



REPUBLIC OF MAURITIUS

BUDGET SPEECH 2024 - 2025

Dr the Hon Renganaden Padayachy
Minister of Finance, Economic Planning
and Development

BUDGET SPEECH
2024 – 2025

TOMORROW IS OURS

“L'économie est au service du bien commun”

Jean Tirole

Budget 2024-2025

TOMORROW IS OURS

INTRODUCTION

Mr Speaker, Sir,

1. I move that the Appropriation 2024-2025 Bill No. IV of 2024 be read a second time.
2. I come before this august Assembly for the fifth and last budget of this mandate.
3. Since taking office, this Government has placed Mauritians at the heart of its actions.
4. Investing in the population, whilst reducing inequalities to boost growth and development.
5. This is our strategy.
6. Thanks to this philosophy, we are here today, stronger and more united than ever.
7. Yet, over the last few years, our economy has been faced with its worst shocks since independence.
8. Surviving the unthinkable, we have managed to preserve and even uplift the livelihood of our population.

9. The average monthly household income has increased by 51.1 percent between 2017 and 2023 to reach Rs 55,600.
10. The proportion of households earning less than Rs 25,000 per month decreased from 43 percent in 2017 to 19.6 percent in 2023.
11. Alongside social progress, the economy has exceeded its potential.

Mr Speaker, Sir,

12. We registered a strong GDP growth rate of 7 percent in 2023, following an exceptional growth of 8.9 percent in 2022.
13. Our GDP reached Rs 651.7 billion in 2023, much higher than the Rs 628.4 billion estimated initially.
14. Total investment grew by 30.9 percent, compared to 7.8 percent in 2022.
15. This is the result of an expansion of 20.3 percent in private investment and 73.5 percent in public investment.
16. FDI inflows for 2023 amounted to Rs 37 billion, exceeding the previous record of Rs 33.5 billion registered the year before.
17. Exports of goods and services increased by Rs 30.8 billion in 2023 to reach Rs 347 billion.

18. The unemployment rate as at end of 2023 stood at 6.1 percent, compared to 6.8 percent at end of 2022, the lowest rate in over 25 years.
19. Headline inflation decreased from 10.8 percent in 2022 to 7 percent in 2023.
20. Public sector debt stood at 78 percent of GDP at end of 2023, lower by 7.2 percentage points.

Mr Speaker, Sir,

21. Enabling social progress has stimulated economic growth.
22. It has been possible thanks to the measures taken by this Government, under the leadership of the Honourable Prime Minister, Pravind Kumar Jugnauth.
23. Because our youth is our future, we have made education completely free from pre-primary to university, and launched an Independence Scheme through a one-off grant of Rs 20,000 at the age of majority.
24. Convinced that all work deserves pay, we have increased the Minimum Guaranteed Income from Rs 12,075 to Rs 15,000 monthly in June 2023 and further to Rs 18,500 in January 2024.
25. To ensure that each and every Mauritian has equal opportunities to work, we have introduced and extended the *Prime à l'Emploi* Scheme, which benefits 6,000 individuals, including 5,500 women.

26. To ensure the dignity of our elderly, the basic retirement pension has been increased from Rs 10,000 in June 2022 to Rs 11,000 in June 2023 and Rs 13,500 in April 2024.
27. With the introduction of the *Contribution Sociale Généralisée* (CSG), we have supported the purchasing power of Mauritians through:-
 - (a) A monthly allowance to employees and self-employed individuals of Rs 2,000 for those who earn less than Rs 25,000; and Rs 1,000 for those earning between Rs 25,000 and Rs 50,000;
 - (b) A CSG Child Allowance of Rs 2,000 monthly for children aged up to 3 years; and
 - (c) A CSG Disability Allowance of Rs 2,500 monthly.
28. Making support for the most vulnerable our priority, we have disbursed Rs 4.4 billion in the form of subsidies to maintain retail prices of rice, flour, and LPG this year.
29. To enable greater social and fiscal justice, in particular for the benefit of the middle class, we have replaced the flat tax regime by a progressive and fairer tax system with a maximum tax rate of 20 percent which allows all Mauritians to pay lower taxes.
30. Today, an individual earning up to Rs 30,000 monthly no longer pays income tax.

Mr Speaker, Sir,

31. The vulnerable, middle class, youth, women, retirees, and disabled, no one has been left behind.
32. This is the principle which has guided us during this mandate, and will continue to do so, with the trust of the population.
33. This budget is a continuation of our philosophy.
34. Growth for social progress.
35. Growth for all and with all.
36. Growth that is robust, inclusive and sustainable.
37. In one word, resilient.
38. Because, the only way for our country to prosper is to write our destiny together, and with ambition.
39. Because, the future of this country belongs to each and everyone.
40. Because, Mr Speaker, Sir, tomorrow is ours.
41. This is why we will focus on 3 key pillars: -
 - (a) Fostering Economic Dynamism;
 - (b) Working towards a sustainable and inclusive Mauritius;
and
 - (c) Building our Future.

FOSTERING ECONOMIC DYNAMISM

Mr Speaker, Sir,

42. A dynamic economy creates more opportunities, better jobs, advanced skills, enhanced production, greater investment, better redistribution, lower inflation, lower debt to GDP ratio and less inequalities.
43. This is a better economy for better lives.
44. To foster economic dynamism, we must enhance the ease of doing business environment to sustain higher levels of investment.
45. We must make the labour market more vibrant to enhance our productivity and competitiveness.
46. We must strengthen sectoral development for a well-diversified economic structure.
47. This strategy will bring us to a Rs 1 trillion economy by 2030.

Improving the Ease of Doing Business

Mr Speaker, Sir,

48. This budget will ensure that we continue to upgrade our business environment to fully realise our extraordinary potential.

49. We have reached an investment rate of 23.5 percent in 2023 and record Foreign Direct Investment inflows of Rs 37 billion, 5.7 percent of our GDP.
50. This is the result of the consistent efforts of this Government.
51. In 2024, the objective is to reach an investment rate of 25 percent and FDI inflows of Rs 40 billion.
52. To achieve this goal, a series of measures will be implemented.
53. First, portability of bank accounts will become a reality this year.
54. Second, the information centre of the Companies and Business Registration Department will be operational on a 24/7 basis.
55. Third, the number of licenses on the National E-licensing system will be increased from 26 to 35, starting with applications for clinical trials and fishing licenses.
56. The EDB will work with various authorities to double the number of licenses delivered electronically within the next 3 years.
57. Fourth, a Tax Arrears Settlement Scheme and a Contribution Arrears Settlement Scheme will be implemented up to June 2025, with a full waiver of penalties.
58. Fifth, the FSC will streamline its licenses and permits to ensure they are granted within 10 working days, subject to all requirements being met.

59. Sixth, the MACCS e-bunkering service will be operational on a 24/7 basis.
60. Seventh, to ease the resolution of commercial disputes, the framework for alternative dispute resolution will be modernised.
61. Eighth, Government Gazettes and legislations will be made available electronically by December 2024.
62. Finally, a new Consulate in Réunion Island and an embassy in Japan will be opened to facilitate economic and trade relations

Labour Force

Mr Speaker, Sir,

63. Our jobs policy over this mandate has been fruitful.
64. Unemployment rate fell from 10.4 percent in the fourth quarter of 2020 to 6.1 percent in the fourth quarter of 2023.
65. The lowest figure since 1996.
66. We will pursue on this strategy.
67. One where no individual is left behind.
68. Thanks to the measures taken last year, women participation in the labour force has increased from 43 to 48 percent.
69. We will continue with the *Prime à l'Emploi* Scheme for unemployed women irrespective of age.

70. Persons with disabilities will be further supported to integrate the workplace through an increase in the period of placement from 6 months to one year.
71. Moreover, to increase the participation of women and disabled in the labour force, the *Prime à l'Emploi* will be made available to those willing to work on a part-time basis.
72. We will contribute a sum of Rs 7,500 monthly to their salaries for 20 hours of work.

