



EIGHTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

(UNREVISED)

FIRST SESSION

FRIDAY 12 DECEMBER 2025

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THE CABINET

(Formed by Dr. the Hon. Navinchandra Ramgoolam)

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

Hon. Dhananjay Ramful	Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade
Hon. Darmarajen Nagalingum	Minister of Youth and Sports
Hon. Muhammad Reza Cassam Uteem	Minister of Labour and Industrial Relations
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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Deputy Speaker	Hon. Vedasingam Vasudevachariar Baloomoody
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MAURITIUS

Eighth National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 40 of 2025

Sitting of Friday 12 December 2025

The Assembly met in the Assembly House, Port Louis, at 3.30 p.m.

The National Anthem was played

(Madam Speaker in the Chair)

ANNOUNCEMENTS**HON. MS ANQUETIL, CHIEF GOVERNMENT WHIP – LETTER**

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Members, just a brief announcement.

The hon. Chief Whip sent a letter to me, which I have just received. I have not had time – it is a long letter – to study in depth what she said to me. So, I propose to take time, check the Standing Orders, and reply in due course.

HON. A. DUVAL – POINT OF ORDER

Also, the hon. Member, Mr A. Duval, has informed me that he wants to raise a point of order. I would suggest if we may go through the PNQ first, and then, you can raise your point of order. Is that alright? Everybody is happy as far as it can be?

Okay!

PAPERS LAID

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

A. Prime Minister's Office

Ministry of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications

Ministry of Finance

Ministry for Rodrigues and Outer Islands

The Performance Audit Report on the Sustainable Water Resources Management – SDG 6: Ensure availability and Sustainable Management of Water and Sanitation for all: Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities - December 2025 (In Original)

B. Ministry of Tourism

The Annual Report and Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority for the year ended 30 June 2024.

C. Attorney-General

The Annual Report and Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Law Reform Commission for the year ended 30 June 2024.

D. Ministry of Labour and Industrial Relations

The Immigration (Permits) (Prescribed Fees, Guarantees and Application Form) (Amendment) Regulations 2025. (Government Notice No. 127 of 2025)

E. Ministry of Education and Human Resource

- (i) The Annual Report and Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of Mauritius Qualifications Authority for the year ended 30 June 2024.
- (ii) The Annual Report and Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Human Resource Development Council for the year ended 30 June 2024.

ORAL ANSWER TO QUESTION

NIGHT MARKETS – FESTIVE SEASON 2025 - PERMITS - ALLOCATION

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr G. Lesjongard) (*by Private Notice*) asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to the setting up of night markets for the festive season 2025, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the –

- (a) criteria and procedures applicable for the allocation, withdrawal or refusal of permits to street vendors therefor;
- (b) sites identified therefor, indicating the measures taken to ensure safety during the operation hours;
- (c) consultations, if any, held with organisations or representatives of hawkers, shop owners and market traders;
- (d) estimated number of hawkers who will operate at the different locations, and
- (e) list of hawkers to whom a permit has been allocated, indicating their respective addresses and fees payable therefor.

Madam Speaker: Yes!

The Minister of Housing and Lands (Mr S. Mohamed): Madam Speaker, ...

Mr Lesjongard: *Ah, non!* My question was addressed to the Minister of Local Government.

(Interruptions)

Mr Mohamed: Madam Speaker, with your permission, I shall reply to the PNQ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Lesjongard: There is a court case tomorrow. If the...

(Interruptions)

Mr Mohamed: Madam Speaker, ...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Well, let...

The Deputy Prime Minister: *Ekoute omwin!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Lesjongard: *Non!*

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: One moment! Have I been informed that the Minister of Housing was going to reply to this question?

(Interruptions)

We received it just now.

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: *Touletan finn ena!*

Mr Lesjongard: *Non! Pa touletan!*

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: *Touletan ti...*

Mr Lesjongard: It is not because he is presiding the Interministerial Committee...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: So, you are all going to talk in a sitting position?

An hon. Member: *Kifer to per?*

(Interruptions)

Mr Lesjongard: Etonnant...

Madam Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition, please let him answer.

Mr Lesjongard: If he wants to answer, he answers!

Madam Speaker: Yes!

Mr Mohamed: I take note of the interruptions, but there has been no point of order raised.

Mr Lesjongard: But he is not the Minister for Local Government!

Mr Mohamed: I stand here...

(Interruptions)

Mr Lesjongard: That is not his portfolio, Madam Speaker.

Mr Mohamed: Madam Speaker, he has not even raised a point of order. Is he going to keep on vociferating?

Mr Lesjongard: My question is addressed to the Minister responsible for Local Government.

Mr Mohamed: Well, are you afraid of my answers?

Madam Speaker: May I? May I?

Mr Lesjongard: I am not afraid of your answer. Not at all!

Madam Speaker: Standing Order 22(4) ...

Mr Lesjongard: He is not the responsible Minister...

Madam Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition, please.

The Deputy Prime Minister: *Malelve!*

Mr Lesjongard: *Twa ki malelve, pa mwa ki malelve!*

Madam Speaker: Hon. Deputy Prime Minister, please!

Mr A. Duval: *Li tousel bien elve!*

Madam Speaker: Please!

The Deputy Prime Minister: Yes, yes, I please you.

Madam Speaker: I was saying that Standing Order 22(4) allows the transfer of a PQ with any Minister. So, we have been informed. I was not personally informed, but it seems that the Clerk was informed. So, there is no problem. Let him reply. You can put your supplementary questions.

Hon. Minister, please!

Mr Mohamed: Madam Speaker, I thank you for clarifying this point. I note he is still sulking, but it does not matter.

I shall reply to the PNQ since, specifically, I chaired the five Interministerial Committee meetings and my colleague, hon. Woochit, who is the Minister of Local Government, was also present in some of the meetings.

The policy of this Government, Madam Speaker, is to provide leisure and cultural activities in main towns and villages at night, especially in Port Louis, the capital, during the festive seasons.

Now, in addition, to democratise the economy, it has been proposed that new proponents be allowed to trade, temporarily, during this festive season as from 12 December 2025 up to the first week of January 2026. For this year, as mentioned earlier, it was generally felt that temporary trading should be allowed, however, in a disciplined and organised manner.

An Interministerial Committee has indeed been set up by Government to look into the management of the matter during this festive season, possible measures to allow them to operate without disrupting normal economic activities and operations, and compromising safety and security aspects of both the public and occasional traders.

The Committee has had discussions, established general guiding principles under which the traders would be allowed to ply temporarily during that particular period.

The Committee composed of myself as Chair, the hon. Minister of Environment, the hon. Minister of Youth and Sports, the hon. Minister of Labour and Industrial Relations, the hon. Minister of Land and Transport, the hon. Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection, the hon. Minister of Industry, SME and Cooperatives, the hon. Minister of Local Government, and the hon. Junior Minister of Local Government.

The meetings were also attended by Lord Mayors, Mayors, Chairpersons of Councils, as well as their respective Chief Executives, and representatives of the Mauritius Police Force, Mauritius Fire and Rescue Services, Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit, Ministry of Health and Wellness and other relevant authorities. All of those authorities were requested to prepare proposals in consultation with elected Members of the National Assembly of the respective constituencies as well as elected members of the local authorities.

Only occasional traders residing in the jurisdiction covered by the local authority would be allowed to operate therein. The local authorities were to carry out either an Expression of Interest or invitation, amongst previously surveyed occasional traders to this end.

Occasional traders would be allowed to operate against payment of the daily prescribed fee and the number of occasional traders would be controlled and not be allowed to increase exponentially.

An occasional licence would be granted in line with the relevant legislation and regulations. The daily rate would vary between Rs150 and Rs500, as requested by the respective local authorities themselves. It has been also decided that the fee charged would allow the local authorities to meet the expenses regarding scavenging services, toilet facilities, hoarding enforcement measures, additional lighting facilities, amongst others. And, if ever there were any shortfall, the cost would be met by the local authorities from their own internally-generated revenue and will have no financial implication to Government.

Madam Speaker, it was also decided that occasional traders would be provided with a badge – temporary – for that particular period that would ease enforcement by local authorities and the Mauritius Police Force. There would be uniform structures that would be erected by the hawkers at their own cost to accommodate their wares. Scavenging and cleaning would be carried out on a daily basis immediately after the end of operations by each local authority either through inhouse labour or outsourced service.

The Mauritius Police Force – we have obtained their collaboration for maintaining law and order, and for managing smooth movement of pedestrians and traffic, especially to avoid traffic congestion. The Mauritius Police Force would also ensure regular patrols. All the authorities, namely local authorities, the Mauritius Police Force, the Mauritius Fire and Rescue Services and other authorities I made reference to earlier would also be involved in the whole management of the process.

With regard to part (a) of the question, Madam Speaker, occasional licences for street vendors operating in the relevant jurisdiction are issued by the respective local authorities in accordance with the Local Government Act 2011 and specific operational guidelines approved for this festive period. All local authorities launched Expression of Interest, inviting applications from interested parties within its own jurisdiction to trade at designated locations decided by the specific local authorities. All applicants are issued with an acknowledgment

receipt: “note, only one application per person is authorised for sale of either haberdashery or cooked food”.

At the closing date, the bid box is opened by the officers of the health department of the Council in presence of an internal auditor, and representative of the Chief Executive. This exercise is followed by the counting of the number of applications received, allocation of a reference number to each application, screening of application forms and determination of eligibility of applicants in line with the preset eligibility criteria in the Expression of Interest by the officers of the health department. A counter verification of the eligibility is done by another team to ensure objectivity, fairness, transparency, and equity.

Subsequently, eligible applications are subject to drawing of lots in the presence of a Senior Usher of the Supreme Court, two members of the press, a representative of the Police for the City Council, the District Court for other Councils and internal auditors of the Council.

Reference numbers assigned to eligible candidates are placed in one ballot box. A second ballot box contains the space to be allocated to the eligible candidates. During the drawing of lots, one reference number is drawn from the first ballot box together with a space number from the second ballot box. The procedure is aligned with the guidelines for allocation of stalls by local authorities which has been issued by the former ICAC. I shall also table it if the hon. Leader of the Opposition requests a copy.

It is to be highlighted that 18 longstanding traders operating along SSR Street were exempted from the drawing of lots as decided by the Interministerial Committee and approved by Cabinet.

As regards the local authorities, I am informed that the allocation of occasional licences is still in process. I wish to inform the House that the occasional licences have not been provided where the applicant does not meet the residency or eligibility criteria, is under the age of 18, has submitted an incomplete application form, has not submitted the supporting documents, and the proof of address could not be verified or established.

I will also be tabling a copy of the conditions of the undertaking the traders signed with the Council. I wish to emphasise here that the occasional traders should operate within the approved sites and during the authorised hours.

As to part (b) of the question, Madam Speaker, the Interministerial Committee agreed that one-size-fits-all approach would not be adopted as towns and villages have different

characteristics. Each local authority has, therefore, identified specific sites suitable for day or night markets based on safety, accessibility, and urban management considerations.

I will also, Madam Speaker, table the sites identified in the jurisdiction of each local authority.

Madam Speaker, with regard to part (c) of the question, I have to inform the House that some shop owners associations have made representations at the level of the Ministry of Local Government in respect of illegal hawking in different jurisdictions.

My colleague, the hon. Minister Woochit, has chaired several meetings with these associations to look into the complaints. Consequently, further consultations have been carried out through Interministerial Committee meetings, engagement with Mayors, Chairpersons and Chief Executives of local authorities, representations received from shop owners, market traders, particularly in areas previously affected by congestion such as SSR Street.

Some local authorities have, at their level, held consultations with relevant associations and stakeholders. These consultations aimed to ensure that occasional traders' livelihood are considered, legal businesses are not unfairly impacted and public order, sanitation and safety are preserved.

The relocation of occasional traders to designated temporary market areas, including a night market at Port Louis, was specifically intended to address complaints from shop owners and market vendors while maintaining economic activity during the festive season.

With regard to part (d), Madam Speaker, I wish to inform the House that the number of occasional traders authorised to operate is determined by the capacity of the designated sites. I am advised that some 750 occasional traders, excluding shop owners, will operate at different locations of Mauritius except for Moka and Black River District Councils.

I will also table, as requested by the hon. Leader of the Opposition, a list of those who will be plying their trade within those jurisdictions, their names and addresses as requested.

With regard to part (e) of the question, as I informed earlier in my reply, not all local authorities have completed the exercise and in some of them, it is still ongoing such as in the Municipal Council of Curepipe.

As regards Rivière du Rempart, no application has been received and for the district of Pamplemousses, only one application has been received.

I wish, Madam Speaker, to reiterate that the daily fees vary from Rs150 to Rs500 depending on local authorities.

Madam Speaker, I am therefore tabling all requested documents.

So, that is with regard to parts (a), (b), (c), and (e) of the question.

Madam Speaker: Are we done? Yes, your supplementary. I am sorry, we are receiving documents at the same time. Carry on with your first.

Mr Lesjongard: Madam Speaker, first of all, I strongly protest against the hon. Minister for Housing and Lands replying to my PNQ...

Madam Speaker: Let me...

Mr Lesjongard: ... because that matter does not fall under his purview. It falls under...

Madam Speaker: Let me?

Mr Lesjongard: ... the purview of the Minister for Local Government.

Madam Speaker: Everybody will have to wait.

Mr Lesjongard: That is why I asked my question...

Madam Speaker: Okay.

Mr Lesjongard: ...to the Minister responsible for Local Government.

Madam Speaker: Let me cite the relevant Standing Orders.

Hon. Members, I do not pretend, after one year, to know everything in the Standing Orders. I also make mistakes and I also get a little bit carried away sometimes.

I have checked. Standing Order 22(4) says –

“Decisions on the transfer of questions rest with Ministers.”

You cannot challenge that!

Now, your supplementary question.

Mr Lesjongard: The other Minister is paid to do his job. He is not doing his job, Madam Speaker.

(Interruptions)

Now, my first...

Madam Speaker: That was uncalled for.

The Deputy Prime Minister: It's unfair!

Madam Speaker: Hon. Friends... Members – I thinking of Julius Caesar “Friends, Romans, countrymen” –, today, is presumably our last sitting. This time, I am careful. Let us try and keep some order. I cited you. You may not like it. There are a lot of things that happen that we do not like, but you have to accept the Standing Orders.

So, ask him questions, he will reply. Don't take any notice of the other Minister. Ask him questions.

