is very important. It will touch the most vulnerable. It also gives the duty on courts and on the police officer to inform people. It is now mandatory; it is legal for them to inform people that they are eligible for legal aid.

And, of course, it is also something that is very important that is being introduced – preserving the automatic protection for juveniles. This aligns us. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with the obligations under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

So, these are my contribution to this piece of legislation and I shall certainly support this Bill and I invite the hon. Attorney General to consider the humble suggestion that I am making on behalf of the profession and also, with regard to this issue of separation of powers.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, hon. Minister Subron!

(6.07 p.m.)

The Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity (Mr A. Subron): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is with a sense of duty, as a Minister, as a member of the National Assembly and as a spokesperson of Rezistans ek Alternativ, that I speak in support of the Legal Aid and Legal Assistance Bill, presented by the hon. Attorney General.

Sitting next to him in the National Assembly, I know that this Bill has been one his priorities since he took his seat in this House. On several occasions, he has shared his views with me on what amount would constitute a reasonable criterion for entitlement to legal aid. Even just a few days ago, we were still exchanging views on this matter. Well, this afternoon, this Bill is just minutes away from being adopted. I would like to place on record, my deep appreciation for the enlightened vision of the hon. Attorney General in bringing forward this amendment.

Now, let me share my input on this debate. Let me begin with a fundamental question: what is justice? Justice, as we conceive it today, has evolved from long, often violent and unjust past.

There was a time, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, when justice was designed, administered by the powerful for the powerful. There was time where disputes were resolved through personal vengeance. A perceived wrong was met with a bullet or a rope. Reminiscence of the era of cowboys where shooting someone or hanging them in the town square was considered justice. This was the rule of the strongest. But society has since evolved. Modern justice has become institutional. It is the State and a genuine democracy that now assumes the responsibility for law and order.

It is the State that ensures the application of justice through structured, independent legal systems. But even within this evolution, we must acknowledge a painful truth. We still live in a deeply class-based society. There are the rich. There are the poor. In this unequal society, justice often comes with a cost. One that many cannot afford. This cost becomes a barrier to equality, a denial of justice. In fact, for a significant proportion of our population, especially those from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds, justice remains inaccessible.

In a patriarchal society, where relation between men and women are often unequal, this denial of justice becomes more pronounced. There is hidden exploitation, abuse and violence. Many women find themselves at the mercy of injustices without the financial means or institutional support to defend themselves. In these circumstances, access to justice becomes not merely a procedural right, but a fundamental human right.

Access to justice is not just a principle. It is enshrined in international law. Mauritius is a signatory of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) which in, Articles 14(1) and 14 (3)(d), recognise the right to legal aid, especially in criminal cases. The Covenant insists that no person should be denied the right to a fair trial due to lack of resources. The right to defend oneself in a court of law is a cornerstone of justice.

While Article 14(3)(d) of the ICCPR specifically guaranteed legal aid in criminal cases for those who lack the means to pay for legal representations, Article 14(1) establishes the broader principle that all persons are equal before the courts and tribunal. In essence, the right to justice cannot be the privilege of the wealthy. It is the right of every citizen.

The Human Rights Committee has further clarified that legal aid should also be extended to civil and administrative cases, especially when fundamental rights are at stake. Victims of torture, victims of sexual violence and children are the groups for who whom access to justice must be guaranteed.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let us look at the broader picture. In a class-based society, access to justice is not distributed equally. Those with the means can afford the best lawyer. Some of them are found in this House! They know the system, and they can navigate it. But what about the poor, the working people, the ordinary citizens? What of the vulnerable? Often, they do not even know their rights.

They are intimidated by the complexity of the legal system. They lack legal literacy. They cannot afford legal representation and they are left voiceless. Let us not mince our words. The justice system across the world, as it currently operates, is often biased in favour of the powerful. There are systemic biases. People of the disadvantaged backgrounds face harsher penalties, less favourable outcomes and delayed justice. This is not justice. This is a structural violence.

Access to justice, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, means more often than just the ability to set into a court room. It means having the knowledge, the support and the representation needed to assert one's rights. It means able to understand legal procedures. It means having the legal assistance to pursue a legal case. It means not being excluded of poverty, language or social status. If we fail to provide this, the consequences are dire. We will reinforce inequality, we will erode public trust in the legal system, and we will invite social unrest and instability.

To address this, it is important that we support legal aid and pro bono services. We should work to increase legal literacy and consider reforms to the legal system itself. Investigating in alternative dispute resolution is also essential. Ultimately, we need to create a system that works for everyone, not only for those can afford it. The Legal Aid and Legal Assistance Bill, by the hon. Attorney General, must be situated in this broader context of full access to justice.