Mr Speaker, Sir,

73. For our economy to sustain higher levels of growth, we will continue to open up to foreign talents.
74. We need to make the process seamless for businesses.
75. The threshold for Occupation Permits for professionals will be reduced from Rs 30,000 to Rs 22,500.
76. Professionals with a minimum of 10 years' experience will receive a temporary Occupation Permit of 3 months allowing them to work pending approval.
77. To speed up recruitment of foreign workers:
 - (a) The Agricultural Workers (Job Contractors') Regulations will be amended to provide more flexibility for recruitment in the agricultural sector;
 - (b) Quotas on foreign labour will be removed in the manufacturing, jewellery, freeport and ICT/BPO sectors;

- (c) The maximum timeframe to deliver or renew a Work Permit will be set at 3 weeks; and
 - (d) The maximum renewal period for the manufacturing sector is being prolonged to 10 years.
78. Finally, non-citizens holding a Retired Residence Permit will be allowed to work without an additional Work or Occupation Permit.

Sectoral Development

Mr Speaker, Sir,

79. Our economy is now stronger.
80. Together, we have achieved higher growth, more jobs and a more resilient economy.
81. We will further boost our strategic sectors to build the tomorrow we deserve.

SMEs and Entrepreneurship

82. Throughout our mandate, Government has been at the side of SMEs, entrepreneurs and innovators.
83. We will continue to promote entrepreneurship for a diversified, resilient and competitive economy by: -
- (a) Paying the full salary compensation of up to Rs 2,000 for SMEs up to December 2024;
 - (b) Providing a 10 percent rebate on DBM rental for SMEs in productive sectors for two years;

- (c) Writing off loans which will become outstanding for more than 20 years as at June 2025 and loans of deceased micro entrepreneurs at DBM;
 - (d) Increasing the maximum yearly refund to Rs 500,000 under the Participation in International Fairs SME Refund Scheme; and
 - (e) Waiving 50 percent of rental arrears of over 5 years at DBM if settled by June 2025.
84. Financial support will also be provided for a period of 3 years for barcoding by SMEs, cooperatives and small farmers.
85. To empower cooperatives to grow strongly: -
- (a) A scheme will be introduced to provide 50 percent of the digitalisation cost up to a maximum of Rs 100,000;
 - (b) Cooperatives will benefit from DBM and IFCM schemes; and
 - (c) Cooperatives will receive interest on accounts held in public banks.

Agro Industry

Mr Speaker, Sir,

86. Agro-industry is fundamental for our future.
87. We cannot remain blind to the impact of climate change on food security and the availability of food crops.

88. We will thus provide a series of measures to support the resurgence of the agro-industry.

Crop Sector

89. To further boost the local production of food crops and reduce our dependency on imports, we are providing a: -

- (a) Grant of 50 percent, up to a maximum of Rs 500,000 for the construction of up to two sheltered farms, including replacement of plastic nets;
- (b) 50 percent subsidy for purchase of fertilisers;
- (c) 75 percent subsidy on seeds for potatoes, onions, carrots, beans, garlic and tomatoes;
- (d) Grant of Rs 250,000 for the purchase of equipment by small planters; and
- (e) Grant of Rs 300,000 for cooperatives for acquisition of equipment to boost local production.

90. Moreover, Government will provide: -

- (a) A grant of Rs 1 million and concessionary leasing facilities by IFCM for planters purchasing fully equipped container farming facilities;
- (b) Rs 10 million for upgrading of track roads, drains, and sheltered farms at the Britannia Organic Zone; and
- (c) Rs 50 million for setting up of a cold storage facility at the National Wholesale Market to increase the shelf-life of fruits and vegetables.

91. To uphold the re-emergence of the tea sector, Government will provide Rs 6 million to continue the Road Mending Scheme for tea cooperatives.
92. Tea growers occupying a minimum of 1 arpent of land will henceforth benefit from duty free facilities on purchase of a double cab.
93. Finally, we will increase the winter allowance for tea growers by 80 percent from Rs 2.50 per kg to Rs 4.50 per kg.
94. For planters affected by adverse weather conditions, we are:-
 - (a) Maintaining a cash compensation of Rs 6,000 per arpent for the first crop cycle annually; and
 - (b) Introducing a cash compensation of Rs 3,000 per arpent for a second crop cycle annually;

Mr Speaker, Sir,

95. We have rekindled the cane industry.
96. Thanks to the Cane Replantation Scheme and Cane Revolving Fund Scheme, some 9,900 arpents of land have been replanted over the last 3 years.
97. In order to continue the renewal of sugar cane plantation: -
 - (a) We are increasing the grant under the Cane Replantation Scheme from Rs 50,000 to Rs 60,000 per arpent to restore abandoned cane lands; and

- (b) The Cane Revolving Fund Scheme at the DBM will be renewed for a period of one year.
98. The subsidy of 50 percent on green certification of sugar production will be maintained.
99. For planters producing up to 60 tons of sugar, Government will:-
- (a) Continue to pay the premium to the Sugar Insurance Fund Board;
 - (b) Provide a 50 percent subsidy on purchase of fertilisers;
 - (c) Continue to provide a financial assistance of Rs 150,000 for purchase of drip irrigation systems; and
 - (d) Waive CESS in respect of crop 2024.
100. Furthermore, we are increasing the minimum guaranteed revenue of sugar to Rs 30,000 per ton for crop 2024, a 20 percent increase over two years.

Livestock Sector

Mr Speaker, Sir,

101. The livestock industry is essential in our food security strategy.
102. We will support our farmers and breeders to produce more locally. To this end, I am making provision for grants of:-
- (a) Up to Rs 225,000 for the import of cows, goats, pigs and sheep;

- (b) Rs 200,000 for construction and upgrading of sheds and purchase of goats, sheep, pigs, and cows; and
 - (c) Rs 10,000 to calf breeders.
103. The subsidies will be increased by 50 percent for: -
- (a) Cost of veterinary services from Rs 1,000 to Rs 1,500; and
 - (b) Purchase of heifers from Rs 5,000 to Rs 7,500.
104. We are further increasing the grant under the Pasture Development Scheme to Rs 25,000 per arpent.
105. Government will acquire a mobile veterinary clinic to deliver quicker service to farmers for their livestock.
106. The subsidy on animal feed is being increased by 33 percent from Rs 15 to Rs 20 per kilogram.
107. For our farmers and breeders, we are: -
- (a) Providing a grant of up to Rs 300,000 for purchase of fencing and security equipment; and
 - (b) Increasing the threshold from Rs 250,000 to Rs 300,000 for purchase of land mechanisation equipment.

Mr Speaker, Sir,

108. To tap into the potential of the apiculture sector and reduce our imports, Government will increase: -
- (a) The one-off grant under the Bee Keeping Scheme from Rs 150,000 to Rs 200,000 for fencing purposes; and

- (b) The 50 percent subsidy on acquisition of solar powered CCTV cameras from a maximum of Rs 25,000 to Rs 30,000.
- 109. Moreover, we will give a subsidy of Rs 500 per Bee Queen to beekeepers up to a maximum of 10 queens.
- 110. Finally, the DBM will extend its Amnesty Scheme to write-off long outstanding loans of more than 20 years up to June 2025 and loans of deceased breeders, farmers and planters.

Blue Economy

- 111. As an island nation, fishing is part of our rich heritage.
- 112. This Government has always stood by the side of our fishers.
- 113. We have been the first to consider the sustenance, financial independence and retirement of fishers.
- 114. This year, we will further support this industry through: -
 - (a) A grant of Rs 300,000 to fishers for the purchase of canotte;
 - (b) A grant of Rs 6 million to cooperatives for the purchase of semi-industrial fishing boats;
 - (c) A grant of Rs 1 million to individual fishers for the purchase of semi-industrial fishing boats;

- (d) Increasing the grant for purchase of:
 - i. hooks and fishing materials from Rs 2,500 to Rs 3,500; and
 - ii. materials to construct fish trap from Rs 5,000 to Rs 7,500.
- (e) Setting up modern fish markets in the region of Mahébourg, Grand Baie, Baie du Cap and Trou d'eau Douce;
- (f) Constructing fisheries post at Saint Brandon for monitoring of bank fishers; and
- (g) Providing a one-off grant of Rs 50,000 to registered fishers for renewal of outboard motors.

115. For the safety of fishers, we will: -

- (a) Allocate Rs 10 million for the placement of marker buoys; and
- (b) Install a second layer of Fish Aggregating Devices across the island.