Mr Mohamed: Madam Speaker, in the meantime, I will be very grateful, in the spirit of goodwill at the end of the year...

Madam Speaker: Do not stand both of you!

Mr Mohamed:...if the hon. Leader of the Opposition could withdraw what he just said.

Madam Speaker: Oh, come on!

Mr Mohamed: Because he has been insulting. It would start with at least his good faith.

Madam Speaker: No, that is alright. Carry on!

Mr Lesjongard: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Will the hon. Minister confirm first whether the whole exercise which was carried out by the various local authorities inviting Expression of Interest was open to the general public or to hawkers operating in those local authorities?

Mr Mohamed: I have said earlier on. The criteria that were established by the Interministerial Committee, and it is in my answer; unfortunately, most probably, the hon. Leader of the Opposition did not listen to that part or hear it. It was open to people living within the jurisdiction of the relevant local authorities.

Mr Lesjongard: Then my question is why, Madam Speaker, was it like this when the highlights of Cabinet Meeting on Friday 28 November state the following, Madam Speaker –

“Only hawkers residing in the jurisdiction covered by the local authority will be allowed to operate therein.”

My question is: why was it open to the general public?

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Prime Minister: *Li difisil pou ...*

Madam Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition, we all understand what was meant and what the hon. Minister just said. If it is in Beau Bassin-Rose Hill, only those working in Beau Bassin-Rose Hill, which happens to be my town, will be able to work in Beau Bassin-Rose Hill. They will not come to Port Louis, right? Is that what you are saying?

Mr Mohamed: If I may. I mean, I understand that the hon. Leader of the Opposition is playing on, if I may use the word “semantics”. I mean he understands, but he pretends not to.

The Prime Minister: No, he does not understand.

Mr Mohamed: Or maybe he does not. Maybe the hon. Prime Minister knows things I am not aware of. But what I am trying to get at is very simple.

If someone is going to ply the trade of a hawker or a *marchand saisonnier* or *de rue*...

Madam Speaker: Ambulant.

Mr Mohamed: ... so, that would be precisely those people referred to as hawkers. That is all. So, there is no need to complicate something that is very simple.

Madam Speaker: You just...

Mr Lesjongard: But this is where the problem is, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Okay.

Mr Lesjongard: Will he confirm whether...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Chut!

Mr Lesjongard: ...people who are not hawkers also applied?

Madam Speaker: Okay.

Mr Mohamed: I am aware that people who are not usually hawkers...

Madam Speaker: You mean all year round.

Mr Mohamed: ...have also applied, and basically when they have applied and if they are granted the right and they are applying that trade during that particular period, they qualify to be hawkers.

Madam Speaker: Yes.

Mr Mohamed: Simple! So, now I hope he has understood.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Do not speak...

Mr Lesjongard: This is not possible, Madam Speaker. How can they be qualified to be hawkers only during that period?

(Interruptions)

Will he confirm that only two criteria were requested, that is, the person should apply for only one site and be a resident of that area and no other criteria? And, will he agree that this is what is causing so much frustration among the regular hawkers?

Madam Speaker: You have two questions in one. First of all, the criteria. Hon. Minister!

Mr Mohamed: As I have said earlier on - I gave quite a long and detailed answer while keeping watch on the clock to allow him more time because this is not what they used to do. But I would like to say that everything I have said in that answer also covers the aspect of criteria, and there are several issues that are the criteria there and this is what I have already referred to.

I refer the hon. Leader of the Opposition to my answer I gave just a few seconds ago.

Madam Speaker: Okay.

Mr Lesjongard: The night fair for the Municipal City Council of Port Louis will start operating tonight. Can the hon. Minister confirm to the House whether the Local Government (Fees) (Temporary Provisions) Regulations 2025 have already been promulgated?

Mr Mohamed: I am informed, according to the officers, that the necessary has been done. I have seen the draft document, and I am sure that it has force of law already. As far as promulgation is concerned, the needful will be done by tomorrow morning at latest.

Mr Lesjongard: So, in other words, they will operate today and the law will be promulgated tomorrow, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Is that correct, hon. Minister?

Mr Mohamed: Yes.

Mr Lesjongard: This is the information.

Mr Mohamed: In fact, Madam Speaker, you see, I have the impression that the hon. Leader of the Opposition...

Mr Lesjongard: I am not interested in your impression!

Mr Mohamed: Do not interrupt me, for god's sake!

The Deputy Prime Minister: He is not even listening!

Madam Speaker: One moment! Let me, please.

Mr Mohamed: I know. He is putting a question, but he does not want to listen to the answer.

Madam Speaker: Do not shout from a sitting position!

The Deputy Prime Minister: He speaks ...

Mr Mohamed: You see, what the hon. Leader of the Opposition is trying to do, Madam Speaker, and if I may be allowed, he is trying all ways and means for this Government not to allow those people to work. Just like they did!

(Interruptions)

Look at...

(Interruptions)

Please, let me go on.

Mr Lesjongard: That, you allow!

(Interruptions)

Mr Mohamed: I know it does not allow you.

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: Tu n'as pas honte ?

(Interruptions)

Mr Mohamed: When you look at it, he fails to understand that...

Mr A. Duval: He is imputing motives.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Aah!

Mr Mohamed: ...there are people whom we, this Government, unlike his Prime Minister, in 2016, who publicly stood up in a meeting in Plaine Verte and said: '*pa pou les zot travay!*'. This is what his Prime Minister did!

Mr Lesjongard: Madam Speaker, this is imputing motive!

Mr Mohamed: And we understand that the people of those cities and villages...

Madam Speaker: That is enough!

Mr Mohamed: ...should be allowed to work.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: That is enough!

Mr Mohamed: So, as far as the Gazette is concerned, Madam Speaker, ...

Mr Jhummun: *Later dan manze dimounn!*

Mr Mohamed: ...what he does not seem to be aware of...

Mr Jhummun: *To pe met later dan manze dimounn!*

Mr Mohamed: What he does not seem to be aware of, it is on Saturdays that those issues are gazetted.

Mr Assirvaden: *Pa later sa, labou!*

Madam Speaker: Shhh!

Mr Mohamed: It is on Saturdays. He does not seem to be aware of it, and he was Minister for so long!

Mr Assirvaden: Tu n'as pas honte ?

Madam Speaker: Come on!

Mr Jhummun: *Les dimounn travay!*

Madam Speaker: Hon. Mr Jhummun, I have not heard your voice for a long time!

Mr Lesjongard: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, may I refer you to point of order 40(3), where it is stated –

“No Member shall impute improper motives to any other Member.”

Madam Speaker: Point of what? Not point of order! You mean the Standing Orders?

Mr Lesjongard: Yes!

Madam Speaker: Which one? You said ‘point of order.’

Mr Lesjongard: Standing Order 40(3).

Madam Speaker: Standing Order 40(3), okay.

Mr Lesjongard: Yes!

Madam Speaker: Which says?

Mr Lesjongard: Standing Order 40(3) –

“No Member shall impute improper motives to any other Member.”

An hon. Member: *Pa* motive *sa*! Facts *sa*!

Mr Mohamed: It is facts!

Madam Speaker: It is a well-known one. Well-known!

Mr Lesjongard: Yes! May I then request the hon. Minister to withdraw what he just said?

Madam Speaker: Withdraw, please, hon. Minister!

Mr Mohamed: I withdraw since it has never been my intention anyway to impute motives. I only want to state facts. So, if the facts give the impression that that is the case, I apologise. But that is not what I meant to do, you see?

Madam Speaker: You did not want to...

Mr Mohamed: I respect what your ruling is.

Madam Speaker: You did not want to impute motives?

Mr Mohamed: No, no, not at all!

Madam Speaker: So, please sit down.

Let us carry on, please!

Mr Mohamed: Madam Speaker, I was continuing the reply.

Madam Speaker: You will continue the reply?

Mr Mohamed: Yes, if I may.

Madam Speaker: Yes!

Mr Mohamed: If I may.

Madam Speaker: It was on which question? Which question?

Mr Lesjongard: No, he...

Mr Mohamed: Okay, allow him. Allow him.

Mr Lesjongard: ...that is all.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Leader of Opposition, please, I am not used to you speaking to me in a sitting position. Normally, you stand up.

An hon. Member: *Li pa kompren!*

Madam Speaker: You stand up, normally. Please, do that!

Mr Lesjongard: Okay!

Mr Assirvaden: Mets-toi debout, Joe!

Mr Lesjongard: I put my other question, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Yes! Yes!

Mr Lesjongard: Now, time is running out, Madam Speaker, since the festive season is only for a couple of weeks.

Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether the same arrangements which have been made for those operating in the capital city will be extended to other local authorities? Can he specify which additional roads, in the case of Port Louis and regions, in the case of other local authorities, will be considered for more hawkers to be able to work during that festive period?

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Shhh!

Mr Mohamed: Madam Speaker, I have tabled all relevant documents. One of the documents relates to the hon. Leader of the Opposition's question; part (d) of the question. The details are at Annex D. Thank you.

Mr Lesjongard: With regard to the Municipal City Council of Port Louis, one of the streets which is being considered is Bourbon Street. Can the hon. Minister confirm whether Bourbon Street falls within a radius of 500 m of the central market of Port Louis? I believe he must be aware that it is prohibited for hawkers to operate within that radius from the central market.

The Deputy Prime Minister: *Sa kou la li pe...*

Hon. Members: *Aswar sa!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Mohamed: As I...

(Interruptions)

Mr Jhummun: *Aswar bazar ferme!*

Hon. Members: *Aswar sa!*

Madam Speaker: Wow!

Mr Mohamed: Madam Speaker, ...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker, ...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: I cannot! I cannot hear!

Mr Mohamed: If I may, please.

Madam Speaker: I cannot hear the Minister!

(Interruptions)

Mr Mohamed: Friends, please!

Madam Speaker, as I had said earlier on...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Shhh!

Mr Mohamed: As I had said earlier on, and now that I have understood, I mean, I understand what the hon. Leader of Opposition is doing, is that he saying in his question, he wants to prohibit working on Bourbon Street...

Mr Lesjongard: I do not want...

Mr Mohamed: ... or any place where it is within 500 m.

Mr Lesjongard: Madam Speaker, ...

Mr Mohamed: That is my understanding!

Mr Lesjongard: This is not the case, Madam Speaker!

The Deputy Prime Minister: *Ey!* Is it a point of order?

(Interruptions)

Mr Lesjongard: May I, Madam Speaker?

Mr Assirvaden: *Le soir, le bazar est fermé, Joe!*

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: There is so much noise. You cannot follow. At the same time, I am getting three amended versions of a document. So, *comment je vais faire ?*

An hon. Member: *Bazar ferme 17:30-18:00, Joe!*

Madam Speaker: *Je dois me concentrer sur les documents. Je dois me concentrer sur vous.*

Alors, where are we, hon. Leader of the Opposition? Tell me! What is your ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Lesjongard: I will ask the question then, if they are saying that! How will the Municipal City Council of Port Louis ensure and what are the arrangements that have been made so that the hawkers operate only during night-time and will not operate during daytime?

Madam Speaker: Okay. Good question!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Chut!

Mr Mohamed: Madam Speaker, it is very simple.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker, please, if I may.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members! I know he has a big voice ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Juman: It is a night market!

Madam Speaker: I know he has a big voice.

(Interruptions)

Mr Lesjongard: What is the Minister of Local Government doing?

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Prime Minister: He is sitting down...

Madam Speaker: Yes!

The Deputy Prime Minister: And...

Mr A. Duval: *Ress trankil!*

Madam Speaker: And everybody is shouting!

Mr A. Duval: *Li debout li!*

Mr Lesjongard: *Ar mwa pa fer to ban komanter!*

Madam Speaker: Chut!

So, everybody is shouting! Then, you are surprised that I do not hear. Of course, I cannot hear if you are all shouting! Even if he has a great voice, I still could not hear him.

Keep calm so that I can listen to the Minister and to the Leader of the Opposition!

Mr Mohamed: With regard to the issue of 500 m, the Municipal City Council of Port Louis has been very careful to take legal advice prior to making any decision.

The legal advice is quite clear on the matter. It has even referred to a specific court judgment – that of the Supreme Court, which was in relation to a *concurrence déloyale* matter.

Madam Speaker: *Exactement!*

Mr Mohamed: This *concurrence déloyale* matter, obviously, was applicable because they could not operate within the 500 m at the same time, which, therefore, constituted *concurrence déloyale*.

As the hon. Leader of the Opposition would understand, night starts as from the time that the sun is going down. I just wanted to clarify that! So, obviously, since I have a lot of respect for hopefully the logic that he has, he understands that it is not operating at the same time. The market will be closed. So, therefore, there cannot be *concurrence déloyale*.

Madam Speaker: No, but his question...

Mr Lesjongard: How would you ensure?

Mr Mohamed: That is part (b) of my answer now.

Now, with regard to ensuring, it is very simple. The Municipal City Council of Port Louis has inspectors, police officers, enforcement agencies, and health inspectors.

What they will do is that before 6 p.m., during working hours or from the moment that they leave, that is, as from 1 to 2 a.m., the place will have to be cleaned up. That is why additional money is being asked for, Rs150 to Rs500; cleaned up! But for Port Louis, it is Rs150.

It is going to be cleaned up. Once it is cleaned up, all the people who are operating on those roads will have to be put away. The parking spaces are usually used on Desforges Street/SSR Street. It is used normally. Traffic is the usual traffic. It is as from 6 p.m. that they are authorised to come at places and numbers that have already been demarcated.

A very simple, structured, and practical solution. So, the hon. Leader of the Opposition should not worry. We invite him to come there. I am sure he will have quite good deals there, and he will see that it is being done properly.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Okay. As from Maghrib then. As from Maghrib.

Mr Mohamed: Just before!

Mr Lesjongard: We have to be worried, Madam Speaker. Is the hon. Minister aware that the Chief Health Inspector of the Municipal City Council of Port Louis gave a statement at the Pope Hennessy Police Station yesterday afternoon because he had received death threats? Are you aware of that?

Madam Speaker: Oh my God! Will you be aware of that?

Mr Mohamed: Madam Speaker, for one thing, I am not aware of it. For two, that does not change in any way the decisions that Government has taken in the interest of all hawkers, in the interest of the public and in the interest of the inhabitants of all the towns and villages.

Now, once again, I still have the impression that he does not want this market fair to be organised.

Mr Lesjongard: *Non*, Madam Speaker!

Mr Mohamed: That is why he is trying to throw spanners in the wheel!