This amendment to enlarge access to justice for our people forms part of a broader democratic process. Change process is underway under this Government.

Let us now turn to the specific context of Mauritius. Mauritius has a unique history. A history shaped by slavery, by indentured labour, by colonial denial of justice to the majority of those who toiled for this country.

The right to justice was intrinsically linked to our social and political emancipation. With independence, we enshrined civil and political rights in our Constitution. Though immense progress has been achieved since then, we are a society that remains unjust towards the lower classes and towards women. Legal assistance in practice has been costly. It has been reserved for an elite.

Though our Constitution and law recognise the rights of citizens to legal assistance, the threshold has long been set to a mere Rs10,000. This threshold has excluded many. In practice, justice remained inaccessible for too many Mauritians.

The Legal Aid and Legal Assistance Bill before us today aims to address these deep-rooted injustices. Its object is clear: to repeal the existing legislation and to introduce a modern framework that makes legal aid accessible to persons with low income who cannot afford legal representation.

The Bill does several important things, which has been underlined by my colleagues. It increases the income threshold from Rs10,000 to Rs20,000 on the methodology proposed and described by the hon. Attorney General. It expands the list of offences for which legal aid is available. It imposes new obligations on courts and Police Officers to inform citizens of their right to legal aid in a language they understand. It addresses existing shortcomings and corrects longstanding anomalies.

For instance, under the new framework, if a woman applies for legal aid, her application will no longer be evaluated based on the family's total income. The husband income will no longer count against her. This is a major step towards injustice for women, particularly in cases of domestic violence and matrimonial disputes.

We must emphasise this point: the overwhelming majority of legal aid applications today concern matrimonial matters. Women seeking divorce, custody, protection from abuse, need the support of the State. The Bill answers that need.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me give some real-life realities. What would have happened to someone from the lower rank of society, poor, without legal connection if they were falsely accused, if they were victim of planting by the police under the previous regime? Let us remember my friend B. L., what would have happened to him without legal assistance, without being assisted by my colleague, hon. Shakeel Mohamed? Or what would have happened to A. B., would he have survived the system if he had been poor and unable to defend himself? What about the woman who killed her abusive husband in self-defence after

years of domestic violence? If she had no access to legal representation, would she have had a fair trial? Would justice have been served? How many young men have been victims of police brutality because they have no means to hire a lawyer? How many have died in police custody? And let us not forget the many everyday cases, the nearby disputes, the inheritance issues, the workplace conflicts where the poor are left defenceless against the wealthy simply because they cannot afford a lawyer.

Let us look at the numbers, the statistics from 2020 to 2023 show the following –

- (i) On average during the four years in question, only one third of those who apply for legal aid were granted assistance;
- (ii) On average 92% of the application are for matrimonial cases;
- (iii) Though criminal cases are of prime importance for many citizens, application for legal aid related to criminal case was a tiny proportion of legal aid applied for. For the 4 years, 2020 to 2023, the proportion was 1.06 of the application of legal aid;
- (iv) The number of requests for legal aid assistant peaked in the year 2020 with 4,965 applications while in 2023, the number of applications dropped to 1,532.

From 2022 to 2023, the expenditure on legal aid increased by 66.6%, from Rs1.7 million to Rs2.7 million. This shows that despite the low threshold, the growing demand and the State's growing recognition of the importance of this service. The need is immense and the current system is not meeting it. Legal aid is not a luxury. It is not a charity. It is justice; it is one of the pillars of the sovereign and democratic State.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Legal Aid and Legal Assistance Bill is a step forward. It is a progressive measure, it is a necessary measure, it is a response to the to the cries of those who have waited too long, suffered too much and been ignored too often.

Let us remember the fundamental truth, non-access to justice is justice denied. This Bill gives a voice to the voiceless. It brings hope to the hopeless, it tells every citizen rich or poor, men or women, that they are equal before the law. This is what justice looks like and with these words, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I commend this Bill to the House.

(6.22 p.m.)

The Minister of Housing and Lands (Mr S. Mohamed): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I was sharing with the hon. Deputy Prime Minister a few minutes ago the

difficulty I find myself in is, after having listened to everyone on this very important piece of legislation and the excellent speech pronounced by the hon. Minister of Social Security and the others, I find myself with very less, because I do not want to repeat whatever they have said.