Mr Speaker, Sir,

116. Two years ago, we introduced a lump sum to artisanal fishermen aged 65 years and above returning their licenses.

117. We are increasing it from Rs 100,000 to Rs 125,000.

118. For net fishers returning their fishing licenses, we are increasing the compensation from Rs 100,000 to Rs 125,000 for individuals and from Rs 200,000 to Rs 250,000 for cooperatives.
119. In the case of sudden death of the fisher, an amount of Rs 200,000 will be paid to his heirs.
120. We are also increasing from Rs 200,000 to Rs 300,000 the death grant provided to families of fishers lost at sea.
121. Moreover, the DBM Ltd will extend its Amnesty Scheme for the write-off of long outstanding loans of more than 20 years as at June 2025 and loans of deceased fishermen.
122. We are further providing duty free facilities to registered artisanal fishers for the acquisition of a 4 by 4 vehicle.
123. Finally, we are increasing the daily Bad Weather Allowance for fishers from Rs 650 to Rs 800.

Manufacturing

Mr Speaker, Sir,

124. The manufacturing sector has been one of the most resilient sectors of our economy, despite the pandemic, the war in Ukraine, increase in freight prices, and labour shortages.
125. The sector has recorded for the second consecutive year, a double-digit growth.

126. Last year, it grew by 12.9 percent, after a growth of 10.4 percent in 2022.
127. Exports of goods have exceeded Rs 100 billion in both 2022 and 2023.
128. Our aim is to reach Rs 150 billion of exports of goods annually.
129. We will provide a comprehensive set of measures to support our industrial base and boost our export industry.
130. To boost the production and consumption of goods produced locally, Government will:-
 - (a) Introduce an “*Industrie du Futur*” programme for 100 SMEs over a period of 3 years to enable them to digitalise their operations; and
 - (b) Facilitate the development of a distribution network of 10 retail outlets and mini-stores across the island for *Made in Moris* products.
131. Furthermore, the investment tax credit of 15 percent over 3 years will henceforth include AI and patents.

Mr Speaker, Sir,

132. It is equally essential for us to engage in a sustainable transformation of the export industry.

133. We have to diversify our exports, improve our export competitiveness, and explore new market segments and destinations.
134. A critical aspect of our textile industry is its competitiveness.
135. Government will provide a support on the wage bill of the textile industry by compensating the increase in minimum wage and the salary compensation of 2024.
136. We will introduce Export Manufacturing Regulations under the Economic Development Board Act, which will, inter-alia:-
- (a) Define an export manufacturing enterprise as having a minimum of 30 percent of export turnover;
 - (b) Set-up an export promotion fund with a seed capital of Rs 50 million; and
 - (c) Provide for a public-private sector Export Development Council to devise export strategies including identification of products and markets.

Mr Speaker, Sir,

137. The Africa Warehousing Scheme has successfully enabled an increase in exports ten-fold to reach Rs 475 million in less than 3 years.
138. We are thus prolonging the scheme up to 2027 and expanding it to Kenya.

139. To continue facilitating exports, the Freight Rebate, the Trade Promotion and Marketing, and the Export Credit Guarantee Schemes are being renewed for an additional year.
140. Moreover, first time exporters with a turnover of less than Rs 20 million will benefit from an increased refund of 40 percent for a period of one year under the Freight Rebate Scheme.
141. The Trade Promotion and Marketing Scheme will now include New Zealand.
142. To accelerate the decarbonisation of the industrial sector, the Carbon Neutral Loan Scheme will henceforth include the cost of batteries.
143. Finally, we will extend the DBM Wage Support Scheme over a period of 7 years up to 2031.

Construction

144. Our country is engaged in substantial public investment, with the construction of social housing, drains, roads and other infrastructure projects.
145. In addition, over Rs 300 billion of private sector investment is under facilitation at the EDB.
146. To further reinforce the capacity of the construction industry, Government will:-
 - (a) Harmonise the fees for Building and Land Use Permits (BLUP) across all local authorities;

- (b) Extend the validity period of a BLUP for construction to start from 2 years to 3 years;
- (c) Provide for harmonised timeframes for the determination of Environment Impact Assessments; and
- (d) Streamline the process to determine land conversion permits.

ICT/BPO

Mr Speaker, Sir,

- 147. The ICT/BPO sector is a dynamic and resilient industry which catalyse innovation and growth in the economy.
- 148. The sector has grown consistently at an average annual rate of over 4 percent.
- 149. Last year, it has registered a growth of 4.5 percent.
- 150. To accelerate the development of this economic pillar, Government will introduce: -
 - (a) A refund of 25 percent under the 'Small Business Digital Champion Scheme' on investment of a minimum of Rs 500,000 in new technologies and equipment;
 - (b) A virtual platform to showcase Mauritian IT services; and
 - (c) An enhanced margin of preference of 50 percent for local service companies.

151. Moreover, a 5-year blueprint for the Digital Industry will be devised.

Mr Speaker, Sir,

152. The development and spread of Artificial Intelligence across the world offer vast opportunities for Mauritius.

153. It will enable us to improve our global competitiveness and productivity.

154. We will launch a national 'A.I-for-ALL' campaign to encourage the use of AI tools in schools, universities, businesses and for the public at large.

155. Moreover, training courses involving AI will be eligible to an increased refund of 90 percent.

156. Finally, to accelerate the transition towards renewable energy, the CEB will launch an ICT Sector Carbon Neutral Scheme with excess electricity exported at Rs 4.20 per kWh.

Life Sciences and Biotechnology

Mr Speaker, Sir,

157. The life science and biotechnology sector is a nascent industry that has the potential to become a key feature of our economic landscape.

158. We need to provide necessary support to promote Mauritius as a hub for international players to set-up their R&D activities.

159. To strengthen innovation and growth in the sector, a Mauritius Biopharmaceutical Regulatory Authority will be set up.

160. In order to attract international fertility centres to set up in Mauritius, an Assisted Reproductive Technology Act will be introduced to regulate and supervise reproductive technology clinics and assisted technology banks.

Financial Services

Mr Speaker, Sir,

161. The financial services sector is the first contributor to our GDP with a growth of 4.4 percent in 2023.

162. To maintain the momentum and further expand the sector: -

- (a) Payment Intermediary Services (PIS) Licence Holders will now benefit from the Partial Exemption Regime;
- (b) The Fund and Asset Manager Certificate will be reviewed to include at least 2 qualified officers;
- (c) The Funds Regime will be reviewed to enhance the attractiveness of the jurisdiction;
- (d) The blueprint for the financial services sector will be reviewed in light of new opportunities, challenges and threats;
- (e) A blueprint for the development of Mauritius as a Fintech Hub in the region will be devised with the assistance of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa; and
- (f) The centralised e-KYC will be extended to the global business sector.

163. Furthermore, to consolidate the position of the Mauritius International Financial Centre, we will: -
- (a) Introduce a 10-year expert Occupation Permit to attract foreign talents in wealth management, family office, virtual assets and virtual tokens; and
 - (b) Explore the signature of a Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA) with India and African countries;
164. We will further engage into discussions with the Indian authorities for the development of our financial sector.
165. Moreover, a new framework for the secondary trading of government bonds will be established on the Stock Exchange of Mauritius.
166. To encourage the adoption of digital payments in Mauritius, the Bank of Mauritius will remove the fees associated with the use of the MAUCAS platform.

Tourism

Mr Speaker, Sir,

167. According to the United Nations, the tourism industry in Mauritius has recovered at 94 percent of pre-pandemic levels compared to the global average of 88 percent.
168. This shows that the measures taken by Government since the pandemic have borne its fruits.
169. Indeed, tourism earnings in 2023 were 36 percent higher than in 2019, reaching Rs 86 billion.

170. The country is attracting higher spenders and longer stay tourists.
171. Our objective for 2024 is to reach 1.4 million tourist arrivals and Rs 100 billion of tourism receipts.
172. To support the promotion and marketing of the Mauritius destination: -
- (a) The Promotion and Destination Marketing budget of MTPA is being increased by 20 percent to reach Rs 600 million;
 - (b) The grant provided to SMEs for projects undertaken by small hotels associations is being increased to Rs 800,000; and
 - (c) The amount under the Participation in International Fairs SME Refund Scheme is being increased to Rs 275,000.
173. To facilitate the utilisation of pleasure crafts by tourists and the public, jetties will be constructed at Trou d'Eau Douce and Black River.
174. With a view to enhancing travelers' experience, Government will fast track the implementation of the e-Gate and the e-Passport.

Mr Speaker, Sir,

175. We will continue to foster sustainable tourism development to make Mauritius a Green-Certified Destination by 2030.
176. Last year, Bel Ombre Village achieved a significant milestone by earning a place in the esteemed Green Destination Top 100 Stories list.