Mr Lesjongard: I do not want to hear...

Mr Mohamed: That is the impression I have.

Madam Speaker: Do not impute motives, please!

Mr Mohamed: I am not imputing. I am saying it is an impression.

Madam Speaker: Chut!

Hon. Leader of the Opposition!

Mr Lesjongard: Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether during consultations – because he chaired that Interministerial Committee –, he was made aware of the concerns of shop owners on the issue of the unfair competition that this market will generate?

Mr Mohamed: I have chaired that meeting. For all those apprehensions, attention has been brought to us. There were not only Ministers but also some elected Members, backbenchers who gave their views and helped in trying to find solutions, and I am very thankful to all of them. I must say that we have taken into account all those particular issues. We have also taken into account, Madam Speaker, the fact that the Victoria Urban Terminal, where people were sent with the dream that they would manage to be able to make a living there as hawkers, in fact, it is a dead end where people cannot even work. Those are hawkers suffering there, and this is what work the MSM has done. I have to take that into account as well!

Madam Speaker: Hon. Minister, we are not talking of that issue for the moment.

Mr Mohamed: We are; it is connected.

Madam Speaker: *Non*. Last question!

Mr Lesjongard: Can the hon. Minister confirm if from the list of those who have been granted permits to operate, members of the same families have obtained more than one stall, and will he confirm that this situation does constitute an unfair advantage on other families who were eligible but have not been selected, Madam Speaker?

Mr Mohamed: Madam Speaker, for one thing, the criteria was very simple. It was one stall per applicant.

Madam Speaker: Per applicant.

Mr Mohamed: This has been adhered to and this has not been departed from. Strictly! Now, something else, it is also important to note that if it happens to be that there is a list in front of the hon. Leader of the Opposition, we have been so transparent because we know that we have done things as it should be done. The Municipal City Council of Port Louis, the Lord Mayor and their officers have adhered to strict measures, discipline, where they do not want to be accused and cannot be accused of any wrongdoing. Now, it is clear that there are people who may be unsatisfied, for whatever reason, but, in spite of that, the Lord Mayor, together with the Councillors and the officers, are trying to find ways and means of accommodating in line with what has been agreed.

So, there is, once again, a willingness – and not only a willingness but a demonstrated willingness – on the part of this Government to show that we have heard the apprehensions of the traders, of the shop owners, of those who are now going to be the *marchands saisonniers* or occasional traders. We have also listened to the need for traffic fluidity, emergency work services to come in. We have looked at the rights of the inhabitants, the rights of shop owners. All of this has been put into the equation. And what we want to create now is what? The festive mood, the good mood. It comes back to the capital, it comes back to the towns, it comes back to the cities and villages when it has been killed under their mandate.

Madam Speaker: Thank you very much. Time is now up.

Hon. A. Duval is going to raise his point of order.

STANDING ORDER 40(2) - BREACH

Mr A. Duval: Yes, thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, on a point of order, I wish to draw your attention to a breach of Standing Order 40(2) by the hon. Deputy Prime Minister during the Sitting of Tuesday 09 December 2025 when he directed towards me the following unbecoming, insulting and offensive words –

- “*Bourik*”;
- “*Imbécile*”, and
- “*Bachara*”.

The House will no doubt note that this is not the first occurrence; far from it. I respectfully request that you direct the hon. Deputy Prime Minister to withdraw these remarks and to apologise to the House.

Madam Speaker: I can only ask him to withdraw these words as per standing orders.

Please do so, nicely!

The Deputy Prime Minister: I withdraw.

Madam Speaker: You withdraw all three words? The three words mentioned.

The Deputy Prime Minister: And the next to come.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Deputy Prime Minister, I do not appreciate that.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Prime Minister: But you provoked me. I have withdrawn! I have withdrawn!

Mr Mohamed: Festive mood! Festive mood!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: I am far from provoking you. You have not tested me yet!

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

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

The Deputy Prime Minister rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

Madam Speaker: Hon. Prime Minister!

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, with your permission, I have two Statements to make.

(4.11 p.m.)

MELROSE PRISON – INMATE ANDY SELMOUR – DEMISE

First of all, I wish to make a Statement relating to the very serious incident that took place at Melrose Prison on 09 December 2025, resulting in the death of an inmate, Andy Selmour at about 20.25 hours on the same day.

Madam Speaker, information provided to my Office by the Commissioner of Prisons and the Commissioner of Police has revealed some very alarmingly disturbing facts.

Immediate action was taken to interdict Superintendent of Prisons, Mr Goburdhun Buldewo and Assistant Superintendent of Prisons, Vijaysing Jhurry.

I am also informed that four detainees, who allegedly participated in the assault on Andy Selmour, have been identified through CCTV footage and they have been transferred to other prisons for their own security.

I am further informed that the CID team led by Assistant Superintendent of Police Seedeeyan, has already started an inquiry. So far, 15 statements from Prison Officers, Prisons Health Officers and several detainees have already been recorded. Strict instructions have been given to the Police that this inquiry be completed in the shortest delay possible; and the file will then be referred to the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions for necessary action.

Madam Speaker, what has happened at the Prison is simply revolting! What is equally unacceptable is that this incident took place at the same prison where serious disturbances took place a few months ago on 17 July 2025.

I present my sincere condolences to the family of the victim and I wish to give them the assurance that we shall do all that is possible to bring to justice all those responsible for the death of Andy Selmour.

In view of the very disturbing circumstances surrounding the death of Andy Selmour, I am setting up a Board of Inquiry under section 3(1)(a) of the Public Inquiries Act to inquire into the case.

The Board of Inquiry will be presided by former Judge Mr Paul Lam Shang Leen, who has been consulted and who shall be appointed to act alone on such terms and conditions as will be decided under section 8(1) and (2) of the Public Inquiries Act.

I will make a further statement to the House as soon as reasonably practicable as regards the terms of reference of this Board of Inquiry, in line with section 6(1), (2) and (3) of the Public Inquiries Act.

Madam Speaker: Thank you, hon. Prime Minister. Your second Statement!

SALARY COMPENSATION 2026 – QUANTUM

(4.14 p.m.)

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, with your permission, I would like to make a Statement on the Salary Compensation 2026.

It will be recalled that at the meeting of the Tripartite Technical Committee held under the chairmanship of hon. Minister of Labour and Industrial Relations on 26 November 2025, Statistics Mauritius informed that the inflation rate for the year 2025 is estimated at 3.7%.

Yesterday, the Tripartite Committee Meeting on Salary Compensation was held under my chairmanship to consider the proposals from workers' and employers' representatives, and propose the quantum of salary compensation to be paid as from 01 January 2026.

Representatives of employees proposed a monthly salary compensation ranging from Rs855 to Rs1,792 across the board. On the other hand, Business Mauritius proposed that a salary compensation of 3.7% be paid only to employees earning a monthly basic salary of up to Rs18,000.

Madam Speaker, in view of the current fiscal situation and to restore the purchasing power of employees, Government has decided to award a monthly salary compensation of Rs635, which is equivalent to 3.7% of the National Minimum Wage of Rs17,110, to employees drawing a monthly basic salary of up to Rs50,000. The Rs50,000 threshold is consistent with last year's policy decision for salary compensation and payment of the 14th month bonus.

Some 409,400 employees will benefit from the salary compensation, of which, 89,100 in the public sector and 320,300 in the private sector. 88% of employees in the economy will, therefore, benefit from the salary compensation.

The annual cost of the salary compensation is estimated at Rs3.38 billion, of which, Rs740 million will be for the public sector and Rs2.64 billion for the private sector.

Madam Speaker, despite the tight fiscal situation, Government is making an exceptional effort in favour of our senior citizens and the most vulnerable groups of our society.

Government has also decided to grant an increase of 3.7% to all beneficiaries of basic pensions as from 01 January 2026. These include beneficiaries of Basic Retirement Pension, Widows' Basic Pension, Basic Invalidity Pension and Orphan's Pension.

Furthermore, Government is extending the increase to all eligible beneficiaries of Income Support, that is, those having reached 60 years but not eligible for the BRP.

These measures will cover more than 350,000 beneficiaries and will cost Rs2.4 billion annually.

Madam Speaker, in line with our policy focussed on compassion and inclusiveness, we are making today this effort despite the very difficult economic and fiscal context, and our commitment on fiscal consolidation.

I also wish to inform the House, Madam Speaker, that I intend to make a statement on the Pay Research Bureau Report 2026 next week.

Madam Speaker: Thank you. Yes, Minister!

(4.17 p.m.)

BAIE DU TOMBEAU – CAP L’ESPOIR SHELTER & CHILD DAY CARE CENTRE

The Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare (Ms A. Navarre-Marie):
Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, with your permission, I wish to make a statement in light of my previous replies on the situation at Shelter Cap l’Espoir and the Child Day Care Centre at Baie du Tombeau.

Madam Speaker, at the time I took office in November 2024, the situation at the shelter was deeply disturbing and upsetting. Some staff had been taking advantage of their position of authority with clear impunity. For instance, –

- food meant for children was being taken and carried away;
- age-appropriate meals were not served to these children;
- the children were made to believe that cameras were installed to watch their doings and whereabouts, and consequently, they were incited to damage same.

Madam Speaker, following the absconding of minors from the shelter on 01 June 2025, Government was informed on the immediate closure of Shelter L’Oiseau du Paradis and the setting up of an internal enquiry which led to the suspension of certain staff of the National Children’s Council (NCC).

Meanwhile, renovation works were initiated, training programmes were provided to enhance caregivers’ skills working at the shelter by officers of my Ministry as well as resource persons from an NGO. The shelter was re-opened on 05 December 2025, with new programmes and activities designed for children.

Likewise, the situation at the Child Day Care Centre at Baie Tombeau was also disturbing, as already highlighted in my reply to the PQ at the last Sitting of the National Assembly on 09 December 2025.

Madam Speaker, my Ministry has therefore embarked on a transformative journey to overhaul the service delivery for children in need of care and protection as well as the provision of early childhood services, respectively, for Cap L’Espoir and the Child Day Care Centre of Baie Tombeau.

Based on the deficiencies noted at the Child Day Care Centre, immediate corrective measures were taken. The Officer-in-Charge was replaced by the Assistant Child Programme Officer of the NCC. The new Acting Officer-in-Charge was designated to reinforce operational supervision and restore compliance, pending the enlistment of a duly registered Manager.

Furthermore, an upskilling session was provided by officers of my Ministry to the caregivers working at the day care centre from 24 October to 03 November 2025. In addition, they were also provided a half-day on the job training at a nearby child day care in Baie du Tombeau called Éveil Wi Nou Kapav.

Madam Speaker, some serious allegations were made on Tuesday 09 December 2025 by an hon. Member who indicated that evidence would be tabled at the National Assembly. Following these allegations, an internal enquiry has been initiated by the Ministry. As soon as the documentary evidence is tabled, appropriate disciplinary or legal actions will be taken according to law. Such allegations, if proved, cannot be taken lightly.

With regard to qualifications and experience, the Child Day Care Centre Regulations 2022 do not require a Manager to hold specific child care qualifications. As for child caregivers, they should hold a basic qualification in child care or at least possess three years of experience in the field of child care services. Under the regulations, due diligence is mandatory for all staff. Managers and caregivers must submit Certificates of Character and Medical Certificates before registration and, subsequently, every two years. I wish to reassure the House that my Ministry is ensuring that the provisions of the Regulations are being strictly complied with.

Madam Speaker, the National Children's Council is meant to be the key consultative and coordinating national body on activities and issues relating to children. As from May 2025, a new NCC Board was set up with a new Chairperson. The NCC is now on the right track with regard to its true mission. However, with regard to the shelter, we had to entrust the management to the NCC, for which, a Government decision was obtained, and my Ministry will endeavour to outsource the management of the shelter.

Madam Speaker, as a caring government, we remain fully committed towards creating an environment conducive to the well-being and development of our children. Moreover, as a new initiative, a steering committee comprising officers of my Ministry, representatives of

the NCC, two representatives of caregivers and two representatives of the children, would be set up as a monitoring mechanism for the effective running of shelters.

Madam Speaker, actions have been taken by my Ministry to turn things around, yet much is to be done. A situation that has deteriorated over the last ten years cannot be changed overnight, but we will leave no stone unturned in our struggle for a better protection and development of children entrusted to us.

Madam Speaker, the doors of my Ministry are open and will always remain open to welcome all those willing to contribute positively and meaningfully in the best interest of the children of our Republic. I thank you.

PUBLIC BILL

Second Reading

THE ROAD TRAFFIC (AMENDMENT) BILL

(NO. XXX OF 2025)

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on the Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill (No. XXX of 2025).

Question again proposed.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Second Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka!

(4.24 p.m.)

Dr. Ms B. Thannoo (Second Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka): Thank you, Madam Speaker.

This Bill is fundamental, for it aims to change our road culture. Our current road culture is dangerous and deadly with tragic consequences. A responsible government has the duty to save lives. This Bill does precisely this. It is about fostering a more responsible driving culture.

In 2016, the removal of the Penalty Points System demonstrated demagoguery at the expense of the people's well-being and safety. Then, our streets were flooded with cars. Our

bus services were made inadequate and irregular. All the while, more roads were built. These factors along with the near liberal dismantling of our social infrastructure, our health sector, our education sector, entailed an explosion of social ills and violence, including a dangerous, deadly road culture.

On the streets, anger is everywhere. When we are compelled to experience austerity imposed by socio-economic crisis. As a result, the road becomes one of the spaces where that pent-up anger erupts, explodes and destroys.

Madam Speaker, road rage is indeed too common on our streets. How often do we come across drivers who have become machines? Their humanity erased. Their transformation into raging monsters complete. On our roads, we witness aggressive behaviour on a daily basis – tirades of insults, physical battering, vicious attacks, bouts of insanity. We have all experienced the terror of being a victim of a perpetrator of road rage. Fear grips our mind and our heart skips a beat. We know not what they can do.

Where does this rage stem from? A capitalist system. A neoliberal system that compels people to live in dire austerity, to live in precarity, to live in constant anxiety, fear and anger, at those who profit from our sweat and blood by giving us insecure jobs, heightened cost of living and dire social inequality.

Capitalism destroys humanity. It transforms the driver into a raging machine – exhausted, tired after long hours of work in places where employee abuse is rife. The driver loses it on the road and in the domestic sphere. A neoliberal world destroys social welfare, emphasises competitive individualism and wealth accumulation at the expense of others. It dehumanises the self.