However, just to pick up from where my honourable friend, the Minister of Social Security has left on. Everyone agrees that the whole idea of legal aid is indeed for the issue of access to justice to be resolved. I have had the opportunity of reading the past legislations back in the 70s and I have had the pleasure of reading some of the excellent presentations made by those who are no longer with us, for instance, hon. Ollivry and hon. d'Unienville in those days. The interesting thing is that everything my learned friends from the Bar have said here, including the Attorney General, and hon. Members have said, today, is exactly what they were saying back in the 70s. In other words, it is a fundamental right, that of having access to justice, that one should not curtail the access to justice, one should not put barriers to that access otherwise we would be defeating the purpose of access to justice. This is exactly what then hon. Guy Ollivry was saying in this House. I find it, as I say it again, interesting that now we are in 2025 and we are saying the same thing.

So, somewhere, somehow, something has gone wrong. We have the habit in this Republic of ours of having beautifully written laws but we also have the bad habit of not being able to enforce laws. So, when I read our Constitution and our Constitution says, at the very start, and some people from the previous government failed to understand what exactly section 1 of the Constitution means –

“Mauritius shall be a sovereign democratic State”.

What is democracy? Democracy is not just the right to say something but democracy is wider than that and part of democracy is also the element of access to justice because if you do not give proper access to justice, democracy is stifled. You are killing democracy. When I go to section 10 of the Constitution, it is even more interesting because the framers of our Constitution – “Provisions to secure protection of law” at subsection (2)(c) – every person who is charge with a criminal offence –

“(c) shall be given adequate time and facilities for the preparation of his defence;”

But I do not stop there and the Constitution does not stop there, it goes further, subsection 2(d) and this is where the subject of this debate, today, takes all its relevance

because it finds its footing, its source, at section 10(2)(d) of the Constitution. It says every person who is charged with a criminal offence –

“(d) shall be permitted to defend himself in person or, at his own expense, by a legal representative of his own choice or, where so prescribed, by a legal representative provided at the public expense;”

So, the whole idea of providing someone a lawyer to represent someone in a court of law at the public expense is there in our Constitution. Why do I stress on that, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? It is because here, I speak to the nation and what I see in front of me, as other friends have reminded us, two empty chairs!

Hon. Members: Three!

Mr Mohamed: Oh yes, I say two because sometimes some people do not know where they stand and very often they try to sit on the fence, and as I have always said, be careful when you sit on the fence, it will hurt physically.

So, we have those three empty spaces but not only are those seats empty and it is not the first time that the Opposition chooses not to be present. They choose not to be present but hear me out, they believe by their absence that they have nothing to contribute to this piece of legislation and what is this legislation talking about? It talks about providing help and we simplify it, those who cannot afford justice – for those who cannot open the doors to a court of law, to hire the lawyer next to their side, or a solicitor or an attorney – that we give them that possibility without any barriers. This is what the law is about. So, it addresses those who cannot afford it.

In other words, the poor, those on low income, those who need our help, those who need our attention, those who need us to listen to what they are saying, and this is an example of how this Government is not only listening but through what the Attorney General and this Government has done, we have acted upon what we have heard. Not only listened but we have acted upon what we have heard, and this is the result of the action; this piece of legislation opening the doors to the Courts, to justice and not only leaving in our Constitution the simple theory that what the Constitution says; you shall be able to obtain at the expense of the public, the State a representative. But it does not leave it in our books, we turn it into reality.

So, today, when I see those empty seats, what it says to me is that they are not interested. They are only interested in going out there and telling people ‘Well, this is what is

being taken away from you’ but they are not interested, or they do not realise either out of incompetence or of sheer ignorance, choose it, left or right they lose. They are not even aware that this is such an important piece of legislation that we are here putting into practice what is in theory provided for in our Constitution. This is a shame, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. So, now I want people out there, through those words, through my words, through the words of all our friends in this Assembly who have chosen to be present, to look at what those empty seats mean; that for them, the people who want access to justice, they mean nothing to the Opposition that should have been here but have chosen to be absent.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have had an interesting read of a document entitled ‘In Mauritius, courts and police confront weakened public trust amid persistent perceptions of corruption.’ This is Afrobarometer which is of 06 September 2024. The first page of the document, I quote from it, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it says –

“Afrobarometer’s latest survey in Mauritius sheds light on public perceptions of the judiciary and police. Findings show that a mere one-fifth of Mauritians view the rulings of judges and magistrates as completely free from political interference.”

And who was in power then? The empty seats! They have run away –

“Two-thirds of citizens suspect that at least some judges and magistrates are involved in corruption...”