177. This year, the Tourism Authority will engage in the accredited certification process of Bel Ombre on the Global Sustainable Tourism Council to be completed by December 2025.
178. Furthermore, the newly refurbished Cotton Bay Hotel in Rodrigues will open next month.

Arts and Culture

Mr Speaker, Sir,

179. Arts and culture are central to our national fabric.
180. Its impact goes beyond the economy, with the society at large benefitting.
181. We need to transform the sector into a vibrant and thriving creative arts industry.
182. Our unique local talents and artists can become the pride of Mauritius both locally and abroad.

Support to Artists

183. Last year, Government introduced a historic legislation to recognise the status of artists in our economy.
184. Our first priority is to strengthen support to our registered professional artists.
185. Rs 25 million is being provided to the Professional in the Arts Council for the financing of schemes and programmes to support professionals in the art.

186. To give due recognition to our renowned local artists, we will: -
- (a) Launch an Artist of the Year Award of Rs 250,000 to showcase and market the artistic works of professionals in visual arts, literature, music, audio-visual and digital media, dance and performing arts; and
 - (b) Introduce an Artist Welfare Fund to provide support to the professionals in the arts and their families.
187. Furthermore, to facilitate an enabling environment for our artists, companies supporting a registered professional in the arts will benefit from a double deduction on the costs incurred.
188. Second, to encourage more youth to acquire professional training in the field of music and dance: -
- (a) The Artist Incubator Scheme will include mentoring of talents in traditional Mauritian Segga and Bhojpuri; and
 - (b) Government will continue to meet the cost of international examination fees for diploma courses at the Conservatoire National de Musique François-Mitterrand.
189. Third, private investment in the development of the creative industry, including concert venues and theatres will be eligible for a Premium Investor Certificate with incentives on taxation, utilities, labour, infrastructure amongst others.

Preservation of Heritage

Mr Speaker, Sir,

190. Our culture and our heritage are vastly enriching.

191. We need to preserve and promote them.

192. As part of the promotion of our ancestral heritage, we will:-

- (a) Celebrate 'La nuit du Séga' at Le Morne in October 2024, an event last celebrated 60 years ago;
- (b) Organise a conference on 'Routes of Enslaved People' in February 2025 to mark the 190th anniversary of the abolition of slavery; and
- (c) Launch the International Indentured Labour Route Project in May 2025.

193. As part of the preservation of our cultural heritage, we are going to: -

- (a) Develop a cultural heritage district in the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Area to celebrate Mauritius' rich history, promote cultural exchange, and enhance visitor experiences;
- (b) Undertake preliminary works for the setting up of an Interpretation Centre, including a Maroonage Museum and craft market at Le Morne; and

- (c) Provide for the restoration of the Canal Dayot Aqueduct, Tower of Old Powder Mill at Pamplémousses, Windmill Tower at Belle Rive, and Batterie de L'Harmonie at Les Salines.

194. Socio-cultural organisations play a key role in promoting our cultural, linguistic and religious values. Government will thus: -

- (a) Increase the grant for the organisation of cultural activities to Rs 10 million; and
- (b) Allocate funds for the construction of cultural centres, over four years.

WORKING TOWARDS AN INCLUSIVE AND SUSTAINABLE MAURITIUS

Mr Speaker, Sir,

195. The second strategy is to pursue our agenda of an inclusive and sustainable Mauritius.

196. We will incentivise local and efficient energy and water supply.

197. We will prioritise the climate agenda by promoting a circular economy, greening of our island and conservation of our terrestrial and coastal landmarks.

198. We will ensure an inclusive tomorrow for our children by investing in their wellbeing, their education and their safety.

Energy

Mr Speaker, Sir,

199. Last year, we set out a goal to make of Mauritius a Carbon Neutral Economy.
200. One based on clean, green, secure homegrown energy supply.
201. We are acting fast to reduce our dependence on fossil fuel.
202. Thanks to CEB's renewable energy schemes, we have to date approved over 9,200 PV systems for installation in houses, and businesses, with a production capacity of over 250 Megawatt of electric supply.
203. A Government Support Agreement will be established to unlock over Rs 15 billion of private sector investment in renewable energy projects in the upcoming 2 years.
204. To move our energy supply towards renewable home-grown sources, we aim to: -
 - (a) Launch an Agri-voltaic Scheme to enable planters, farmers and breeders to generate electricity at a premium tariff of Rs 5 per kWh;
 - (b) Introduce a community based solar PV Scheme for households within vulnerable localities who will benefit freely from 50 kilowatt-hours of electricity monthly;

- (c) Install 3,500 solar PV kits on rooftops of households, NGOs as well as religious and charitable institutions;
 - (d) Revamp the Net Billing Scheme to allow households to install batteries and sell any excess electricity generated to the CEB;
 - (e) Increase the Home PV Scheme from 5 kWh to 15 kWh;
 - (f) Set up an additional 20-Megawatt Battery Energy Storage System at L'Avenir; and
 - (g) Set up solar PV panels on rooftops of public buildings for a total capacity of 5 Megawatt.
205. Moreover, DBM Ltd will increase the maximum loan amount for the purchase of solar kits and batteries by households to Rs 350,000.
206. In our efforts to phase out coal in electricity generation, the CEB will shift its production on biofuel in Mauritius and Rodrigues.
207. To reduce energy consumption and improve on energy efficiency;
- (a) Minimum energy performance standards will be implemented for electric pumps; and
 - (b) DBM will implement an Energy Efficiency Loan Scheme for the implementation of energy-saving measures.

Mr Speaker, Sir,

208. Two years ago, we removed the excise duty on all electric and hybrid vehicles.

209. The impact has been immediate.

210. The share of sales of electric and hybrid vehicles has gone up from 24 percent to 46 percent.

211. To further support the move towards the greening of our automobile fleet: -

(a) The Negative Excise Duty of Rs 200,000 for purchase of electric vehicles will be renewed up to June 2025; and

(b) The CEB will install prepaid public charging stations.

Pursuing on our Climate Agenda

Mr Speaker, Sir,

212. Rising sea levels, flash floods, unprecedented rainfall, and extreme weather conditions are today a visible outcome of climate change.

213. We cannot remain insensitive whilst we see our pristine beaches being washed out, our coral reefs being destroyed and our lagoons and forests being deprived of its lifeline.

214. Our actions today have to be bold.

215. This initiative cannot be done alone.
216. It requires the collaboration of each and every one; Government, business community and civil society.
217. To meet our adaptation and mitigation agenda, we will have to mobilise some Rs 300 billion.
218. This is why we are introducing a Corporate Climate Responsibility (CCR) levy, equivalent to 2 percent of the company's profits.
219. Companies with a turnover of less than Rs 50 million will be exempted from this levy.
220. It will be used to support national initiatives to protect, manage, invest and restore the country's natural ecosystem and combat the effects of climate change.
221. A Climate and Sustainability Fund will thus be set-up to implement this agenda.
222. The fund will further be open to donations from international organisations and individuals and will be managed by a joint public-private committee.

Mr Speaker, Sir,

223. Rs 3.2 billion is being earmarked under the Climate and Sustainability Fund (CSF) for projects to address climate change.
224. More than 37 km of our coastline have been affected by beach erosion.

225. During the next five years, we are restoring more than 26 km of shoreline and rehabilitate some 30 degraded sites across the island:-
- (a) In the North: Trou aux Biches, Pointe des Lascars, Grand-Baie, Mon Choisy, Bain Boeuf, and Bras D'Eau;
 - (b) In the South: Bel Ombre, Riambel, Rivière des Galets, Saint Felix, Blue Bay, Pointe d'Esny, Pointe des Régates, Bois des Amourettes, and Rivière des Créoles;
 - (c) In the East: Poste de Flacq, Belle Mare, Grand River South East, and Palmar; and
 - (d) In the West: Albion, La Preneuse, La Mivoie Rivière Noire, Le Morne Trou Chenille, La Prairie, Flic en Flac, Wolmar, Le Morne Village, and Petit Verger.
226. We will invest in ecosystem-based adaptation remedial works on some 5 kilometres of shoreline at Bain Boeuf, Mon Choisy, Le Morne, Grand Sable, La Prairie, Grand River South East and Baie du Cap.
227. To do so, we are enabling sand extraction for beach nourishment.
228. We will introduce the concept of sustainable villages by promoting eco-friendly infrastructure, environmental conservation and community resilience in coastal and touristic regions.