Madam Speaker, may I refer you to the evocative short animation film by Steve Cutts. You can watch it later on YouTube. We both know that art can awaken the mind. Cutts depicts humanity during late-stage capitalism: thousands of rats caught in a race for cash. On the roads, these rats are entrapped in infuriating traffic jams as they battle to reach the deadly workplace.

Well, one rat, too many; aggression rages. One car, too many at peak hours; aggression rages. When it rains, chaos reigns on the streets. As research has shown, crowded roads worsen rage. Research has also demonstrated that road rage is mostly perpetuated by young males in their early thirties.

Madam Speaker, road rage is, therefore, a gender-based issue. Toxic masculinity leads to accidents as much as alcohol, fatigue, speed and drugs. Men aged between 21-50 are the main victims and perpetrators of road accidents in Mauritius. Right now, when we have all been discussing gender-based violence, we need to be sensitive as to how men are victims of toxic masculinity.

At illegal rallies held across the island, young men compete to win at dangerous driving. Regrettably, cars still symbolise masculinity and virility. Dangerous driving signals the macho stereotype that breaking speed limits channel male driving abilities. The reintroduction of the Penalty Point System, therefore, is about tackling deep rooted gender-based misconceptions that leads to violence and tragedy on our streets.

This Bill reflects how this Government is taking responsible actions. It seeks to protect life – life endangered by capitalism that reinforces gender-based violence and reinforces patriarchy. From 2010 to 2020, the number of road accidents spiralled by 41%. Recent data shows but a slight drop in the early quarter of 2025. The issue remains critical.

As we are all strongly aware, road accidents destroy lives. They carry a heavy emotional and physical toll on survivors. The social and psychological impacts or Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) following road accidents are severe, complex and difficult to treat. This trauma may be carried across generations. Moreover, PTSD requires steady and long-term access to psychological care for a patient to heal. By making drivers responsible and avoiding accidents, we are ensuring that there are less victims to life-altering PTSD. This is care.

Madam Speaker, in 2025, Tandrayen-Ragoobur, a researcher, noted that we have limited emergency response capacity. She also underlined the economic toll of accidents on the health sector. Accidents reduced GDP by 0.42 %. Not that we care about GDP, we care about life! But within a context of economic crisis, the Penalty Point System promises much relief.

Globally, across multiple countries, the Penalty Point System has proven its effectiveness in dramatically reducing the number of accidents once it is implemented. Scientific evidence shows that the point-based license reduces road traffic offences by almost 80% in some cases.

This Bill exemplifies how a scourge can be tackled with informed and knowledgeable decision-making. This Bill, Madam Speaker, as most Bills introduced by the hon. Attorney General, is about ensuring social justice within the legal system.

The Penalty Point System guarantees that all perpetrators are equally penalised.

Madam Speaker: Dr. Ms Thannoo, it was introduced by the hon. Minister, Osman Mahomed. Of course, with the help of the Attorney General's Office!

Dr. Ms Thannoo: Yes, of course!

Mr Glover: It is the same as the Bills that I have introduced. That is why she mentioned it.

Madam Speaker: The Attorney General always works on all Bills, anyway! But after the Minister has worked on it.

Dr. Ms Thannoo: Sure! So, thank you, hon. Minister.

Madam Speaker: Sorry, I stopped you.

Dr. Ms Thannoo: It is alright. I stand to be corrected at any point in time.

Madam Speaker: Good.

Dr. Ms Thannoo: Okay. The Penalty Point System guarantees that all perpetrators are equally penalised for driving offences committed. For the wealthy, fines are too easily dealt with. They are not deterrents to poor road practices; the Penalty Points System in contrast is fair and just. The system aims to sanction all drivers equally regardless of their economic or social status. It will entail behavioural changes and the reduction of risky behaviours across all social classes.

The Penalty Point System is also crucial for us bus users. We are often treated as second class citizens. Our comfort and needs are barely taken care of. Anybody who has taken a bus from Plaine Magnien to Port Louis at peak hours or from Rose Hill to Rivière du Rempart knows that our buses can transform into dangerous roller coasters. The thrill is real, the danger is even more real. You can get a ride for as cheap as Rs35 and there are not seat belts. If you stand, be prepared to do gymnastics.

With the Penalty Point System, we may aspire to more road safety for bus users. Together with the Fleet Management System, the penalty system will protect us. The Fleet Management System is therefore a matter of urgency. Madam Speaker, for our roads to be safe, we need to emphasise the importance of driver education which this Bill briefly refers to in terms of driver rehabilitation.

Driver re-education may sensitise drivers so they understand the damaging impacts of their risky behaviours. Research accomplished by the University of Madrid emphasises that

the number of drivers who offend again after losing their license is very, very low, 1850 out of 850,000 drivers. Thus, a strong driver re-education programme that teaches about accident-related trauma and its transgenerational impacts is necessary.

Moreover, as former speakers have noted, for the point-based license system to be fully effective. We will require functional surveillance systems and improved road infrastructure. Most importantly, we need to re-think our social and economic model that currently heightens the incidence of dangerous driving. Neo liberalism kills, it destroys life. It makes us senseless consumers, tired workers, angry humans and mad drivers.

It wants more roads, more cars, more buildings, more shopping malls, senseless privatisation, endless hours of work for the poor and endless wealth accumulation for the murderous capitalist elites. In contrast, ecofeminist socialism sustains life, it helps us review our modes of life for more happiness and wellbeing. Feminist-eco-socialism should be at the core of our societal programme not an economic system that turns us into raging machines.

Indigenous women farmers who fight capitalism teach us to value life and nature not cars. They call upon us to take a walk, gaze at the stars, breathe clean air and rest. We are not money-making machines; we do not kill. We are made to care for each other, sit under trees, breathe in the sea and tell the story of the ecofeminist. Papita from Plaine des Papayes to our children, Papita did not become an astronaut in a men's world. She chose nature not roads, she chose life not cars, the moon embraced her.

The Penalty Point System is a major step ahead but we need system change. Thank you, Madam Speaker, I commend the Bill to the House.

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

(4.40 p.m.)

Mr K. Rookny (Third Member for Pamplemousses & Triolet): Madam Speaker, as Mauritians leave their homes, they invariably get on our roads to go and grab opportunities, to go to work or to go for leisure. At the same time, they are exposed to threats that invariably comes with road traffic. Our job is to stimulate our people to go and grab opportunities, to go for jobs and also to do everything that we can to mitigate the risks and threats that can be faced by our dear people.

Madam Speaker, today as we consider the Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill, I would like to remind the House that behind every statistic lies a life, a family and often a tragedy that

scars a whole community. Road fatalities are not numbers, they are stories, broken futures and empty chairs at the dinner table. Let it be said clearly, it was Labour led Government in 2012 that had the courage to introduce the Penalty Point System. It was not a perfect system; it was a lesser system than the hon. Minister is introducing but yet it was a modern, responsible, internationally recognised reform.

Then came the 2014 change of Government, the MSM administration scrapped the system not because it was ineffective but because it was politically convenient and Mauritius paid the price. I will not revisit the technical details of the Bill. The hon. Minister has presented them comprehensively and with clarity. My purpose today is to speak about responsibility, political responsibility, moral responsibility and national responsibility. There comes a time when politics and campaigning must be left at the door.

Today, is one of those days. When we were returned to office a year ago, this country was on its knees – economically weakened, socially fractured and morally adrift. Every Bill brought to this House by this Government has been rebuilding the foundations of our Republic brick by brick.

We still face challenges, yes, but the difference, Madam Speaker, is that we are not governing out of fear or calculation. We are governing out of duty. The price of not taking the right decisions is simply too high. When leaders fail to act because they are unsure of what to do or because they fear unpopularity, the cost is paid by the people.

Let the House be reminded of something that touched the nation deeply. In 2023, a pilgrim was electrocuted and his *kanwar* caught fire on its way to Ganga Talao. One poor soul lost his life and everyone knew that decisive, clear safety measures were needed. What did the previous government do? They implemented what I call ‘cosmetic guidelines’ – a complete abdication of responsibility. And the following year, eight young men, eight children of Mauritius all from my constituency lost their lives in a similar tragedy. This, Madam Speaker, is what happens when leadership fails.

In contrast, as soon as we came to office, the hon. Prime Minister ensured that regulations were clear and enforcement effective. After two painful years, our country was finally able to celebrate Maha Shivaratri safely again. This is the difference between governance and political avoidance. We do not abdicate our responsibilities and this is not new.

In 2012, when hon. Anil Bachoo introduced the Penalty Points System with proper enforcement, the fatality rate dropped by 13% in just one year. These are facts. And then the Jugnauth-led government dismantled the system and fatalities rose again. This is also a fact. Even the then Leader of the Opposition, today our hon. Deputy Prime Minister, warned them about the lack of data and transparency sustaining their 2015 amendment and urged them to adjust the system where and when needed but clearly, their priorities were elsewhere.

Madam Speaker, a law without enforcement is a dead letter. And over the last ten years, enforcement broke down; institutions weakened. A culture of recklessness took root. And worst of all, the sense of respect for law and for the police eroded. In many places, road offenders behaved as though the law did not apply to them. Illegal rallies, organised and dangerous, became common place. Lives were lost because the State closed its eyes.

In my own constituency, in Baie du Tombeau *notablement*, people tell me the same stories every week: motorcycles not with silencers but with noise amplifiers, riders without helmets, passengers standing upright, and too often, a funeral a few days later. I have attended funerals of teenagers, promising children whose lives were shattered in a moment. It is not rare to drive through my constituency and see a white circle on the asphalt indicating where a body fell, or where a small bouquet, on the side of the road, left by a grieving family where somebody lost his life. Madam Speaker, this is not something any country should accept. It is too high a price to pay for an empty chair at home. It must stop!

I would like to thank my friend, the hon. Minister Osman Mahomed, for bringing this Bill to the House. Combined with measures introduced and to be introduced in the future, it will help reduce fatalities. We must also recognise that we face new dangers, such as people driving under the influence of synthetic drugs. In 2012, this problem did not exist at the scale we see today. Legislation exists, yes, but it is only if its application is firm, fair, and consistent that it will protect our citizens. The Penalty Points System becomes an essential deterrent in this new context. I can now only hope that we will very soon bring a legislation that will enable authorities to impound the vehicles of those who are caught driving under influence of alcohol or drugs.

Madam Speaker, the goal is not to punish but to protect; not to restrict freedom but to preserve life. No road safety strategy is complete without enforcement, education, prevention, and continuous adaptation. And I have full confidence that this government will keep

improving our road safety practices dynamically, intelligently, and in line with global best standards adapted to our little island.

Before I conclude, Madam Speaker, allow me to share something personal. These tragedies are not abstract to me. They have touched my own village, more than once. I wish to dedicate my intervention today to the memory of my father's very dear friend, Guruji Woochit, who lived in our village at Impasse Jouvence. His life was violently taken away by a reckless motorcyclist. A man respected, a man loved, a man who contributed quietly to many lives; gone in a fraction of a second. It is to prevent tragedies like this from striking our families, our neighbours, our communities, that I rise in full support of this Bill.

If this legislation saves even one life, prevents even one mother from burying her child, or spares even one family from the pain of an empty chair, then we would have done something meaningful today.

Madam Speaker, I support this Bill.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, I propose we go for tea and we come back in half an hour.

At 4.50 p.m., the Sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 5.39 p.m., with Madam Speaker in the Chair:

Madam Speaker: Please be seated.

Hon. François!

(5.40 p.m.)

Mr J. F. François (Second Member for Rodrigues): Thank you. Madam Speaker, with your permission, allow me, before beginning my intervention on the present Bill, to extend my congratulations to you and the entire National Assembly for the two historic and symbolic events that took place this week.

Premièrement, l'Assemblée plénière du Parlement régional des jeunes de l'océan Indien à travers le projet Gouvernance, Paix, Stabilité (GPS) de la Commission de l'océan Indien et le support de l'Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie.

Secondly, the successful observance of the 16 days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence held with the remarkable support of UNDP as part of the United Nation's Global Campaign. This is innovation in action for our National Assembly.

Finally, I wish to congratulate all PSAC students, their parents and all the educational personnel across our republic, with a special mention to those from Rodrigues, for their outstanding performance of 84.89%. *Bravo aux élèves!*

Madam Speaker, coming to the present Bill, allow me to begin my intervention by speaking as a recent victim of a serious road accident which occurred just a month ago. I can understand the emotion of hon. Rookny. It was a profoundly shocking moment. The car transporting me was brutally collided from behind by another vehicle speeding at what I estimate to be no less than 180 kilometres per hour. If not, well over 200 kilometres per hour on a highway where the speed limit is 110 kilometres per hour, judging by the magnitude of the impact. By sheer miracle, we got away without injuries and no trauma. Thanks to the Lord, our Saviour!

Ms Anquetil: Yes!

Mr François: Je peux vous dire qu'aujourd'hui la résilience m'anime et ma vie est une vie toute donnée pour accomplir ma mission pour l'humanité.

I fully realise the degree of danger, fragility and high crash risk on our roads. Madam Speaker, hon. Members, it is with a renewed mindset and sense of purpose that I rise today to fully support this Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill (No. XXX of 2025) as presented by hon. Osman Mahomed.

The Bill's main objective is to provide for the reintroduction of a penalty point system applied to holders of driving licences, provisional driving licences and also to holders of international driving permits. The occurrence of road accidents contributes to a significant number of casualties and deaths in our republic. That depends on human factors, namely –

- driver error;
- negligence;
- irresponsibility;
- distraction;
- mobile phone use;
- unnecessary speeding,
- reckless driving, which are amongst the 33 deterrent offences listed in the First Schedule of the Bill.

Sure, Government is taking a bold step to send a strong signal to the defaulters by enforcing this penalty point system. The Bill rightly seeks to restore discipline on our roads. Those who persist in committing offences repeatedly will have to learn the hard way by being removed from driving or riding on our roads until they decide to improve their behaviours.

The Bill, Madam Speaker, responds to an urgent national concern and to align us with international best practices. It has been mentioned: Australia is moving towards zero tolerance in order to reverse worrying trends in road injury and fatality statistics. A new reality is confronting drivers with the enforcement of tough new traffic rules through significant increase in penalties for high risk and aggravated driving offences.

Madam Speaker, road safety is an essential sustainable development target under the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Bill certainly aligns with our commitment to act on road safety related targets and supports to achieve SDG Goal 3 and Goal 11 of the 2030 Agenda, and notably, SDG targets 3.6 and 11.2.