I am not saying it is true but this is the perception, a perception encouraged by a government whose representatives today, in the Opposition, have chosen to run away but it is encouraged by a government that did nothing for access to justice for ten years whilst they were in power. And what this study also shows, and it is interesting, the reading of the study, shows that people with low income are those who do not trust our justice system the most. That is interesting. People with low income are those that do not trust our justice system the most. In other words, when you do not open up the issue of accessibility to justice, when you do not come up with legislations of this nature, when you do not do such a marvellous job as the hon. Attorney General has done, that is when you encourage those who do not have enough money to pay a lawyer or pay a solicitor, you encourage those people not to have confidence in the judiciary.

And what I find interesting at page 11 of this report which is dated 6 September 2024 and I join what hon. Lobine has stated, and it says here at page 11 –

“(...) more than half (58%) of Mauritians say they are not aware of any legal aid services in their community...”

This is serious. So, what is the point of having beautiful laws if you do not know that this is what you have access to? So, yes, I agree and I am sure that the hon. Attorney General has taken note and I am sure that those who will be responsible for the manning of the system will take note of what has been said. We have to let them know that they have access to this. We have to let them know that not only do they have access to this, we also have to let them know that not only we participated in the process of giving them access to it but there are certain people who chose not to participate. That also they have to know but I am not saying that we have to put it on a flyer but then again, they have to know. So, what I find most interesting and I would like here to quote a Judgement, that of *A. S. Mamode v the Queen* 1991, Mauritius reports page 223. In that Judgment it says –

“The concept of fair trial guaranteed by section 10 of the Constitution implies fair and impartial enquiries into the allegations of accused parties, the more so when as in the present case the accused is detained pending his trial.”

In other words, you cannot have a fair trial without a fair enquiry and how can you have a fair enquiry, subsequently a fair trial if the person who is suspected of having committed an offense, I use that as an example, if he does not have access to legal advice and legal assistance at the time that he is being questioned as a suspect, how can he benefit from any fair trial if he is not taken care of from the very start?

So, that is why, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is always easy to read a piece of legislation. It is nice to be able to write it but then again to remove it from the Constitution, bring it into legislation and to give it life for it to mean something to people who need that assistance, this is the whole beauty of our system and that is why it is a beautiful piece of legislation. That is why I congratulate the hon. Attorney General and his officers and all those who have helped in the drafting of this piece of legislation. Let me say this, I know for a fact many of us are lawyers here. Every single person who is a lawyer in this House – I must say including myself – we do not wait. We have not waited for the legal aid system to function for us to represent people *pro bono*, including yourself, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. We do it but I think it is important not only that we continue doing it – let me say *en passant* that I miss the fact that I do not do it nowadays – but that we continue doing it. But I think that it is good now that we have a structured system that is clearly a better system.

Those are my words. Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. Minister. Hon. Attorney General!

(6.36 p.m.)

Mr Glover: I will certainly not start blowing my own trumpet by saying that it is beautiful Bill. I am glad to see the support of the House to this Bill which as I have said earlier, is one of the most important I have brought to this House to date. One must understand how the legal aid application or system works. It is a decentralised system, that is, at the Supreme Court you have a Legal Aid Unit which is headed by the Senior Puisne Judge, the number 2 of our justice system. Then at the Intermediate Court, the Industrial Court and District Courts, the presiding Magistrates of these Courts are the ones who actually deal with applications. They see these applications day in day out and I think we should trust this decentralised system for the time being in order to see how this Act will work in practice.

There is no doubt that there will be a necessity to empower the legal aid units at all levels in order for them to be able to process these applications so that the system is not clogged by the number of applications which will inevitably go up. Let me reassure the House, the swift processing of applications will be a priority. The expeditious necessity for a quick decision, especially needed in criminal matters when a citizen needs advice whilst in detention or if his interrogation might lead to his arrest, this answers the question of the hon. Member of Rivière du Rempart regarding legal advice.

This is covered, I must say, by the legal assistance proviso in Clause 10 (1) of the Bill. So, there will be a need to expediate matters, and, of course, to empower the legal aid units in all the court rooms.

Now, I also agree that there is a need to have an overarching enactment in order to give more, how can I put it, oomph to this legislation. The long-awaited Police and Criminal Justice Bill is not just a dream, as some might think. It is real. There is a draft ready and it will be brought before this House within a few months, just like the National Crime Agency Bill. These pieces of legislation are important to this Government and they will be brought before this House very soon. In the meantime, we should continue to bring forward litigation that will clarify processes, rationalise them, and in so doing, increase access to justice.

I take good note of the proposition to review the Public Officers Protection Act. Let me reassure the hon. Member that I am on the same wavelength as he is.

From day one, it has been my aim, and I hope to be able to fulfil this goal, to actually shape the system so that every citizen of this land feels that he has or she has been taken care of and that he or she has not been left behind because of lack of means.