229. To rebuild our marine eco-system, we are launching a lagoon reseedling programme.
230. Furthermore, we will implement a national coral reef restoration and replantation programme including: -
- (a) Establishment of 250 coral farms in Belle-Mare, Pointe-aux-Feuilles, Port-Louis Harbor, Trou-aux-Biches and Flic-en-Flac;
 - (b) Use of sustainable coral farming techniques to grow and transplant some 25,000 corals to degraded reef areas annually over 3 years; and
 - (c) Installation of underwater cameras at coral farm sites to provide live video feeds.
231. Oysters can act as natural water purifiers by filtering and removing pollutants.
232. We are going to invite proposals from individuals and companies to set-up oyster farms across the island.
233. Moreover, companies will be issued a licence for the cleaning of beaches through collection of algae and seaweeds for valorisation into products such as fertilisers.

Mr Speaker, Sir,

234. We are engaging in a Reforestation and Tree Plantation Programme across the island.

235. Our aim is to increase the tree coverage by 100 hectares annually over the next decade. To do so, we will:-

- (a) Make it mandatory for morcellements of more than 5 arpents, including Smart Cities, to allocate at least 4 percent of the total area for development of a mini forest, featuring endemic trees;
- (b) Invest and restore eco-sensitive zones having incomparable values due to its landscape, wildlife, biodiversity and natural values;
- (c) Plant trees on river banks, mountains and in sites identified by village and municipal councils;
- (d) Rehabilitate and preserve endemic plants at the SSR Botanical Garden; and
- (e) Distribute trees for plantation to students in primary schools.

Mr Speaker, Sir,

236. Cleaning, greening and embellishment of our country is a critical and collective effort.

237. The National Environment Cleaning Agency (NECA) was set up under the aegis of the Prime Minister's Office to develop our national cleaning strategy.

238. To achieve this strategy, funds are being provided for the cleaning of:-

- (a) All primary and secondary roads, Motorways and lateral roads in towns and villages;
- (b) 500 major public sites including Grand Bassin, Eau Bouillie, Rochester Falls, Viewpoints Chamarel, Eau Bleu Falls, Marie Reine de la Paix, Trou Chenilles Trail, Dutch First Landing, Bassin des Esclaves, and Pas Géométriques de Labonté;
- (c) 100 highly visited beaches; and
- (d) 500 kms of drains and watercourses, especially in high flood prone areas.

239. NECA will recruit 2,000 employees to this end.

Mr Speaker, Sir,

240. We shall continue to promote a circular economy by encouraging recycling and re-use of products by: -

- (a) Removing the levy on PET bottles for fully biodegradable plastic bottles;
- (b) Implementing extended producer responsibility for electronic and electrical wastes;

- (c) Initiating source segregation of waste through distribution of bins at household level; and
- (d) Enabling the import of used tyres solely for the purpose of re-treading for exports.

241. Waste has both an economic and ecological value.

242. Two Regional Integrated Waste Processing Facilities will be developed on a PPP basis to convert waste into compost and new materials.

243. Furthermore, recycling will be classified as a manufacturing activity to enable companies to benefit from incentives.

Flood Management

Mr Speaker, Sir,

244. Extreme weather conditions such as flash floods are being observed in unimaginable places and no country is spared.

245. Mauritius is no exception.

246. This is why we need to invest in flood management programmes.

247. This year, we have earmarked Rs 1 billion to pursue the implementation of 132 drain projects of a total value of Rs 3.5 billion.

Landslide works

Mr Speaker, Sir,

248. Landslide works are crucial to enhance resilience of communities against natural disasters.

249. It enables safer living environments for present and future generations.

250. We are providing Rs 178 million for completion of landslide protection works including:

(a) Stabilisation works at Rivière des Créoles, Rivière des Anguilles Bridge and Chamarel; and

(b) Slope stabilisation works along Plaisance-Ferney Road at Rivière des Créoles.

251. We will further invest in flood and landslide mitigation works at Le Hochet, Crève Cœur, Signal Mountain, Ruisseau du Pouce, Chitrakoot and Quatre Sœurs.

Water

Mr Speaker, Sir,

252. Climate change has not only affected the country in terms of flash floods, but we also witness prolonged periods of droughts causing stress on water supply.

253. It is imperative to further increase our water storage capacity and improve our distribution network.
254. Rs 2.5 billion is earmarked for existing and new water storage infrastructure: -
- (a) Rs 1.2 billion this year for the replacement of pipes across the Island including L'Escalier, Mahébourg, Ferney, and Bambous Virieux;
 - (b) Rs 930 million for the construction works of the Rivière des Anguilles Dam Project as from December 2024;
 - (c) Rs 345 million for the construction of new and upgrading of existing water treatment plants in regions including Mont Blanc, Piton du Milieu and Pont Lardier; and
 - (d) Commissioning of the service reservoirs at Alma and Nouvelle France by August 2024 with a total capacity of 5,500 cubic metres to serve around 4,000 households.

Mr Speaker, Sir,

255. Access to water supply is a basic need.
256. It should be seamless, efficient and swift.
257. Henceforth, a person applying for a water connection will be connected within a period of 30 days, subject to all requirements being met.

258. When the network of the CWA needs to be extended, the full cost of this expansion was borne by the household.
259. As from the 1st of July 2024, 50 percent of the cost will be incurred by the CWA.
260. In Government's efforts to improve sanitation across the island, some Rs 1.1 billion will be invested for the implementation of sewerage infrastructure projects.

Infrastructure Development

Mr Speaker, Sir,

261. This Government has during its mandate, invested massively in the construction, upgrading, and extension of our road network, easing the flow of traffic in many regions, such as: -
- (a) The Quay D flyover, which is operational since May 2023;
 - (b) The new link road connecting La Vigie and La Brasserie;
 - (c) The new flyover at Saint Pierre;
 - (d) The Verdun and Bois Cheri bypasses;
 - (e) The new bridge at Baie du Tombeau; and
 - (f) The SAJ Bridge, linking Coromandel and Sorèze, and which is operational since March 2024.

262. This year, we will invest Rs 3 billion for completion of existing projects including: -

- (a) Upgrading of roads at Bel Air, Holyrood Vacoas, Wooton, Tyack, and at Constance near the new Flacq Teaching Hospital;
- (b) Construction of road bypasses at Flic-en-Flac and Hermitage;
- (c) Construction of flyovers at Wooton, Terre Rouge, Ebène and La Vigie;
- (d) Construction of a new roundabout at Goodlands;
- (e) Upgrading of the Roussel Bridge at Grand River North West (GRNW);
- (f) Construction of a new footbridge on M1 at Trianon; and
- (g) Construction of the new link road connecting La Brasserie to Beaux Songes, to Pierrefonds roundabout and to Cascavelle.

263. Government will engage in new road projects including:

- (a) Construction of new flyovers at Labourdonnais on Motorway M2 and Camp Fouquereaux;
- (b) Construction of a new link road connecting Britannia to Rivière des Anguilles; and
- (c) New motorways M4 in the East and M5 in the South.

264. Rs 600 million is being earmarked for the rehabilitation, maintenance and upgrading of roads across the island.

Community Development

Mr Speaker, Sir,

265. We will revamp, upgrade and further equip our social welfare and community centres.

266. 46 Social Welfare Centres will be upgraded into evacuee centres to be used as refuge during natural calamities.

267. The Social Welfare Centres at Montagne Ory, Lallmatie, Bel Air Riviere Sèche, Petite Julie and Saint Pierre will be reconstructed.

268. We are providing more facilities to our citizens to improve their quality of life across the Island.

269. These projects include the upgrading of: -

(a) 4 Basketball pitches at Chamarel, Vuillemin, Riambel and Trèfles;

(b) 2 Markets at Plaine Magnien and Mahebourg;

(c) 2 Health tracks at Dubreuil, and Bois Chéri;

(d) 5 Green spaces at Balfour Garden, Coromandel, Mont Roches, Rose-Hill and Britannia;

- (e) 2 five-a-side football pitches at Résidence Saint Luc and Résidence La Brasserie;
- (f) 6 Municipal centres at Vacoas, Route Militaire, Roches Brunes, Chebel, Beau Bassin and Mare Gravier;
- (g) 6 Multipurpose complexes at Cascavelle, Grande Rivière Noire, Triolet, Midlands, La Flora and Rivière des Anguilles; and
- (h) 8 Sport complexes, 47 children's playgrounds, 34 football grounds, 30 outdoor gyms, 20 mini-soccer pitches, 15 indoor gyms, 8 volleyball pitches, 32 village halls and 24 cremation grounds and cemeteries.