Surely, SDG Goal 3 ensures healthy lives and promote well-being for all, at all ages. SDG Goal 11 is to make human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

Target 11.2 calls upon us, by 2030, for access to safe and sustainable transport for all by improving road safety.

Madam Speaker, the Penalty Points System, an unquestionable powerful tool to improve road safety, is fully aligned with Government's strategy to reduce casualty and make our roads safer.

Tuesday last, I addressed a PQ, B/1197, to hon. Minister Ramful regarding SDGs' achievement for our Republic. Hon. Ramful rightly stated that according to the 2025 Sustainable Development Report, Mauritius achieved an SDG Index Score of 70.3, well above the regional average and ranked 76 out of 167 countries. I note in the report that for SDG3 – mentioned above – Mauritius is in the red zone, indicating that major challenges still remain.

Madam Speaker, I recall that in 2012 hon. Bachoo, the then Minister of Transport, set as objective to reduce fatality rate per hundred thousand population from the relatively high level of 12.2 to a much lower level, if not to eliminate it altogether. In 2024, the fatality rate

per hundred thousand population was 11.2 from an average of around 11.0 for the last 10 years.

I am not certain, hon. Minister, of our national target under the Road Safety Strategy 2021-2030. Is it aligned with the UN objectives to reduce road fatalities by half by 2030? Perhaps, you may further enlighten us during the summing up on this target.

Madam Speaker, I will not go through all the clauses of the Bill, but I will highlight a few clauses. Clause 8, Section 123AG of the principal Act repealed and replaced by “123AG. Allocation and effectiveness of penalty points”. By ensuring the application of penalty points to holders of driving licences and the payment of fixed penalties, Government is signalling clearly that we mean business for stricter laws, stronger enforcement and greater accountability rather than profit making.

The hon. Minister mentioned the introduction of digital penalty points certificate through a digital e-counterpart for security and authenticity, enabling real time management of the Penalty Points System. Surely, this will facilitate operationalisation of the system through the link with the Revenue Collection of the judiciary, the Driving Licence Management System of the Police and the National Land Transport Authority. Madam Speaker, the hon. Minister further stated that there will not be any digital driving licence counterpart as there was in the first Penalty Points System in 2013.

We are living in an era where most people are in one way or another dependent on our smartphones. In that spirit, Madam Speaker, I propose that our Republic reconsiders legislating for digital driving licences which can be displayed on a smartphone to any authorised person on request. Such a compliant digital driving licence should function as a simple and secure electronic counterpart to the existing hard copy licence, offering a more convenient and modern way of carrying and representing ones driving identification.

I am convinced my colleague, hon. Dr. Ramtohul, – he is not here – will be more than willing to champion this initiative in line with Government’s modernisation and digital vision for our Republic. We shall not lag behind to meet a system change, as rightly canvassed by hon. Dr. Ms Thannoo.

Madam Speaker, now, I wish to briefly comment on the Bill in relation to Rodrigues. One important issue I wish to raise concerns the suspension of driving licences and

rehabilitation courses. The court may convict a driving offender by ordering the disqualification of his licence as part of the penalty imposed. Madam Speaker, the MITD, here, offers driving rehabilitation courses in Mauritius. These courses are mandatory after certain traffic offences such as drink and drive, comprising of a one-day theory session for road traffic offenders and include additional modules on defensive driving, learner training and professional driving leading to certification. With this Bill, the old driving training and education issues must be revamped for the whole Republic.

In Rodrigues, two courses are currently offered at the MITD, Le Chou: the Traffic Offenders Rehabilitation Course (TROC) and the Drink Driving Rehabilitation Course (DDRC). I am informed that this year, in April, two batches of TROC and one batch of DDRC were held, and in July, one batch of each course was also conducted. The November session has been rescheduled to February next year as the courses depend on the number of offenders referred by the Rodrigues Court. This situation should be reviewed, especially to facilitate breadwinners whose livelihood depends on driving.

Madam Speaker, again, as the law becomes harsher, our roads require drivers with a stronger sense of responsibility, social commitment and mastery of proper driving skills. Too many people, especially the youngsters mistakenly believe that driving is simply about holding the steering wheel and pressing the pedals. This is far from the truth, as discipline, courtesy and respect to the *Code de la route* must guide every driver as a new mindset and positive behavioural change. In that regard, I propose that the hon. Minister together with the hon. Minister of Education and the Rodrigues Regional Assembly explore the possibility for the introduction of short courses on road safety, driving with care to develop lifelong skills. These could be delivered at MITD, Le Chou, in Rodrigues.

Another issue I wish to address concerns the regularisation of auto-motor driving school instructors so that they may be fully registered and legally authorised to provide driving instructions. Some instructors in Rodrigues have been operating for more than 20 years without a licence. They took part once in the examination dispensed by the MES and they missed the required 85 points threshold by only 1, 2 or 3 points and they obtain nothing so far. I, again, humbly request that the hon. Minister, in collaboration with the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate, the Police Traffic Branch and the Rodrigues local authority, remedy this long outstanding issue in the interest of those instructors.

Madam Speaker, the hon. DPM and you mentioned that Rodrigues once had only one vehicle. Indeed, Rodrigues registered its first and only vehicle in 1955, a single Land Rover that served the island for many years. At that time, the only and paved road stretched from Port Mathurin to St Gabriel where the Cathedral is. Our first school was there at St Gabriel. As part of history, the mid-1950s marked the beginning of a new era of development for Rodrigues, particularly with the agricultural revolution initiated by one Philip Hotchin. That is part of history; I wanted to put that on record.

Coming back to the Bill, Madam Speaker, the statistics for 2024 show that Rodrigues has 22,047 registered vehicles. According to NLTA records, as at date, for 2025, Rodrigues has registered an additional number of vehicles: 1351 motorcycles and 918 motor vehicles of various types. This brings the total number of vehicles from 22,047 to 24,316 for 2025, including 15,369 motorcycles and 8,947 motor vehicles. This represents an increase of 4 %.

Road traffic accidents statistics from Rodrigues Police Division show 176 accidents including 222 motor vehicles recorded as at November 2025 compared to 198 in 2024. The total number of casualties were 140 in 2024 and 101 as at November 2025 and fatal casualties are 2 for this year; so far. The highest number of fatal cases recorded over the past ten years is 6 – in 2015 and 2021.

Madam Speaker, interestingly, my hon. colleague from Rodrigues, also my political adversary from Rodrigues, hon. Ms. Henriette Manan, highlighted the urgent need to upgrade our existing road infrastructure and construct new roads so that all Rodriguans can enjoy facilities similar to those in the Republic. She is absolutely right, and I, therefore, associate myself with her remarks. In the same vein, this should urge the Regional Government to prioritise infrastructure development with sound fiscal discipline. It is about urgency, control, sustainability and making the right choices for the future prosperity of Rodrigues.

Madam Speaker, allow me to recall where under road construction, appropriated funds are being diverted to a non-budgeted project – reconstruction of Port Maturin Waterfront costing Rs50 million. I said so but I need to repeat that – as rightly pointed out by hon. Ms Manan – at the expense of urgently required road projects across the island, including the mentioned Anse- Femie road, as affirmed by hon. Ms Manan.

Madam Speaker: I see you are keeping an eye on the time.

Mr François: Yes, I just received a paper, but...

Ms Anquetil : C'est déjà terminé.

(Interruptions)

Mr François: Non, laissez-moi terminer, Madame la présidente. C'est très important. Il faut parler. J'ai tellement de choses à dire sur Rodrigues.

Madam Speaker: Okay, we give him a few minutes.

Two minutes for Rodrigues.

Mr François: Madam Speaker, I also note that in 2022, the RDA and the Traffic Management Road Safety Unit, published a report which today requires an update regarding the possible classification of approximately 200 km of roads in Rodrigues. I think we need to look into that, together with the Regional Assembly, the road classification.

Madam Speaker, my last point, another matter that deserves the granting of a special derogation for Rodrigues concerning the new offences listed under item 29 –

“Carrying person(s) in the open pick-up area of a double cab pickup/dual purpose vehicle – ...”

Offence code – DRIV43

Why I said so because in Rodrigues, it is deeply rooted. It is a cultural practice to use 4 x 4 double cab pickup to transport a coffin during funeral procession, especially for access to and from remote areas over entered and trapped roads.

Hon. Minister, I think this can be addressed by way of regulations together with our colleagues from Rodrigues.

Madam Speaker, let me conclude. As usual, I will humbly make a request for the enforcement of this legislation in Rodrigues that the Commissioner of Police, with the hon. Prime Minister and Minister for Rodrigues, to continue strengthening the police force in Rodrigues, particularly by deploying trained Rodriguan-born police officers currently in Mauritius. They have already applied for the transfer to Rodrigues. It is being done.

And, to conclude, Madam Speaker, the reintroduction of Penalty Point System will undoubtedly contribute to shaping the right mindset among drivers as government remains determined to take bold and severe measures against road defaulters who show no respect for human lives. This Bill is a strong step forward, realising the vision of safe roads throughout the Republic. And, I hope that in the years to come, the data on road offences will certainly

demonstrate that Penalty Point System has been effective in improving road safety across the Republic.

Thank you, Madam Speaker. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Dr. Ms Jeetun, please.

(6.03 p.m.)

The Minister of Financial Services and Economic Planning (Dr. Ms J. Jeetun): Madam Speaker, last year, there were close to 40,000 road accidents in Mauritius. 134 Mauritian families buried loved ones lost to road accidents, close to 3000 people were injured. These statistics recur year after year. Lives lost and people affected for life due to injuries.

The numbers from the year 2015 add up to more than 315,000 road accidents. 1346 lives lost, and over 32,000 injuries but this is not just about statistics, not just about numbers and as the hon. Minister of Land Transport and hon. Rookny said earlier today, this is about a mother who will not see her child, a wife who lost her husband and a husband who lost his wife, children who will have to grow up without parents. This is a real tragedy because behind every road accident statistic, is a shattered family.

Now, Madam Speaker, these tragedies impose costs that extend far beyond individual grief. Behind the lives lost and injuries, lie thousands of hospital bed days, lost income, damaged cars and infrastructure, traffic jams, billions in lost productivity, rising insurance payout for insurance companies and rising insurance premium for vehicle owners. These tragedies could have been avoided. When we look at the victims, the majority are often young motorcyclists or cyclists and pedestrians. A combination of youthful risk-taking and the most vulnerable on our roads. Our roads have become their far west. Many drivers think the law does not apply to them.

I, therefore, welcome and fully support our colleague, the hon. Minister of Land Transport's proposal to reintroduce the Penalty Point System. This is a long overdue reform that establishes clear accountability for drivers' behaviour. This proposal strikes at the heart of our road safety crisis. The graduated system sends an unambiguous message – reckless driving will no longer be tolerated and persistent offenders will lose the privilege of operating vehicles on our roads.

The Penalty Point System framework is sound. The legal architecture is robust and the administrative procedures are fair. I commend the hon. Minister of Land Transport for bringing this essential reform to Parliament.

As the Minister of Economic Planning, I recognise that this is exactly the kind of evidence-based policy intervention our nation needs. One that protects lives while generating substantial social and economic benefits through reduced accidents.

Let us look at the economic ramification of this important piece of legislation, and let me take a moment to distinguish between two dimensions of this reform that are often discussed together. This relates to the economic and insurance sectors.

First, the economic dividend for our nation from safer roads. Fewer accidents mean immediate savings on government spending. Healthcare expenditures are reduced as hospital emergency department treat fewer injuries. Road infrastructures need fewer repairs. Workforce productivity stabilises as fewer employees face career ending injuries. Less hours in traffic jam due to road accidents is more productivity for our enterprises. Household financial security improves. Public resources currently consumed by accident response such as ambulances, emergency staff, hospital beds, rehabilitation services can be reallocated to other pressing national priorities.

Madam Speaker, the World Bank estimates that lives lost and injuries cost Mauritius around 3% of our annual GDP. This is the equivalent to roughly Rs20 billion every year. International evidence suggests that introduction of the penalty points system reduces road accidents by up to 30%. Even a conservative 20% reduction in accident frequency would save Mauritius approximately Rs4 billion annually.

This is Rs4 billion that can be redirected to education, infrastructure development, social housing and poverty alleviation. These benefits accrue to our nation regardless of insurance market structure. They represent definite economic gains, resources saved, productivity safeguarded and lives protected.

Let me now come to the insurance sector and more specifically to the pricing in insurance market. People frequently come to me complaining that '*mo lasirans in tro monte, madame*. Do something about it. Motor vehicle insurance premium is on the rise. Please, do something about it.' Truth is that drivers who have never caused an accident, never violated traffic laws and drive defensively everyday effectively subsidise reckless drivers through uniform insurance premium structures.

Insurance industry groups have advocated for using risk-based pricing because they help prevent safe drivers from subsidising fewer safe drivers. A driver with a spotless record pays essentially the same premium as one with multiple speeding violations until that reckless driver causes an accident and the entire population's premium rise to cover the claim. Based on risk assessments, high-risk drivers should be paying two to three times the average premium of a low-risk driver.

Differentiated pricing based on risks sends a clear message: recklessness comes at a cost. We do not currently have this system in Mauritius. This is fundamentally unfair to safe drivers.

Madam Speaker, the National Insurance Claim Database (NICD), a centralised digital platform, housed under the Financial Services Commission, was launched in September of this year to promote greater transparency, efficiency and accountability in the insurance sector.

Going forward, the NICD will be an invaluable tool in implementing such a differentiated pricing. The NICD provides information on drivers' claim records and will allow all insurance companies to access their claims history. It will also help reduce insurance shopping, where cars that are not road worthy and therefore at higher risks of accident are able to buy insurance from less reliable providers.

With better and timely information, the NICD will also facilitate the processing of claims. Going forward, the data from the point system could also feed into NICD to improve the pricing of insurance products based on driving history.

With AI enabled analytics processing objective violation records, insurance could finally offer bonuses and discounted premiums to low risk drivers while proportionately increasing rates for high-risk drivers. Bus companies and fleet operators could implement safe driving incentive programmes with objective performance metrics. This is not some actuarial gimmicks. This is accountability and transparency. This is holding individuals financially accountable for the risks they create while rewarding those who drive responsibly.