As the Explanatory Memorandum to the Act states, it is a modern legislation with a view to making it more accessible for persons with low income and who cannot afford legal representation, to have access to justice in civil and criminal proceedings before any court. It imposes certain obligations on courts and Police Officers to inform citizens of their rights, and, as you have all stated, it clearly also addresses shortcomings in the law with regard to legal aid and legal assistance.

With these words, I commend this Bill to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a second time and committed.

COMMITTEE STAGE

(The Deputy Speaker in the Chair)

THE LEGAL AID AND LEGAL ASSISTANCE BILL

(No. XIII of 2025)

The Legal Aid and Legal Assistance Bill (No. XIII of 2025) was considered and agreed to.

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

Third Reading

On motion made and seconded, the Legal Aid and Legal Assistance Bill (No. XIII of 2025) was read the third time and passed.

ADJOURNMENT

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Prime Minister!

The Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Tuesday 15 July 2025 at 11.30 a.m.

The Deputy Prime Minister rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker: The House stands adjourned!

At 6.44 p.m., the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Tuesday 15 July 2025 at 11.30 a.m.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

ADVISERS/SENIOR ADVISERS – MONTHLY ALLOWANCE, GRATUITY & BENEFITS – QUANTUM

(No. B/585) Mr A. Duval (Fourth Member for Port-Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the monthly allowance, gratuity and other benefits to which Advisers and Senior Advisers are entitled, he will state whether same have recently been revised, and, if so, indicate the –

- (a) quantum thereof, whether in cash or in kind, and
- (b) effective date thereof.

Reply: I wish to refer the hon. Member to the statement I made in the House on Wednesday 25 June 2025 on the salaries payable to Advisers.

As I stated, with a view to rationalising the monthly allowances payable to advisers, my Government has categorised advisers into five categories namely –

- (i) Senior Adviser (Technical);
- (ii) Senior Adviser;

- (iii) Adviser;
- (iv) Adviser on Information Matters, and
- (v) Adviser on Public Relations Matters.

As I said, Government also wants to be transparent in respect to the different scales of salaries applicable to Advisers. We do 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.

As such, with the new grading and pay structure, all persons enlisted in a particular category would now draw the same pay package, contrary to past practice under the previous government.

In regard to part (a) of the question, the quantum now in force are –

S/N	Category	Quantum
(i)	Senior Adviser (Technical)	Rs 100,000
(ii)	Senior Adviser	Rs 90,000
(iii)	Adviser	Rs 70,000
(iv)	Adviser on Information Matters	Rs 66,200
(v)	Adviser on Public Relations Matters	Rs 60,000

SSR INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT – ADDITIONAL PARKING SLOTS – DIRECTIONAL SIGNAGE

(No. B/586) Mr T. Apollon (Second Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam International Airport, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from Airport Terminal Operations Ltd., information as to whether consideration will be given for the provision thereof –

- (a) additional parking slots, roads and exit gates, and
- (b) adequate directional signage on the parking areas of the Old Terminal, indicating the current use made thereof and if same will be operational anew and, if so, when, giving details thereof.

(Withdrawn)

**HOMICIDE & VIOLENT DEATH – REPORTED CASES – PERIOD NOV 2024-
JUNE 2025**

(No. B/587) Mr A. Duval (Fourth Member for Port-Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to homicide and violent death, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of reported cases thereof since November 2024 to date, indicating the –

- (a) number thereof in which arrests were effected;
- (b) number of suspects formally charged, and
- (c) measures envisaged to address the issue and reduce the occurrence thereof.

Reply: The terms “homicide” and “violent-death,” as referred to by the hon. Member, are offences which are categorised as murder, manslaughter, murder of a newly born child, castration causing death, assault with premeditation causing death and assault upon father or mother with aggravating circumstances causing death in the Criminal Code.

With regard to parts (a) and (b) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that from November 2024 to 04 July 2025, 24 cases of murder and 1 case of manslaughter were reported to the Police. 46 persons were arrested in connection with these cases, out of which, 45 persons were provisionally charged for murder and 1 for manslaughter.

As regards part (c) of the question, I am further informed that since this Government took office, several measures have been put in place by the Mauritius Police Force as part of an integrated approach to reduce the occurrence of such crimes. These include *inter alia* –

- (i) The adoption of a risk-based approach by regularly visiting elderly and vulnerable persons to ensure their security and aggressive sensitisation campaigns across the island focused on safety, security, and crime prevention by the Crime Prevention Unit and the *Brigade pour la Protection de la Famille*;
- (ii) The establishment of a dedicated Homicide Review Committee by the *Brigade pour la Protection de la Famille* to study crime trends and identify root causes, especially in cases of femicide and domestic violence-related deaths as well as the increasing use of SafeCity Cameras for crime detection, and
- (iii) The enlistment of a retired officer with extensive expertise in homicide investigations to guide and support Enquiring Officers in criminal investigation.