270. In addition, 8 new health tracks, 16 new children's playground and 9 new pétanque courts will be constructed across the island.

Access to Public Transport

Mr Speaker, Sir,

271. Public transport is part of our greening strategy to reduce carbon emissions.

272. Hence, continuous support will be provided to our transport system.

273. The Metro Express Project now connects Curepipe to Port Louis, and has been extended to Ebene and Reduit.

274. The next phase of extensions will include La Vigie, Saint Pierre, Côte D'or and Immigration Terminal.
275. We will further develop a masterplan to connect the Metro Express to the North, South, East and West.
276. To maintain the price of bus fare, Government is going to:-
- (a) Pay the compensation for the additional remuneration 2024 for the bus industry; and
 - (b) Extend the Bus Modernisation Scheme for the purchase of buses up to June 2025.
277. For taxis, we are increasing the once-in a lifetime VAT exemption on purchase of a car by 20 percent to Rs 120,000.
278. Moreover, taxi owners will be able to form a company for the transfer of their license to their heirs and the process for temporary drivers will be streamlined.
279. Furthermore, DBM will provide a loan for taxis of 2.5 percent over a period of 7 years.

Education

Mr Speaker, Sir,

280. Education is the cornerstone of our progress and prosperity.

281. We will continue to invest in our education system, school infrastructure and our students through the provision of Rs 21 billion.

282. In January, this Government implemented a major reform to make pre-primary education free.
283. This is in complement to the free tertiary education implemented in 2019.
284. Our children today enjoy free education, from pre-primary to tertiary.
285. We are enabling some 36,000 children to have free access to education through the Free Pre-Primary Education Scheme.
286. In order to incentivize owners of pre-primary buildings to integrate the Free Pre-Primary Education Scheme, we will further provide for compensation equivalent to rental payment for use of building.
287. We will continue to support special education needs students to benefit from equitable opportunities.
288. As announced last year, we have reviewed the Grant in Aid formula for assistance to SEN schools.
289. We are therefore increasing the provision by 10 percent to Rs 330 million.
290. Government will continue to strengthen our education system to ensure that no one is left behind.

291. First, we will provide Rs 250 million for the construction, upgrading and maintenance of school infrastructure at pre-primary, primary and secondary levels.
292. Second, we are revamping the Scholarship schemes to make them fairer and to ensure that all students receiving a scholarship benefit from the necessary support.
- (a) The living allowance for beneficiaries of all scholarship schemes is being increased by 50 percent, irrespective of whether they are studying locally or abroad;
 - (b) HSC Professional Scholarship holders will henceforth benefit from a full scholarship and a living allowance instead of Rs 400,000 actually;
 - (c) The 50 laureates under the Additional Scholarship Scheme and the Additional Scholarship Based on Merit and Social Criteria will benefit from an increase in the: -
 - i. Annual all-inclusive financial grant from Rs 400,000 to Rs 600,000 if they study abroad;
 - ii. Annual Allowance from Rs 105,600 to Rs 150,000 if they study locally; and
 - iii. Entitlement on tuition fees and other related charges from Rs 150,000 to Rs 225,000.
 - (d) Beneficiaries of the Scholarship to Children from Vulnerable Families studying locally will benefit from an increase in the annual living allowance to Rs 100,000.

293. Third, for private secondary schools, a Minimum Guaranteed per capita variable grant of Rs 1,000 will be provided to cater for basic schooling expenses; an amount of Rs 239 million is being earmarked to this end.
294. The Bank of Mauritius and Maurice Stratégie will jointly launch a PhD Scholarship programme for 10 students annually.

Healthcare

Mr Speaker, Sir,

295. Government will continue to enhance the services it provides for the health of all its citizens.
296. We are therefore providing a budget of Rs 17.2 billion this year.
297. Of this amount, Rs 1.7 billion is earmarked for the implementation of health infrastructure around the island: -.
- (a) Rs 800 million for the operationalisation of the New Flacq Teaching Hospital by October 2024;
 - (b) Rs 311 million for completion of the New Renal Transplant Unit at the JNH Hospital by December 2024;
 - (c) Rs 310 million for completion of the New Eye Hospital by November 2024;
 - (d) Rs 127 million for completion of Area Health Centres at Cap Malheureux, Curepipe, Bramsthan and Bambous by February 2025;

- (e) Rs 81 million for upgrading works at regional hospitals;
- (f) Rs 55 million for mediclinics which comprise completion works at Grand Bois by October 2024 and works starting at Chemin Grenier by end of this year;
- (g) Rs 38 million for upgrading of 10 mediclinics, 17 area health centres, 113 community health centres and 18 health offices across the island; and
- (h) Rs 11 million for construction of community health centres at Roche Bois and Ecroignard.

298. In order to provide specialized care to children, we will set up a pediatric intensive care unit at the New ENT Hospital.

299. Artificial intelligence-enhanced electro-cardiography for detection of cardiovascular diseases has been introduced in 6 mediclinics last year, and will be extended to all regional hospitals for effective detection.

Mr Speaker, Sir,

300. Last year, we announced the implementation of the e-health system; one patient, one record.

301. We are pleased to announce that the system is in pilot phase at the JNH Hospital.

302. As from November 2024, the e-health system will be rolled out in all public health institutions around the island.

303. Henceforth, the public will be able to benefit from a digital health record including online appointment and medical history.

Youth and Sports

Mr Speaker, Sir,

304. Sports is not only a source of leisure and recreation.

305. It contributes to the wellness of our society.

306. It is capable of evoking national solidarity and lifting the spirit of a nation.

307. Let me congratulate the athletes who have made our country proud.

308. We will continue to support the development of our athletes by providing: -

(a) Rs 20 million for the preparation and participation of some 250 athletes at the Seychelles CJSOI Games in July 2025;

(b) Rs 40 million for the hosting of the Africa and Asia Pacific Choir Games in Mauritius in September 2025; and

(c) An increase from Rs 50 million to Rs 60 million in the grant allocated to 51 sports federation.

309. Moreover, we are increasing the grant to the 26 football clubs to Rs 17.5 million.

310. An amount of Rs 10 million is being provided for the Retired Athletes Allowance Scheme.
311. We will provide a special grant of Rs 30,000 to our high-level athletes for the purchase of sports equipment.
312. We are increasing the cash prize for winning medals in individual sports at the Olympic and Paralympic Games from: -
- (a) Rs 2,160,000 to Rs 2,500,000 for a gold medal;
 - (b) Rs 1,440,000 to Rs 1,750,000 for a silver medal; and
 - (c) Rs 720,000 to Rs 1,000,000 for a bronze medal.
313. To motivate the youth to engage in sports activities, new MUGA facilities will be constructed in Rose-Belle, Bambous, Rodrigues and Agalega.
314. A National Yoga Campaign will be launched with weekly classes for the public at Port Louis, Mon Choisy, Mahebourg, Gris Gris, Sodnac, Ebene, Moka, Tamarin, Vacoas and Belle Mare.
315. We will also invest in the upgrading of Germain Comarmond Stadium at Bambous, Auguste Voltaire Stadium at Flacq and the Centre Technique Nationale Francois Blaquart at Reduit.
316. The Mauritius Sports Council will upgrade its swimming pools at Mare D'Albert, Pavillion Quatre Bornes, Rivière du Rempart, Serge Alfred, Souvenir Calebasse and Côte D'Or to make them accessible for persons with disabilities.

317. Moreover, a half day will be reserved weekly for disabled individuals to benefit from the facilities with dedicated staff.

Law and Order

Mr Speaker, Sir,

318. National security and safety of our citizens have always been high on the agenda of this Government.

319. We are committed to upholding of law and order in the Republic of Mauritius.

320. To this end, the total provision allocated to the police force is being increased by over 15 percent from Rs 10.8 billion to Rs 12.6 billion.

321. We have, since 2019, recruited over 2,000 police officers and some 4,850 have been promoted.

322. For this financial year, we are engaged in the recruitment of some 1,000 police officers.

323. We will also invest in improving the infrastructure and equipment of the police force, including:-

(a) Construction of the Disciplined Forces Academy;

(b) Acquisition of an Offshore Patrol Vessel to ensure maritime security;

- (c) An Automated Biometric Identification System, which will be linked to a criminal attribute database;
- (d) Acquisition of new Coastal Surveillance Radar System for coastal surveillance and monitoring of vessel movement;
- (e) Renewal of vehicles of the police force; and
- (f) Construction and upgrading of police stations at Cent Gaulettes, L'Escalier, Phoenix and Triolet.