In 2024 last year, 478,640 vehicle owners paid an estimated Rs6.4 billion in insurance premium. That is an average of Rs13,400 to insure one vehicle. The payout for accident was Rs5.1 billion. If we reduce accidents and the resulting payout by an estimated 20%, this means a saving of just about Rs1 billion a year. If these are transferred to the customers, it could reduce insurance premium costs by around Rs2,100 on average per vehicle.

Let me be crystal clear. The economic benefits and the insurance market benefits while complementary are actually distinct. Our nation gains from fewer accidents, regardless of how insurance prices adjust. The insurance market gains fairness and sustainability as a secondary benefit. The primary objective is saving lives and making our roads safer.

Madam Speaker, having reviewed international evidence on the penalty point system implementation, I believe we have an opportunity to maximise the effectiveness of this reform. We can leverage technology to amplify behavioural change. At its most basic, we already have road traffic cameras, which once deployed, remain active 24/7 without any human intervention.

Drivers know what is waiting. Police officers can focus on other priority works. These have been shown to be effective. These are investments that repay for themselves. The benefit cost ratio of speed cameras typically ranges from 2:1 to 10:1, meaning for every rupee spent, there are Rs2 to Rs10 saved in costs related to accidents and injuries. And they save lives too.

How to avoid drivers gaming the system? Points documented on paper after occasional police stop may not fully alter behaviour. A risky driver who knows that speeding might occasionally be detected by police patrol will calculate the odds and take that risk. A driver who knows that speeding will be consistently and automatically detected will modify his/her behaviour fundamentally.

Points backed by certain consistent automatic detection fundamentally shape how drivers think about risks every single time that they get behind the wheel. This is what we need. We must acknowledge an uncomfortable truth. The Mauritian driving culture has shifted in dangerous directions.

Speeding has become normalised. Some drivers think our roads of Formula 1 track. Many motorcycles turn our roads in racing circuits. Mobile phones use while driving is routine. Risky overtaking is accepted but these behaviours kill people, they kill the drivers themselves, they kill innocent passengers, they kill pedestrians and they kill other road users who made no dangerous choice but had the misfortune of being in the wrong place when a delinquent driver made a fatal decision. They cause lifelong injuries and trauma and let us be frank, our current enforcement capabilities face major constraints, limited detection capabilities, large volumes of undetected violations and resource constraints on manual operations.

These are not criticism of our Police Force who work diligently with available resources. These are issues that technology can help address. Improving road behaviour cannot be corrected through penalties alone. It requires certainty of detection and this is what video camera-based system deliver – continuous, impartial, reliable enforcement.

We can leverage technology to make our roads smarter and our island safer. I would say we can also leveraged technology to improve the governance of our road management. Faced with the prospect of losing their points and paying a fine, some drivers may likely propose a bribe but the majority of our officers will deal with this by reporting it.

But unfortunately, a small minority may accept the bribe and this is where decay starts and the efficacy of the system starts to collapse. That is why we will need to invest in more technological interventions. They will find drivers on one criterion only. Breach of road traffic regulations irrespective of who the drivers are, whom they know and in which station their families work. This is transparency; this is fairness.

I would, therefore, respectfully request the hon. Minister of Land Transport to consider developing as a subsequent phase to the penalty point implementation, a comprehensive video camera-based violation detection system to maximise the deterrent effect and amplify the results from this crucial reform.

Madam Speaker, let me conclude where I began: with those 134 families who lost loved ones due to road accidents in just last year. If we replicate that 20% to 30% reduction in accidents from the penalty point system, Mauritius could save up to 40 lives annually. 40 families who do not bury children, parents, spouses – 40 funerals that do not happen.

The hon. Minister of Land Transport's penalty point proposal provides the legal structure for driver accountability and I commend him for bringing this important piece of reform forward.

We must maximise its effectiveness. Intelligent video enforcement technology provides the detection certainty that can be data driven and transformative. Beyond the human cost, we preserve economic productivity. We reduce the stress on the healthcare system. We enable insurance market transformation through risks differentiated pricing. We reward responsible drivers financially. We built the data infrastructure for continuous safety improvement. Most fundamentally, we change the culture on Mauritian roads from one where violations are routine and consequences are uncertain to one where safe driving is expected, enforced and non-negotiable.

10 years from now, Madam Speaker, when our road fatality rate would have reached historic lows, we will look back at this moment. We will recognise it as

a day when Parliament chose lives over political convenience. Let us commit to those 1346 families and to all the families we can still save, that this Government will continuously strive for safer and most secure roads to build a more prosperous and safer Mauritius.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Thank you.

Yes. Hon. Minister Gunness!

(6.21 p.m.)

The Minister of National Infrastructure (Mr G. Gunness): Madam Speaker, at the very outset allow me to extend my congratulation to the hon. Minister Land Transport, Mr Osman Mahomed, for introducing the Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill (No. XXX of 2025). a legislative measure that will undoubtedly have a positive impact on our society and foster greater discipline among our drivers for the benefit of all road users. I rise today to join him in his strong support of the Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill (No. XXX of 2025).

I do so with a profound sense of duty, a deep moral conviction, and an unwavering commitment to the citizens of our Republic. This Bill is not merely a piece of legislation. It is not just a procedural formality or a political statement. It is above all a reflection of our national conscience, an expression of our collective responsibility and a measure of the value we attach to human life.

Madam Speaker, the vision of this Government is clear and simple: a Mauritius where every journey is safe. A Mauritius where every life is valued. A Mauritius where road safety becomes a national culture.

This vision cannot be achieved overnight but with conviction, unity and discipline, it remains within our reach. Unlike the former government which ignored warnings and neglected its duties, we are committed to implementing this new system. Our ultimate objective is protecting lives. We are implementing it because our citizens and road users deserve a modern, fair, effective and evidence-based road safety system and that is exactly what we are delivering.

Madam Speaker, to understand the urgency of this reform, we must revisit our recent history. In 2013, Mauritius introduced the penalty point system. It is not the first time that we

are coming with it. It was introduced in 2013. The results at that time were immediate and undeniable. In just one year, road deaths were reduced by 17.4%. The system was working, lives were being saved, families were being spared the agony of loss. But in 2014, a tragic political choice was made. The MSM and its allies made the irresponsible decision to campaign against this proven safety tool. It was one of the rare instances globally where a political party actively opposed a life-saving mechanism for short-term populist gain.

Once in power, the MSM chose the opposite path. They abolished the system – dismantling a mechanism that was fully aligned with international standards. The result of that decision, Madam Speaker, was a decade of stagnation and tragedy. From 2015 to 2024, over 1300 Mauritians lost their lives on our roads.

Annual deaths remain stubbornly high, fluctuating between 139 and 157. There was no progress, no coherent strategy, just a counting of bodies. Meanwhile, in countries like France, Germany, Netherlands, Finland and Italy which strengthened the penalty points, the rate of fatal road accidents had fallen drastically.

The contrast is stark; where others modernised, the previous Government regressed. Where evidence was clear, political expediency prevailed. Today, Madam Speaker, we are here to correct those mistakes. We will not repeat them. We will not neglect our duty. We will not shy away from difficulties but will be bold and committed to reverse the dreadful situation created by them.

Madam Speaker, whenever significant reform is introduced, questions arise and it is quite legitimate. That is healthy and good for our democracy but the concerns surrounding the Penalty Points System are not reasons to avoid it. They are reasons to implement it responsibly. I wish to address the four main concerns that have been raised directly and transparently –

- (i) Is the system too strict? The answer is no. The system punishes patterns of behaviour, not isolated mistakes. A single minor error will not strip you of your licence but if you repeatedly speed, if you repeatedly endanger others, the system will catch you. We are targeting the reckless, not the responsible.
- (ii) Will it hurt new drivers? No, in fact, it will protect them. Young drivers will be better prepared. New licence holders will grow up in an environment of discipline and accountability, reducing the chance of dangerous habits taking root. Young

drivers are statistically more vulnerable to accidents. This system will guide them towards safe habits from day one.

- (iii) Will it increase fines? No, points do not replace fines; they complement them. In many cases, points allow for behavioural correction without severe financial penalties. The goal is not to fill the Treasury; the goal is to keep people alive.
- (iv) Will it be fair? Yes, Madam Speaker. Under previous systems, enforcement was often inconsistent. The new system is transparent, automated and uniform. Records are accessible, procedures are consistent, technology reduces arbitrary enforcement. Every driver is treated equally, whether you are powerful or powerless. Anyway, the camera does not discriminate. Drivers will know exactly what each offense means. There are no hidden surprises, no discretionary punishments and no ambiguity. Furthermore, it will be easier for police to enforce. With the new proposed system, police officers can focus on serious offences rather than administrative processes. This improves policing, reduces roadside conflicts and enhances public trust.

Madam Speaker, some may ask how this helps the ordinary driver. The answer is simple. It makes the road safer for everyone but let me enumerate the benefits more deeply –

- (a) We will have safer roads. By removing reckless and repeated offenders, we reduce the likelihood of accidents. This benefits every user of the roads; drivers, pedestrians and cyclists alike.
- (b) There will be fairness and equality. As I stated, the days of inconsistent enforcement will be over. The rule of law applies to all.
- (c) It will lead to less insurance costs. International evidence shows that when accidents decrease, insurance costs follow. A safer road environment benefits responsible drivers financially.
- (d) It will promote responsible driving. The psychological impact of accumulating points is powerful. Drivers become more vigilant, more respectful of road signs and more aware of the consequences of any risky behaviour.

Madam Speaker, while we introduce this legislation, my Ministry is doing its part. A Penalty Point System requires an environment that supports compliance. We are implementing a Comprehensive Infrastructure Upgrade Plan –

- Modern road design: we are redesigning high risk intersections and roundabouts to reduce conflict points;
- Standardised signage: we are auditing and upgrading road signs across the country. A driver must see the limit to respect the limit;
- Black spot intervention: we are fast-tracking engineering solutions for accident-prone zones;
- Maintenance: we are clearing vegetation and fixing road markings to ensure that enforcement is technically sound and visually clear. We are building a physical environment that matches the legal framework; modern, safe and efficient.

Madam Speaker, this reform is more than legislation. It is a movement; a movement towards respect, accountability and shared responsibility. Our citizens must also adopt responsible behaviour. Government cannot do this alone; road safety is a shared responsibility. Every citizen must play a part whether, it be drivers, pedestrians, educators, parents, businesses or community organisations. We must build a culture of road respect, respect for speed limits, respect for pedestrians, respect for motorcyclists, respect for school zones, respect for traffic officers and more important, respect for the sanctity of human life. Road safety is not an inconvenience; it is an essential act of citizenship. Let us be honest, too many drivers in Mauritius view road rules as suggestions rather than laws. Too many believe they are immune to consequences. Too many assume that accidents happen only to others, but the reality is that accidents spare no one. They strike young and old, rich and poor, urban and rural, experienced and inexperienced. The only barrier between life and death on our road is responsible behaviour.

Madam Speaker, this is a turning point. For too long, we tolerated dangerous driving as a cultural norm. For too long, we accepted preventable tragedies as unavoidable. For too long, we relied on outdated systems that belong to the past. With the introduction of the Penalty Point System, together we are taking a decisive step into a safer, more disciplined, more responsible future. We do this not for political gain but for the taxi drivers who aspire to safer traffic conditions, for the motorcyclists navigating traffic to deliver meals, for the mother driving her child to school, for the grandparents crossing the road outside their home, for the students who dream for a better tomorrow, for every family who wants to live without the fear of road traffic tragedy. We do this because every life matters. We do this because every accident prevented, is a life saved. We do this because Mauritius deserves better.

Madam Speaker, the Penalty Point System is not merely a reform, it is a promise; a promise of safety, a promise of discipline, a promise of accountability, a promise of better Mauritius. Let history record this moment which shows courage over complacency, action of over apathy and responsibility over connivance.

Let us move forward together. Let us build a safer system, safer communities and a safer future for all. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Deputy Prime Minister!

(6.35 p.m.)

The Deputy Prime Minister: *Madam Speaker*, j'aimerais commencer en félicitant le ministre du Transport pour l'excellent travail qu'il fait depuis un an.

Madam Speaker, notre mission et notre devoir est de sauver des vies sur nos routes et de faire diminuer, année après année, le nombre d'accidents et de victimes sur nos routes. Nous avons, de ce côté de la Chambre, écouté attentivement les intervenants, ici même, au Parlement, *unlike, as usual, the so-called Opposition which has chosen, once again, to be absent for nearly all of the debates*. Nous avons écouté attentivement les intervenants ici. Et pour ma part, j'ai aussi lu attentivement tous les commentaires et les suggestions formulés jusqu'ici dans la presse et ailleurs.

Avec cette loi – je le répète moi aussi après bien des orateurs –, nous faisons un grand pas en avant. Nous corrigeons en fait un grand pas en arrière pour faire un grand pas en avant. Mais il est clair aussi, après tout ce que nous avons entendu et lu, que nous aurons à amender un bon nombre de lois – et j'en ai discuté avec le ministre – et de règlements dans le sillage de cette loi. Il faudra la compléter en effectuant ces amendements dans les lois existantes et dans les *regulations* existants.

En attendant de faire cela, aujourd'hui, je vais parler surtout du *Penalty Points System*. Beaucoup, presque tous les orateurs, évidemment, ont parlé sur le *Penalty Points System*. Mais moi, j'aimerais surtout revenir – après avoir entendu ce que le ministre et d'autres ont eu à dire là-dessus – sur une grande et ambitieuse innovation dans le *Penalty Points System*, c'est-à-dire le *redemption system*. Je n'aime pas trop l'expression pour des raisons évidentes,

le *redemption system*, que je traduis comme un système de rattrapage. Ce sera très intéressant de voir comment ça va se développer dans les trois à six mois à venir et après aussi.

Comme on le sait, *Madam Speaker*, à 15 points, un chauffeur ayant accumulé 15 points de pénalité perd son permis. Avec ce *redemption system*, ce système de rattrapage prévoit qu'en arrivant à 10 points, la personne concernée peut suivre un cours et aller devant une cour de district. Un *rehabilitation course* et ensuite demander à la cour d'être entendu. Si la personne est entendue avec succès, elle rattrape un maximum de 3 points sur 15. Je pense qu'une bonne partie de la population n'a pas compris du tout cette innovation, cette nouveauté, qui peut avoir un impact considérable au-delà de l'île Maurice même. Quand je parle de cour, nous parlons de cour de district, des différentes cours de district qui ont pénalisé...

Madam Speaker: Les magistrats.

The Deputy Prime Minister: ...qui ont fixé les amendes, qui ont fixé les pénalités, les différentes cours de district.