These actions are part of our broader national strategy to ensure the safety and security of all citizens, and these are already giving results with a 12% decrease in the crime rate compared to the same period last year.

Moreover, as I have already stated in the House on Thursday 19 June 2025, that several reforms are being brought in the Mauritius Police Force, and new technological equipment are being purchased for the Police to maintain law and order. These reforms reflect the Government's clear commitment to ensuring the safety of every citizen, with special attention to the elderly, who are among the most vulnerable in our society.

My Government has always ensured that our institutions are equipped with the necessary tools and resources to carry out their duties diligently and without interference.

COCAINE SEIZURE (95 KG) – INTERPOL ASSISTANCE – COCAINE STORAGE

(No. B/588) Mr B. Babajee (First Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the 95 kg of cocaine worth Rs 1.4 billion seized in a backhoe loader on 04 July 2019, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to where matters stand regarding the inquiry initiated thereinto, indicating whether the –

- (a) assistance of Interpol is envisaged in relation thereto, and
- (b) cocaine is in the possession of the Police and, if so, further indicate whether –
 - (i) all the 95 kg is stored and where, and
 - (ii) regular monitoring thereof is carried out.

(Withdrawn)

MRS S.O., ATTORNEY AT LAW – FEES & ALLOWANCES & FRINGE BENEFITS

(No. B/589) Mr R. Jhummun (Second Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to Mrs S.O., Attorney at Law, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the total quantum of fees and allowances paid out thereto, together with the other fringe benefits to which she was entitled, over the period 2015 to 2024 in her capacity as legal representative, chairperson, board member and for any other legal services rendered to the different Ministries and parastatal bodies.

(Withdrawn)

**RODRIGUES REGIONAL ASSEMBLY – PUBLIC FUNDS MANAGEMENT –
TRANSPARENCY & ACCOUNTABILITY**

(No. B/590) Mr F. François (Second Member for Rodrigues) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the Accounts of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly, he will state –

- (a) the measures and remedial actions, if any, taken to strengthen the governance and management of public funds for budget transparency, accountability and credibility thereof, and
- (b) whether new guidelines have been issued for the reallocation and virement of funds, as recommended in the Fourth Report of the Public Accounts Committee of the Seventh National Assembly and, if so, give details thereof and, if not, why not.

(Withdrawn)

**REWARD MONEY – QUANTUM ALLOCATED – CHECK & BALANCE
MECHANISM**

(No. B/591) Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to reward money, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the –

- (a) quantum thereof allocated to Police Officers over each of the past five financial years;
- (b) procedures followed therefor, and
- (c) check and balance mechanism put in place to prevent abuse and illicit use thereof.

(Withdrawn)

BANK CHEQUES – PROPOSED PHASE OUT

(No. B/592) Mr L. Caserne (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in

regard to the use of bank cheques as means of payment, he will state if consideration will be given for the phasing out thereof and, if so, when and, if not, why not.

Reply: I am informed that as part of the modernisation and digitalisation of the domestic banking and payment services sector, the Bank of Mauritius is adopting a strategy for promoting digital payments in Mauritius. Digital banking is becoming more prominent everywhere.

Despite the rise of digital banking, cheques are still a crucial part of the banking industry and is an option still widely in use.

However, the switch to digital payments will go concurrently and is expected to yield more transparency, allowing for conducive lending to different sectors in the economy.

PORT MATHURIN POST OFFICE – CUSTOMS UNIT – DRUG DETECTION

(No. B/593) Mr F. François (Second Member for Rodrigues) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the fight against proliferation of drugs through loose parcel in Rodrigues through the Port Mathurin Post Office by Customs, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to –

- (a) where matters stand as to the proposed installation of a scanner thereat for drug detection, indicating how this exercise is carried out presently in the absence of such an equipment, and
- (b) the amount of drugs seized over the past five years thereat, indicating the types and market value thereof.

Reply: In regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Mauritius Revenue Authority (MRA) that on 19 June 2025, a bidding exercise has been launched for the procurement of two X-Ray scanners to be installed at the Parcel Post and the Port in Rodrigues. The closing date for submission of bids has been fixed for 23 July 2025. It is expected that the contract will be awarded in October 2025 and the equipment will be commissioned in Rodrigues in January 2026.