Crusade Against Drug Trafficking

Mr Speaker, Sir,

- 324. In 2015, it is this Government that set up a Commission of Inquiry on Drug Trafficking.
- 325. Since then, huge seizures of dangerous drugs amounting to Rs 15.5 billion have been made and 25,615 persons arrested.
- 326. To strengthen the vigilance by Customs at our borders, both at Airport and seaport, we are investing in the purchase of:-
 - (a) A whole-body scanner and two baggage scanners at the Cruise Terminal;
 - (b) Two additional baggage scanners at the SSR Arrival Hall;
 - (c) Two scanners, for loose cargo at the Parcel Post Office in Rodrigues; and
 - (d) 5 additional drug test equipment for rapid testing of illicit substances at port and airport.

327. Furthermore, to enhance the enforcement capacity of the Anti-Drug and Smuggling Unit (ADSU), a sum of Rs 350 million is being provided.

328. To assist in the rehabilitation of drug users, the Drug Users Administrative Panel, which has enabled 46 individuals to benefit from treatments will pursue its mandate.

Judiciary

Mr Speaker, Sir,

329. I now come to the Judiciary.

330. Over the years, this Government has been making continued efforts to improve access to justice and offer better services to all Court users and employees.

331. This year, we are making provision to: -

- (a) Upgrade court premises including the Mahébourg and Rose-Hill District Courts;
- (b) Equip the New Court House with new air-conditioning system and enhance its connectivity; and
- (c) Appoint a President for the Children's Court, a Senior District Magistrate and additional Judicial Research Assistants and Court Officers.

332. With a view to reducing the number of outstanding cases and improve delivery of judgements, digitalisation of justice and court administration will be accelerated.

Rodrigues and Outer Islands

Mr Speaker, Sir,

333. This Government will continue to engage in the development of our outer islands for the benefit of their inhabitants.

334. We will invest in the largest capital project ever implemented in Rodrigues.

335. The new runway at Plaine Corail will enhance the connectivity of the island to Mauritius and the rest of the world.

336. This runway, which is 2.1 km long, at a cost of Rs 7.9 billion would allow planes such as Boeing 737 and Airbus A321 Neo to land in Rodrigues.

337. We are providing an amount of Rs 1.4 billion to kick-start the construction of this project.

338. This will chart out a new growth path for Rodrigues, with the number of visitors expected to more than double.

339. Rs 900 million will be provided over the next four years to prepare the island in terms of water and electricity supply, food security and tourism development.

340. To maintain competitive and affordable air connectivity, we are maintaining the subsidy on the Special Rodrigues Holiday Package and the Subsidy on Airfare from Rodrigues until September 2025.

341. Funds are being earmarked to conduct a feasibility study for the future development of the port in Rodrigues.

Mr Speaker, Sir,

342. Government is also committed to address the shortage of water in the island.

343. Rs 540 million is being invested for the construction of a desalination plant at Pointe Coton with daily production capacity of 3,500 cubic meters and at Caverne Bouteille with daily capacity of 700 cubic meters.

344. Works have already started and are expected to be completed by July 2025.

345. As part of our vision of Rodrigues Ile Verte, Government will implement a roadmap to decarbonize the electricity grid of Rodrigues.

346. To pursue on our agenda to promote entrepreneurship, A Rodriguan Week will be organised which will include, inter-alia:-

- (a) A Made in Rodrigues Trade Fair to enable local producers to showcase their goods and services to consumers and other businesses;

- (b) A Trade and Investment Policy Forum by the Economic Development Board to identify opportunities for business on the island; and
- (c) A workshop to identify the strategic economic orientation of Rodrigues.

347. We are maintaining the 20 percent rebate on the cost of freight between Mauritius and Rodrigues.

348. Government is also allocating funds to subsidise the costs related to product testing, analysis and certification for Rodriguan SMEs.

Agalega

349. With regards to Agalega, as the House is aware, the airstrip and jetty were inaugurated in February last.

350. This infrastructure will increase connectivity of Agalega and contribute in improving development of the island.

351. In order to make full use of the opportunities, I am providing Rs 15 million for the implementation of the masterplan for the development of Agalega.

352. We are also providing Rs 49.1 million for the acquisition of equipment and vehicles as well as the development of small infrastructure projects that are of immediate need for Agalega.

Chagos

Mr Speaker, Sir,

353. Government will pursue in our struggle for the completion of the decolonisation of Mauritius.

354. We remain strongly committed to implementing a resettlement programme in the Chagos Archipelago.

355. In this regard, visits will be undertaken to the Chagos Archipelago to lay the groundwork for a proper resettlement, and Rs 50 million is being earmarked.

356. Earlier this year, Mauritius hosted with the support of the Zoological Society of London a workshop on the creation of a Marine Protected Area around the Chagos Archipelago.

357. Building on the outcome of this workshop which attracted participation from scientists and practitioners from across the world, Government will take further steps to make this project a reality.

Economic Outlook

Mr Speaker, Sir,

358. I now come to the budget outturn and economic outlook.

359. Total expenditure will amount to Rs 237.3 billion and total revenue is estimated at Rs 210.5 billion.

360. The overall budget deficit as at end of June 2025 is expected to further decrease to 3.4 percent, from 3.9 percent in June 2024 and 4.8 percent in June 2023.
361. Government debt will decline from 69.8 percent of GDP in June 2023 to 65.4 percent of GDP in June of this year and further to 63 percent of GDP by end June 2025.
362. Public sector debt is expected to decline from 80.2 percent of GDP in June 2023 to 74.5 percent of GDP by June 2024 and further to 71.1 percent of GDP by June 2025.
363. Interest to revenue ratio will fall below 10 percent, to 9,84 percent.
364. The GDP growth will be of 6.5 percent this year, and our measures will enable us to sustain an average growth rate of over 5 percent in the medium term.

Mr Speaker, Sir,

365. This year, we have achieved our objective to bring down public sector debt to less than the statutory level of 80 percent of GDP.
366. By June 2025, we will be largely below that statutory level and closer to our medium-term goal of 60 percent of GDP.

BUILDING OUR FUTURE

Mr Speaker, Sir,

367. I now come to measures for each and everyone.

368. Measures to better care for children who have a cancer.

369. Measures to support families expecting a child.

370. Measures to ensure a dignified life for the most vulnerable of our society.

371. Measures to enable all Mauritians to have decent housing.

372. Measures to create conditions for a fulfilled and confident youth.

373. Measures to recognize the contribution of the elderly in our nation.

374. Measures to fully integrate people with disabilities.

375. Measures to improve the quality of life of the middle class.

376. Measures to restore fairness by offering the same opportunities to all citizens.

377. As, Mr Speaker, Sir, we recognize the value of each and every Mauritian, both individually and collectively.

Paediatric Cancer Care

Mr Speaker, Sir,

378. The life of a child, filled with carefree moments and bursts of laughter, is a treasure that every parent cherishes.

379. When threatened by the tragedy of cancer, the entire balance of the child and their surroundings is disrupted.

380. To address this, it is our duty, as Government, to do everything in our power to better care for sick children.

381. From the time of diagnosis until all care is given, we commit to standing alongside families of children who are bravely fighting cancer.

382. Last year, we announced a new policy whereby all children aged up to 18 years who have cancer are taken care of fully by Government from the time of diagnosis until all care is given.

383. This has enabled 49 children to be treated in some of the best international cancer centres worldwide.

384. And 71 children diagnosed with cancer being provided free access to the best follow-up treatment programmes.

385. We need to do even more for them.

386. We are increasing the eligibility age of the cancer scheme from 18 years to 25 years.

387. As such, all children, and young adults up to the age of 25 years who have cancer will receive treatment in the best foreign and local cancer centres and fully financed by the Government.

Mr Speaker, Sir,

388. For other severe medical conditions, we also removed the maximum amount of Rs 1 million under the Overseas Treatment Scheme for paediatric patients up to the age of 18 years.

389. Thus, Government is covering their full cost of overseas treatment.

390. We are today ensuring that this policy benefits also patients up to the age of 25 years to ensure that each child, benefits fully from the support for medical care.