Madam Speaker: Des magistratures.

The Deputy Prime Minister: C'est nouveau et c'est *challenging*. C'est très ambitieux. C'est *challenging* comme système. Nous verrons comment ça marche dans les trois à six mois à venir, mais surtout comment ça marche du côté de la police et de la cour surtout. J'en ai discuté avec le ministre, bien sûr, mais avec l'*Attorney General* aussi. On peut prévoir où il y aura des problèmes. Mais nous souhaitons que ce soit une réussite. Nous souhaitons que le *redemption system*, ce système de rattrapage innovateur, comme je le disais, et ambitieux réussisse. Je souhaite que, dans six mois – qu'on se donne six mois –, nous fassions un bilan, et qu'alors, nous corrigions ce qu'il y a à corriger, s'il y a à corriger. Je suis sûr qu'il y aura des choses à corriger.

Et si cette innovation ambitieuse est un succès, nous pouvons être fiers que ça aidera à sauver des vies au-delà de l'île Maurice. C'est un système très innovateur et qui peut aider à sauver des vies, qui va aider à sauver des vies, non seulement à l'île Maurice et dans notre région, mais au-delà. C'est pourquoi je dirais au ministre encore une fois : bravo et bonne route !

Merci, *Madam Speaker*.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Prime Minister!

(6.42 p.m.)

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, first of all, I also want to congratulate the hon. Minister and his staff for having worked on this legislation for nearly one year, if I am not mistaken. *Ils ont abattu un travail extraordinaire. Un grand travail en peu de temps, on peut le dire.*

It was not a popular measure when we introduced the Penalty Points System in 2013, as hon. Ajay Gunness just said. What we intended when we introduced the penalty system which exists – as he mentioned – in many European countries was because there were too many road fatalities. Not only deaths, but also families devastated. We often forget people who become disabled for life – loss of limbs, eyesight, broken spine, they become paralysed.

As hon. Dr. Ms Jeetun mentioned earlier in her speech, with a disabled person in the family, it costs the family a lot. Sometimes, the wage earner. It also costs the State because they become handicaps. This was unacceptable. So, we acted as a responsible Government.

But the previous MSM government chose to dismantle not only this penalty points. First of all, they dismantled the speed cameras. Again, this was an unpopular measure. We did not flinch to take an unpopular measure because it was about saving lives and preventing people from becoming disabled. When they dismantled the speed cameras and then the penalty points, the result is there to see: a sharp rise in road fatalities and serious injuries. A sharp rise! It is typical of the MSM mentality. They chose votes instead of lives. They did not care about saving lives. They wanted to become popular. That is all!

Just like they did, Madam Speaker, when they constructed La Vigie Road at the time. Many deaths were occurring. I was in the Opposition at the time. I wanted to find out why a new road and still we were getting a lot of deaths. I was told by engineers that the road curves in certain areas – it is an area where you have a lot of fog –, the oncoming traffic cannot see someone who was overtaking and they crash. And death! I also found out that the construction of that road was funded by the European Union.

So, when I became Prime Minister in 1995, I think it was in 1997, I asked hon. Kailash Purryag, at that time, to go and see people in the European Union, to see if we can get more funding. So, he went and met hon. Jean-Claude Juncker who the President of the European Union but also the Prime Minister of Luxemburg and the Minister of Finance, and he refused. He said, “No, it can’t be done”.

Hon. Kailash Purryag told me maybe if I go as Prime Minister, they might change their mind. So, when I went to an official visit in France, I took the Secretary to the Cabinet at the time, Mr Yat Sin, with me – on a Friday I remember – to Luxemburg to meet with the then Prime Minister of Luxemburg. He gave me an appointment on a Friday evening after 6 p.m. I explained to him what the problem was, that we were getting lots of deaths and we wanted more funding to make it a dual carriage way. Do you know what he answered? He said, “But, Prime Minister, we had given you money to do a dual carriage way. You chose – the previous government – to make it a one lane road.”

Mr Jhummun: *Ar leres kas pou fer Sun Trust*”

The Prime Minister: Yes, God knows where the money went. You can guess. MSM, you can guess.

So, then he said it can’t be done. I made a plea with him. He said, “you know, you are a Prime Minister, you came here. I will take it to the Board of the European Union, whoever was in charge, I will try to convince them.”

And he did convince them and we got the funding, and we made it a dual carriage way. I remember very well, my good friend Deva Virahsawmy was the minister. I think there was some conference. I can’t remember whether it was SADC or whatever, and I saw that the road was ready, but they were not opening the road. So, when I came back in my office, I asked him why they were not opening the road. He said that they were waiting for a date for me to cut the ribbons. I said, “forget the date about cutting the ribbons. We are saving lives. Never mind, people will see that we have opened the road.”

And, to my surprise, when I lost the election, they went and cut the ribbon as if they did the road, and they are the one who stole the money and did not do a dual carriage way. And the result is there for us to see. As far as I know, there have been no fatalities in those areas ever again. Finished. Over.

The impact of the two measures that we introduced, that is, the Penalty Points System and the speed cameras, was immediate and measurable. Fatalities and serious injuries

declined significantly. But the MSM decided to abolish the Penalty Point System and they also dismantled the speed cameras.

What happened? We have the figures. Fatalities have increased; serious injuries have increased. I think it was Mr Nando Bodha, if I am not mistaken, who did this. Now, when they realised what they did, very quietly they reintroduced the speed cameras. But what did they do? To show as if they are doing it, they repainted the cameras yellow instead of white. That's all they did. A cosmetic measure, again – MSM culture.

But it is precisely to remedy their irresponsible decision that we are reintroducing the Penalty Points System today. It was announced. It is part of the programme; we spoke of greater road safety and also, I announced it in the Budget Speech 2025-2026.

Our aim, Madam Speaker, is to reduce the number of deaths on our roads and the untold family sufferings who lose dear ones and also reduce the number of serious injuries. Repealing the Penalty Points System was a reckless decision. It borders on criminal negligence. That is what they did.

Madam Speaker, when I was at the African Union Summit in Addis Ababa, in February of this year, I had a meeting with Mr António Guterres, former Prime Minister of Portugal, whom I have known since our days at the Socialist International. He gave me an appointment and I asked him if he could despatch his Special Envoy for Road Safety to Mauritius, Mr Jean Todt. He is also somebody whom I know from Formula 1 racing days. The Secretary-General sent Mr Todt promptly, I must say. He came for one day – not for holidays. Just because he was asked to come by the Secretary-General he came here. I met him and he launched this UN Global Campaign for Road Safety, here, in Mauritius.

He said he believes he can envisage a “Zero Fatality” island because we have the determination to do what has to be done and he proposed a lot of measures. I think hon. Osman Mahomed knows the measures. The first thing he said is that we must re-introduce the Penalty Points System. That's the first thing he said.

He also suggested that –

- (i) we introduce a Graduated Licensing System. I think you are working on that.
- (ii) He also said that we should have special helmets; not all these helmets that are being sold. For motorcycles, it should exceed 50 cubic centimetres and should

be in accordance with set standards. And he said that this should be mandatory.

- (iii) He also spoke of road safety education, especially in schools.
- (iv) Stringent enforcement by the Police and the ERS. We should have traffic squad for regular crackdown, especially at night.
- (v) He also stressed the fact that people in Mauritius don't wear seatbelts at the back; only in the front. He said we should make it mandatory for seatbelts at the rear as well. And, also, he asked us to start an aggressive communication campaign, which we have started.
- (vi) To introduce registration plates for electric bicycles, compulsory wearing of helmets for electric bicycles and what they call '*trottinette*' – even '*trottinette*'!
- (vii) He said we should strengthen the quality of first rescue and health assistance.

Many people don't know. Very often, when there is an accident, you see people gathering around and people trying to take the person out of the car that has had an accident. This is a mistake. We should let the professionals deal with it. The minute you do this, somebody who has had a small problem in their cervical ribs, you break the neck, he gets paralysed if he does not die. This is why we should let professionals deal with it. There is a method to take somebody out of a car and not just pull him out of the car.

- (viii) He also suggested that create a special fund for road safety through contributions from motor vehicle dealers, I am sure they won't like this, as well as you just mentioned, insurance companies.

These are the things he suggested.

Bringing this amendment today, as hon. Gunness just said, is not simply a legislative decision. It is a moral imperative. It relates to our mandate as a responsible Government as regards to the protection of human life and the prevention of avoidable suffering. We need to halt this ascending trend in road fatalities, and if we don't act, it will keep on increasing. That is the reason we have to bring this.

We need to correct the mistakes of the past and remedy the blunder committed by the previous regime when it repealed the Penalty Points System, because through this, when they

abolished it, they removed a significant component in a strategy aiming at reducing the threats that loom on all users of the road, as hon. Gunness just said.

One must not be deluded, Madam Speaker, into thinking that the introduction of the Penalty Points System will single-handedly eliminate the occurrences of fatal accidents.

For us to bring a significant change in the dangerous trajectory, we cannot isolate the Penalty Points System by itself as the only factor as if in a campaign to foster a culture of responsible and accountable driving. The Penalty Points System is a strong determinant, among others, for reversing a dangerous trend in our country. We should not restrict our approach by looking just at fatality statistics.

One death is a death too many. We should not just look at the statistics. We should widen our perspective and look at the other equally tragic consequences of road accidents. As I just said, disability for life, consequences for a family, a financial loss. Also, it costs the State.

This Bill, therefore, is not a stand-alone initiative. It forms part of the broader, comprehensive strategy. We are determined, Madam Speaker, to reverse the trend, protect our people and ensure that safety on the roads is for all. We also want to induce more discipline for all road users.

Mr Jean Todt also made an appeal for Mauritius when he went back to Marrakech. He made an appeal for us to increase our contribution to the UN Road Safety Fund. It currently stands at 1,500 US dollars. He wants us to increase it and we will do so because through that Fund, we will get assistance for other safety initiatives and other projects.

This Bill, Madam Speaker, seeks to modernise and strengthen road traffic enforcement. Its key objective is to include compliance with traffic laws, enhance the protection and safety of all road users and promote a culture of responsible driving, but, as I said, this is only the first major step.

We intend to bring more measures later on. For example, a newly licensed driver - We have this in plan. They do this in Canada; I have seen it - will have a sticker on his car for one year. Just like you have a learner sticker when you are learning, you have another sticker. In Canada, it is 'R'. I do not know why 'R'; it could be 'N' or whatever so that other road users know that this is a new driver with no experience, and therefore to be a bit more careful with him/her.

I spoke to hon. Osman Mahomed today, in fact, that maybe we have to increase some penalties; not for the moment. For example, the one about mobile phones, I think it should be harsher. It should be harsher because this is terrible. Drivers on the phone are hitting people on the road, even on pedestrian crossings, and later on, I think we should introduce what has already been introduced in the UK. France is going to introduce it early next year, I think in January. They use AI in the cameras to detect if you are not wearing your seatbelt even at the rear of the car and if you are using mobile phones as well. They can detect all this. AI camera can even detect - and I find hard to believe, but this is so - the influence of alcohol and drugs, I am told. I do not know how they do it. I cannot say I know how they do it. So, the system is already being used, as I said, in the UK, and France intends to introduce it in January, I think, of next year.

We also need to have advanced driving lessons. They have this in Europe where people go for advanced driving. That cuts the cost of insurance for themselves and they become better drivers. I have followed that course by the way. We must move with the times, Madam Speaker, and be ahead of the curve.

Our aim is to save lives and stop the tragedies associated with road traffic accidents. This is what I had to say, Madam Speaker.

I commend the Bill to the House.

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

(6.59 p.m.)

The Minister of Land Transport (Mr Osman Mahomed): Thank you, Madam Speaker. As we conclude on today's deliberations on the Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill 2025, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all hon. Members of this House who have contributed to this debate with the passion and concern that it deserves. I thank you all for your support.

In his concluding speech, the hon. Seeburn – I will start with him because I will go to the hon. Leader of the Opposition – amongst other relevant issues, highlighted a very salient point, that is, the hon. Leader of the Opposition is not against the passing of this Bill. I will add one thing further, Madam Speaker, that is, the hon. Leader of the Opposition appeared to be in a hurry for this Bill to be presented in the House because he said we have taken several months to come forward with this Bill. So, he is in a hurry.

I am sure that the hon. Leader of the Opposition, having been a keen Minister before, had introduced Bills in this House and knows fully well the number of consultations and consideration that have to be done before a Bill of this magnitude is introduced in the House. When you think about all the hard work that was done in 2013 and with the ease with which his party – because at that time, he was on the other side; he campaigned with us during the 2014 elections – had destroyed the 2000 version of the Penalty Point System, and that I consider it to be a waste.

Who does not recall of the pledge of the MSM in their manifesto of 2014 under the heading ‘*Les 12 Priorités des Trois Premiers Mois au Gouvernement*’. One of these priorities was to, and I quote –

“Revoir le système actuel de permis à points pour éliminer les injustices, les caméras pièges et les doubles pénalités.”

The electoral promise was to revise but they ended up throwing away the baby with the bathwater to finally introduce a system focusing on fines rather than on sustained behavioural accountability. The hon. Prime Minister and the hon. Ajay Gunness covered about this destruction of the 2013 Penalty Point System just now in their speeches.

Madam Speaker, during the debate, the hon. Leader of the Opposition referred to an article in the Week-End of 30 November 2025 and painted a disparaging image of the Penalty Point System of 2013, qualifying it as being heavy with points, wrongly inscribed which penalised the professional drivers leading to erroneous disqualification. I think he is wrong but what the hon. Leader of the Opposition did not say is that the same edition of the Week-End newspaper had dedicated three full pages to very ably explain the details of the 2025 version of the Penalty Point System, plus an additional pager on the modified headlamps which is a growing problem these days, the so-called led lamps which dazzle drivers coming from the opposite direction. This will be sanctioned under the Penalty Point System. That particular edition of Week-End was very educational in respect of road safety and we can only be thankful for that.

Madam Speaker, had the hon. Leader of the Opposition read the Bill carefully, he would surely have noted that most of the shortcomings of the previous Penalty Point System, if ever there was in his mind, have been carefully considered by my Ministry following discussions and consultations with key stakeholders and have been fully addressed. This Bill provides for the proper management and recording of Penalty Points, avails of IT for real

time updating of allocation of points, provide clarity and ease of access to points allocated and introduces rehabilitation and reduction processes which the hon. Deputy Prime Minister mentioned about. I will come to it in a while.