I am further informed by the MRA that all incoming loose packets and parcels are processed at the Port Louis Post Office commonly known as the Parcel Post Office. Officers of the MRA Customs Anti-Narcotics Section (CANS) and Anti-Drug and Smuggling Unit (ADSU) are permanently posted thereat with a specific mandate for the detection of

prohibited goods including dangerous drugs. They make use of profiling techniques and X-Ray scanners and they are assisted by the MRA and ADSU K9 Unit whereby sniffer dogs are deployed on a daily basis for sniffing operation.

Loose packets and parcels destined for Rodrigues which are suspected to contain dutiable, prohibited goods or products requiring authorization from Other Government Agencies (OGA) such as the Ministry of Agro-Industry, Food Security, Blue Economy and Fisheries, the Ministry of Health and Wellness and the Mauritius Standard Bureau are retained for physical examination by Customs Officers posted at Port Mathurin Post Office. The retained packets and parcels are placed in bags, which are sealed by Officers of the MRA Customs and the Mauritius Post Ltd, to be transported to the airport and to Rodrigues under customs control. This exercise is monitored by the representatives of MRA Customs and the Mauritius Post Ltd. Should the MRA CANS and ADSU have reasons to believe that a particular packet or parcel might contain dangerous drugs, the Officer-in-Charge of the MRA Customs and ADSU of both Mauritius and Rodrigues are immediately notified to that effect.

In Rodrigues, Customs Officers posted at the Port Mathurin Post Office carries out a further profiling exercise with the assistance of Police dogs. All the retained suspicious packets and parcels are examined by Customs and ADSU Officers in the presence of the consignee in accordance with section 27 of the Customs Act and the MRA Customs Departmental Instruction No.1 of 2016.

In case of any detection of dangerous drugs and other prohibited goods in the parcel, same is secured and handed over to ADSU/CID for safe custody and enquiry.

For local parcels and packets destined for Rodrigues, the packaging is done in presence of the representatives of the Mauritius Post Ltd at the Post Office counters. The sender has to provide a detailed list of contents being shipped to Rodrigues. Sniffer dogs are deployed at the Parcel Post Office for the detection of prohibited goods. Scanning exercise is also carried out whenever necessary. All the operations are carried out in the presence of representatives of Mauritius Post Ltd, prior to dispatching to Rodrigues. Customs Officers posted at the Port Mathurin Post Office carry out a profiling exercise to identify any suspicious packet and parcel for physical examination.

In regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that for year 2020 to 03 July 2025, two cases of Possession of Dangerous Drugs concerning loose parcels at Port Mathurin Post Office were reported as follows –

- (i) on 18 August 2020, two male persons were arrested when they came to collect their loose parcel which contained 1.44 grams of heroin having a street value of Rs 15,000. They were sentenced on 15 September 2023, and
- (ii) on 14 May 2025, a loose parcel suspected to contain 3.25 grams of Cannabis having a street value of Rs 3,936 remained unclaimed at Port Mathurin Post Office. The report of the Forensic Science Laboratory is awaited for confirmation. Police enquiry is ongoing.

ROSE BELLE CIVIL STATUS OFFICE – RELOCATION

(No. B/594) Mr A. Ramdass (Third Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the Rose Belle Civil Status Office, he will state if consideration will be given for the relocation thereof in a premise of good standard and comprising basic amenities and in the vicinity of the Health Office delivering permits for cremation.

(Withdrawn)

OFFICIAL OVERSEAS MISSIONS – FORMER PRIME MINISTER, MINISTERS & MPs – COSTS BREAKDOWN

(No. B/595) Mr R. Jhummun (Second Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to official overseas missions undertaken by the former Prime Minister, former Ministers and Members of Parliament over the period 2015 to 2019 and 2020-2024, respectively, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the total cost incurred therefor, including the cost of airfares and per diem allowances.

(Vide Reply to PQ B/581)

DRUGS – WEST COAST & “LA PASSE” ENTRANCES – ARRESTS

(No. B/596) Mr B. Babajee (First Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to drugs, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of arrests effected on the West Coast in connection therewith, especially, on boats coming from Reunion Island, indicating if consideration will be given for the installation of Safe City Surveillance Cameras on the four entrances of “La Passe”.

(Withdrawn)

DIEGO GARCIA – UK-US MILITARY BASE –AIR STRIKES AGAINST IRAN

(No. B/597) Dr. F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port-Louis South & Port-Louis Central) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the joint UK-US military base located on Diego Garcia in the Chagos Archipelago on which the Republic of Mauritius exercises its sovereignty, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to whether same was used in the recent air strikes launched against the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Reply: The answer is no.

PALMA DISPENSARY – PROPOSED RENOVATION/RELOCATION

(No. B627) Ms S. Anquetil (Second Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the dispensary at Palma, he will state if consideration will be given for the renovation or relocation thereof and, if so, indicate when, giving details thereof and, if not, why not.

(Withdrawn)

GLYPHOSATE & GLYPHOSATE-BASED HERBICIDES – PROPOSED BANNING

(No. B/628) Dr. Ms B. Thannoo (Second Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Minister of Agro-Industry, Food Security, Blue Economy and Fisheries whether, in regard to glyphosate and glyphosate-based herbicides, he will state if consideration will be given for the banning thereof in Mauritius in the light of the scientific evidence established by the global research led by the Ramazzini Institute (June 2025) linking the use thereof and

the carcinogenic effects of exposure thereto at levels previously deemed safe by EU standards.

(Withdrawn)

MORCELLEMENT ST ANDRÉ FOOTBALL GROUND – UPGRADING

(No. B/629) Mr K. Rookny (Third Member for Pamplemousses & Triolet) asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to the Morcellement St André Football Ground, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the –

- (a) quantum of funds allocated for the upgrading thereof, more specifically for the lighting and fencing thereof, and
- (b) expected start and completion dates thereof.

(Withdrawn)

SMALL SUGARCANE PLANTERS – SUPPORT MEASURES

(No. B/630) Dr. S. Prayag (First Member for Piton & Rivière du Rempart) asked the Minister of Agro-Industry, Food Security, Blue Economy and Fisheries whether, in regard to the small sugarcane planters, he will state the measures being taken to secure –

- (a) adequate labour availability for the cultivation and harvesting of the fields thereof;
- (b) availability thereto of mechanised solutions to address labour shortage;
- (c) improved targeted financial assistance, subsidies or credit schemes to support mechanisation and improve overall productivity and viability thereof, and
- (d) importation of labour with other Ministries.

(Withdrawn)

COTTAGE-POUDRE D'OR HAMLET ROAD – ROAD SAFETY MEASURES – ROAD WIDENING

(No. B/631) Dr. S. Prayag (First Member for Piton & Rivière du Rempart) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure whether, in regard to the road from Cottage to Poudre d'Or Hamlet, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Road Development

Authority, information as to whether consideration will be given for the implementation of road safety measures thereat, including the –

- (a) installation of pavements and handrails through compulsory acquisition of lands along the main roads to ensure pedestrian security, and
- (b) widening thereof.

(Withdrawn)

**ROCHE BOIS WASTE TRANSFER STATION – RELOCATION PROJECT –
COMPULSORY LAND ACQUISITION AT BAIE DU TOMBEAU**

(No. B/633) Mr K. Rookny (Third Member for Pamplémousses & Triolet) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the land situated around the Waste Water Treatment Plant at Baie du Tombeau, he will state the reasons why his Ministry is pursuing the compulsory acquisition thereof for the proposed relocation of the Waste Transfer Station of Roche Bois thereat when the Ministry of Environment has not prepared and Government has not approved any such project.

(Withdrawn)

DIVING CENTRE ACCIDENT – INQUIRY – REMEDIAL ACTIONS

(No. B/634) Mr T. Apollon (Second Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Tourism whether, in regard to the recent accident that occurred in a diving centre in the north of the island, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to –

- (a) whether an inquiry has been carried out thereinto and the outcome thereof;
- (b) remedial actions taken, if any, in relation to the suspected cause thereof,
and
- (c) the measures taken, if any, to accompany family members of the victim thereof.

(Withdrawn)

**RODRIGUES – NEW SPORTS BILL – *COMITÉ RÉGIONAL OLYMPIQUE ET
SPORTIF***

(No. B/636) Mr F. François (Second Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the proposed introduction of a new administrative framework and a new Sports Bill, he will state where matters stand, indicating if –

- (a) prior consultations have been or will be held with Rodrigues sports communities, and
- (b) Government is agreeable to the setting up of a special committee to make recommendations on the setting up and missions of a *Comité Régional Olympique et Sportif (CROS)* for Rodrigues and, if so, when.

(Withdrawn)

ST MARTIN DAM LEISURE PARK PROJECT – CONTRACTOR/S – MATERIALS SUPPLY

(No. B/640) Mr P. Venkatasami (Third Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to the St Martin Dam Leisure Park Project in Quartier Militaire, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the District Council of Moka, information as to –

- (a) the names of the contractor/s involved therein, indicating the quantum of funds paid to each in respect of works carried out, and
- (b) if the District Council supplied materials therefor and, if so, give details thereof.

(Withdrawn)