It is also ironical of the hon. Leader of the Opposition to pinpoint on the 2013 Penalty Point System when statistics glaringly indicate that the number of accidents on our roads dropped by 13% during the time it was still prevalent. The hon. Leader of the Opposition shot himself in the foot when he referred to the 112 people who died on our roads up to now, this year. He seems to be unaware that the current system is the cumulative road Penalty Point System which his Party had introduced. So, we are now still under this system and with this Bill, we are going to now change to the Penalty Point System according to the deadline that was given to us during the hon. Prime Minister's speech which is for it to become operational in January 2026. So, we are more or less on track.

Having said so, Madam Speaker, allow me to further reply by sticking to the essence of the Bill and the 33 road traffic offences of the Penalty Point System.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition has referred to fines which have been increased in this Bill. I have said it during my Second Reading on the Bill – none of the offences carrying penalty points had their fines reviewed upwards. The confusion in his mind is on the fines increased under Sections 123B and 123D of The Road Traffic Act which concern dangerous driving and driving under the influence of alcohol, drugs and other intoxicating substances for which no points are being attributed – again, as I explained – in my Second Reading.

Madam Speaker, with your permission, the other day, I said I will table it, but I could not because I did not have all the documents.

Madam Speaker: Sure!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Drug and drunk driving are already very highly penalised under the current legislation of The Road Traffic Act, including seizure of licences, fines and imprisonment term up to 8 years for repetitors. For this time, we are increasing the fines up to Rs500,000 for repetitors, meaning the second time. So, it is being done under this legislation. I will table it for more details because if I explain, it is going to take a long time.

Madam Speaker: Thank you, hon. Minister.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Furthermore, Madam Speaker, the hon. Leader of the Opposition established the correlation between the increasing number of accidents and the

ever-increasing fleet of vehicle, which I had explained in great detail during his second PNQ to me.

He made it seem as if it is our Government that is responsible for the appalling state of affairs of our roads insofar as the number of vehicles is concerned. Let me remind him that because of the very low taxation regime adopted by the previous government, the number of vehicles on our road has increased by 53% over the last 10 years. 53%! The official figures show: from 465,000 vehicles in 2014 to 710,000 vehicles in 2024.

So, no wonder there is so much havoc on our road because more vehicles mean more accidents, more traffic jams, more road rages, heavy impact on our import bills and more pollution as well. Here, I would like to place on record that this Government has taken the bold, albeit unpopular measure, but courageous measure in terms of taxation regime to reverse the rate of increase in the number of vehicles. Thus, to reduce the number of accidents on our road, like I have replied during the PNQ.

The panic buying prior to the budget exercise that the hon. Leader of the Opposition had mentioned during his speech is a one-off occurrence. I am confident that the real impact of these budgetary measures will become evident in the course of time. Already, we have seen it – the figures have come down.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition also mentioned during his intervention that the amendments being brought in the legislation have brought us backward. I do not think I need to reply this because it seems to me that he has not read it.

I would like to touch one point that the hon. Prime Minister has just mentioned about the use of hand-held devices. Hon. Prime Minister, the malpractice is widespread. You are right. It is a source of serious distraction to drivers. The Road Traffic Act currently provides for a penalty of Rs3,000 for this offence, which equally carries 3 to 6 points in the Schedule of the proposed Bill.

This rate has been purposely set as it is, but it can be reviewed if needed, given time. Should people continue to use their mobile phones, we can even review the fine and review the points accordingly. So, the fine is Rs3,000, plus 3 to 6 points currently. But we can review that if people continue to use their mobile phones.

The hon. Prime Minister has also mentioned about the Graduated Licensing Scheme. This is currently being worked on. It is in our Government Programme. It is a four-step approach to obtain a driving license unlike the current practise right now.

Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. Deputy Prime Minister for stressing on the challenges that could occur on one of the novel features of this Bill, the innovative features of this Bill, which is the possibility of allowing drivers to redeem some of the penalty points they have accumulated over a period of 36 years.

This essential feature demonstrates a fair and rehabilitative road safety framework instead of a purely punitive system. Thus, leading ultimately to reinforced good driver behaviour and mitigate corruption risks.

I am further proposing to establish a monitoring committee – I have discussed it with the Attorney General earlier – comprising key authorities concerned at the level of my Ministry, his Ministry and the Police, to address the teething problems that could crop up once the law comes into effect.

Hon. Dr. Boolell has rightly stated that this Bill has substance and that the Bill represents a decisive step forward confronting that reality with the seriousness it deserves to address an issue of paramount importance.

Madam Speaker, this piece of legislation is not *du déjà-vu*, as stated by the hon. Leader of the Opposition. The reduction of points, the 33 offences compared to 19 in the previous system, the digital format of the application forms, and the amendments brought the main Road Traffic Act are some examples to show that this Bill is a novelty as compared to the last version of the Penalty Points System.

Madam Speaker, the hon. Leader of the Opposition has accused police officers of engaging into corrupt practices. I find it most unfortunate that an entire department is being painted with the same brush.

Let me remind the Leader of the Opposition of the record number of police officers arrested since the last general elections accused of wrongdoings committed during the previous mandate when he, himself, was a Minister.

However, I reiterate what I stated in my Second Reading of the Bill. The success of the reintroduction of the Penalty Points System depends on its fairness, on drivers clear understanding of it, and above all, on effective and uncompromised enforcement by police officers.

Yesterday, I was at the end-of-year get-together of the NTC and I have asked the General Manager – there are 1,000 drivers there – to conduct courses and lectures with all of

them in batches, if need be, for them to be able to understand the 33 offences so that we lead by example because they are government bus drivers, so to speak. So, we lead by example and we do not commit mistakes on the road. He has agreed to do it.

However, in the same breadth, Madam Speaker, I will also propose to the Commissioner of Police to arrange for a specific training programme for all police officers who will be assigned the duties for the administration and the management of the Penalty Points System.

Madam Speaker, I will touch a little bit on Rodrigues. I have spoken to hon. Ms Henriette-Manan on Thursday last, after her speech, when she said that the six fatalities that occurred in 2021, which was under the Cumulative Road Traffic Offences (CRTO) of the previous government, is not a low figure. Do you know why? Because fatalities are measured on batches of 100,000.

Rodrigues has a population of 45,000. If you bring it on the scale 100,000, you have 13.3 deaths in that particular year, which is higher than mainland Mauritius, which is about 10 to 11 now. Singapore is 1.9. So, there is a lot of work to be done in Rodrigues.

I can tell you that I had fielded a visit in Rodrigues earlier this year. There are quite a number of things to be done. Black spots have been spotted. The Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit was with me. The way the NLTA is doing inspections of the underside of vehicles, the pit, does not work!

So, in Rodrigues, the 22,000 vehicles or so – I am not too sure. Maybe half of them are motorcycles, but the rest of vehicles are four wheelers – are not being tested, hon. François, because people cannot go underneath. An investment has to be made because with the ageing vehicular fleet and the slopes in Rodrigues, you can have problems going forward.

There is now a request – *du jamais vu à Rodrigues* – to install traffic lights! We have had requests to install two traffic lights in Rodrigues. So, we are working with the Regional Assembly on this. Also, one more point, hon. François and hon. Ms Henriette-Manan: we have introduced, in my last trip, Education for Road Safety to primary school students in Rodrigues. We were all very pleased to see the excitement with which the pupils had embarked on this programme. We introduced it at about 2 o'clock in the afternoon and at 5 o'clock the students were still around, trying to learn how to go about and there is a request to go to other schools as well. And, classification of roads is not under my Ministry. Hon. Ajay

Gunness's Ministry is responsible for this. There were a lot of requests for reclassification of roads in Rodrigues when I was there.

Now, the hon. Rookny, Madam Speaker, has reminded the House and the country how after two painful years in 2023 and 2024, the Maha Shivratri festival was celebrated safely this year again – to use the word that he has used – following bold decisions taken by Government, especially the hon. Prime Minister, in the taskforce during Maha Shivratri. He gave instructions to review the regulations and we did so, and fortunately, this year – touch wood – there has not been any casualties and we hope that this still goes on the same way for subsequent years. And this applies to all religious processions in the country, of all communities including the Ghoon, whatever.

Now, Madam Speaker, I have taken good note of the concerns raised by the hon. Jugurnauth with regard to speed limiters. We will request the NLTA to take up the matter with the private vehicle examination centres to ensure that the effectiveness of the speed limiters is duly verified. I wish to mention that Dr. hon. Prime Minister is now very keen in the furtherance of road safety and has expressed the need to optimise on the use of artificial intelligence. He has just elaborated on it. I can confirm that work has already begun. The next step to determine is that there are 150 ITS Safe City cameras, there are 4,000 in all in the country, they are gantry type – there are 150 of them. It is those cameras that will be changed to become AI empowered with new software that can detect several types of offenses –

- Use of mobile phone;
- Not wearing seat belt;
- Changing of lane abruptly, and
- Others as well.

So, it will facilitate police work and it will address the point that hon. Dr. Ms Jeetun has raised. In some sort, it can be a step forward to automatization of the issuing of fines so that there is no tampering. Once the camera picks you, it will send to the relevant authority and there is no tampering between police officer and the contravened. So, I can say for sure that we are working on this, meetings are being held.

Now, in closing, Madam Speaker, I wish to once again express my gratitude to all Members whose contributions have enriched this debate. The shared objective has been clear: safeguarding the lives of our citizens and elevating the standards of conduct on our roads

have been very much debated here. Let us recognise the profound significance of the reform before us for the sake of our families, our communities and the future of road safety in our Republic.

With these words, Madam Speaker, I, therefore, commend the Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill (No. XXX of 2025) to the House. Thank you.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a second time and committed.

COMMITTEE STAGE

(Madam Speaker in the Chair)

The Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill (No. XXX of 2025) was considered and agreed to.

On the Assembly resuming with Madam Speaker in the Chair, Madam Speaker reported accordingly.

Third Reading

On motion made and seconded, the Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill (No. XXX of 2025) was read a third time and passed.

SEASON'S GREETINGS

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Prime Minister!

(7.24 p.m.)

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, before I move for the adjournment of the House, I would like to say a few words as Leader of the House.

Madam Speaker, the first sitting of this year was held on 24 January 2025 and was marked by the Address of His Excellency the President of the Republic outlining the Government Programme of 2025-2029.

During the current year, we have had 40 sittings. 30 Bills were introduced in the National Assembly, out of which 29 have been passed.

In addition, Government has replied to 838 Parliamentary Questions requiring oral answers and 6 requiring written answers. Government has also replied to 32 Private Notice Questions from the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

As we close the year at this Assembly, I wish to thank you, Madam Speaker, for your smooth conduct of the deliberations of the House.

I would like also to thank the Deputy Speaker for his valuable contribution when presiding over the debates.

I also wish to acknowledge the meaningful interventions and active participation of all hon. Members in the debates.

I further extend my appreciation to the Clerk of the National Assembly, the parliamentary staff, as well as the Serjeant-at-Arms and his team, for their dedicated support to the work of this House.

Madam Speaker, may I kindly request you, in my own name and that of the hon. Members of the House, to present the Season's Greetings to His Excellency, the President of the Republic of Mauritius and Mrs Gokhool, as well as to His Excellency, the Vice-President of the Republic of Mauritius and Mrs Hungley.

I convey to you, Madam Speaker, Mr Cziffra and your family, our best wishes for a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. I also extend my warmest wishes to the Deputy Prime Minister, the hon. Ministers, hon. Leader of the Opposition, as well as to all hon. Members of the House and their families.

My best wishes are also extended to the Clerk, the Serjeant-at-Arms, the officers of the National Assembly and to all the civil servants who have assisted in the work of this Parliament.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. Members, hon. Prime Minister, if you will bear with me, I also have a few words to say.

During this year, we welcomed two Heads of State: the Prime Minister Modi of India and President Macron from France recently.

I have also had the immense pleasure to open the precincts of the Assembly to the public. Several groups have visited our Parliament on a regular basis. We already opened the

Chamber to 76 young Parliamentarians in August this year. We were very proud to see that youngsters today are very committed to public service and to politics.

I thank hon. François to have mentioned that we have recently organised a major event in the Sir Harilall Vaghjee Hall from 26 November onwards to engage with the public on the theme which clearly touched many of our citizens who came to share their views with us on the scourge of gender-based violence, and I thank you for having opened that very interesting event.

On 01 December, we launched a prototype letter box called '*La Colombe*' for children to safely send messages regarding violence, which may have been perpetrated against them, and this was done with the Minister of Education.

On Monday, the 09 December, we organised a side event on Rodrigues which was a great success, thanks to our good friends here.

On Wednesday, the 10 December, we organised a free debate on human rights with some 150 youngsters, hon. Prime Minister, 30 of whom came from five countries of the Indian Ocean. They came here in the Chamber to present their resolutions, led by the *Assemblée Parlementaire de la Francophonie*.

The National Assembly was, therefore, more and more opened to one and all. We even welcomed young recruits of the Police Force. They also came, and I hope that they benefitted from our sensitisation talks.

Hon. Members, at the end of this season, in my own name, and on behalf of the Clerk and officers of the National Assembly, I also convey my best wishes and I will present my best wishes in your name to the President of the Republic and Mrs Gokhool, as well to his Excellency, the Vice-President of the Republic and Mrs Hungley and their families.

I also thank you, hon. Prime Minister for your kind words of appreciation extended to myself, to my husband, and to the staff of the National Assembly.

I am pleased to convey my best wishes for a very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to you, hon. Prime Minister and Mrs Ramgoolam; to you, hon. Deputy Prime Minister; to hon. Ministers and members of their family; to the hon. Leader of the Opposition and his family; to the Deputy Speaker, who is unfortunately not with us, and his family, and to all

hon. Members and your families. The time is one of peace and I wish all of you to rejoice and wish each other best wishes.

I join the hon. Prime Minister to thank the Clerk, the Deputy Clerk, the three Clerk Assistants, all the officers of the National Assembly, the Serjeant-at-Arms and his officers, the Solicitor-General and his officers, the Parliamentary Counsel and her officers, and all public officers who have assisted in the work of the Assembly and I convey to them and their families my season's greetings.

I thank you.

ADJOURNMENT

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Tuesday 17 March 2026 at 11.30 a.m.

The Deputy Prime Minister rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Madam Speaker: The House stands adjourned!

At 7.31 p.m., the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Tuesday 17 March 2026 at 11.30 a.m.