391. For patients aged 26 years and above, we are increasing for all medical treatments: -

(a) The monthly household income eligibility from Rs 150,000 to Rs 200,000; and

(b) The grant limit from Rs 1 million to Rs 1.3 million.

Pregnancy Care

Mr Speaker, Sir,

392. In life, there are events which transform our daily existence.

393. The arrival of a child in the world is the quintessence of such events.

394. To support families as they grow, assist expecting mothers during their pregnancies, and ensure the good health of newborns, this government is extending its support to all future parents.
395. To encourage expecting mothers to systematically follow the required medical checkups during their pregnancy, they will receive a grant of Rs 3,000 when they complete the 6 mandatory medical checkups.
396. Yet, the cost of medical care, nutrients and supplements for the mother prior to birth and in the first months after birth are high.
397. Through this budget, we will introduce a Maternity Allowance of Rs 2,000 monthly for nine months for the mother, as from the third trimester of pregnancy.

Work-Life Balance

398. The first days of parenthood are a fundamental period in building family bonds and in the development of the baby.
399. Young parents, mothers and fathers alike, deserve more facilities to manage their work and family responsibilities.
400. This Government is pleased to increase the length of paid leaves: -
- (a) From 14 weeks to 16 weeks for maternity leaves; and
 - (b) From 1 week to 4 weeks for paternity leaves.

401. For mothers who have given birth to twins or triplets or multiple births, or to a premature baby, a special 2-week additional maternity leave will be provided.
402. Moreover, companies investing in corporate nurseries shall benefit from a tax credit of 25 percent on the cost.

Social Welfare

Mr Speaker, Sir,

403. A supportive society that integrates the most vulnerable is one oriented towards progress, future, and growth.
404. Guided by this people-centric philosophy, this Government has continuously made the fight against inequalities an everyday struggle.
405. Wherever inequalities persist, we must fight them with strength, conviction, and redistribution.
406. In 2016, under this Government, the Marshall Plan Against Poverty was launched and the Social Register of Mauritius established.
407. Today, some more than 7,000 households corresponding to 27,600 vulnerable individuals benefit from direct support from this Government.
408. As from the 1st of July 2024, we are increasing the minimum monthly subsistence allowance to Rs 1,500.

409. Moreover, we are providing Rs 11 million to improve access to employment opportunities by SRM beneficiaries through enhanced skills, job placements, and training.

410. We are providing spectacles to all SRM beneficiaries.

Fight against Domestic Violence

Mr Speaker Sir,

411. Violence in all its forms has no place in our homes and we must continue to denounce and eradicate it.

412. Committed to the fight against domestic violence, it is our government's responsibility to assist those who are victims of it.

413. We will thus launch a Survivor Support Scheme with a one-off financial assistance of Rs 5,000 to help victims of domestic violence.

NGOs

Mr Speaker, Sir,

414. The civil society, the NGOs and charitable associations have been pivotal in assisting communities, and the most vulnerable of our society, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic.

415. We will continue to provide our utmost support and recognition to them.

416. We are thus providing a triple deduction for companies donating to NGOs involved in the combat against drug abuse, gender-based violence, poverty alleviation and protection of animals.
417. We will increase the income tax deduction from Rs 50,000 to Rs 100,000 for individuals donating to other NGOs and charitable institutions and also enable companies to do so.
418. In the same vein, NGOs and private hospitals will be provided with duty free facilities for the purchase of ambulances.
419. Moreover, the grant to religious bodies is being increased by 60 percent from Rs 125 million to Rs 200 million.
420. To recall, the grant was Rs 73 million in 2014. Thus, there has been an increase of over 170 percent.
421. We will further provide duty free facilities for the purchase of motor cars to all registered priests of all religions every 7 years.
422. To further support religious bodies, we will: -
- (a) Extend the Water Tank Scheme to all religious bodies; and
 - (b) Increase the Solar PV Scheme for religious bodies to a maximum of 10 panels.
423. Finally, as from the 1st of January 2025, Government will facilitate, through subsidies, overseas religious pilgrimages.

424. The Ministry of Arts and Culture will devise a package, with the different religious bodies to support Mauritians during their pilgrimage.

Animal Welfare

Mr Speaker, Sir,

425. Animal welfare reflects on our values of compassion, empathy, and kindness.

426. We have to treat animals with respect.

427. We shall provide for the: -

(a) Purchase of two mobile veterinary clinics by the Mauritius Society for Animal Welfare to further enhance its dog sterilisation programme; and

(b) Construction of a Dog Shelter at Plaine Magnien.

428. In order to reduce the number of stray dogs, we shall provide an incentive of Rs 200 to individuals for the sterilization and tagging of these animals at the MSAW or at registered NGOs.

429. Finally, all dogs sold should be mandatorily registered with MSAW.

Decent Housing for All

Mr Speaker, Sir,

430. Whilst poor housing conditions is often synonymous to social and economic exclusion, this Government has made access to decent housing one of its priorities.
431. Enabling all Mauritians, in particular the most vulnerable to have a roof on their head is an objective that we pursue with determination.
432. In 2020, this Government announced the implementation of the largest Social Housing programme in the country.
433. Out of the 8,000 housing units announced, 1,850 units will be completed by September 2024 at Pointe aux Piments, Reunion Maurel, Valetta, Camp Ithier, Olivia, Mare d'Albert, Grand Bel Air, Souillac, Bambous, Hermitage, Henrietta, Malherbes, La Source and Camp Levieux.
434. Another 1,800 units are expected to be completed by December 2024, and the remaining will be delivered by June 2025.
435. Indeed, we will deliver on our promise of constructing 8,000 housing units by June 2025.
436. Beneficiaries of the housing units will avail of housing loans on favourable terms for the acquisition of their property.

437. Moreover, the NHDC will: -

- (a) Complete the construction of 223 units at La Valette by end June 2024; and
- (b) Construct 546 new social housing units at Camp Ithier, Quatre Cocos, Solitude, Henrietta, Melrose, Sebastopol, Souillac and Wooton.

438. Moreover, to assist individuals in the construction of their houses, the monthly income eligibility criteria for casting of roof slab grant scheme and purchases of building materials scheme is being increased from Rs 30,000 to Rs 40,000.

Mr Speaker, Sir,

439. A home is as much a basic necessity as a life goal.

440. Throughout our mandate, Government has eased access to property for our citizens.

441. We are providing, under the Home Ownership Scheme, a 5 percent refund on the cost of the purchase of a property, up to a maximum of Rs 500,000.

442. For those having a loan to build or purchase a home, we are providing a 5 percent refund, under the Home Loan Scheme, on the loan amount, up to a maximum of Rs 500,000.

Child Welfare

Mr Speaker, Sir,

443. From early childhood to adulthood, everyone born has the right to benefit from the best conditions to grow, learn, and thrive.
444. Committed to the protection of children, this Government has continuously supported families in their daily lives.
445. Last year, we introduced a monthly Child Allowance of Rs 2,000 for children from birth up to the age of 3 years.
446. Thanks to this support, Government has contributed to improve the daily life of over 36,000 households.
447. This year we will go further by increasing it by 25 percent to Rs 2,500.

Mr Speaker, Sir,

448. By making pre-primary education free this January, we have ensured that all children have a free access to school as from their early age.
449. We want to ensure that all children can start their schooling in the best of conditions.
450. We are hence introducing, as from the 1st of July 2024, the School Allowance of Rs 2,000 monthly to all children aged 3 years up to 10 years.

451. This will enable around 80,000 parents to benefit from an additional support to provide their children with the basic needs.
452. This is our philosophy.
453. This is the philosophy that this Government, under the leadership of the Honourable Prime Minister, Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, has enshrined.

Mr Speaker, Sir,

454. Access to education is a fundamental human right.
455. Providing free sanitary towels ensures that girls can exercise this right fully.
456. This Government will introduce, as from the 1st January 2025, free distribution of sanitary towels to all girls from Grade 6 to Grade 13.
457. In the same vein, we want all students to persist in their studies irrespective of their financial means.
458. Hence, all parents having children in full-time education in fee-paying private schools will be eligible to an income tax deduction of up to Rs 60,000 per child per annum.
459. This Government has restored the subsidy for SC and HSC examination fees.

460. To foster further a growth mindset and resilience, we will ensure that all students have a second chance to succeed.

461. To this end, as from this year, we will provide a full subsidy on SC and HSC examination fees for those who have either not obtained their 5 credits or not passed the SC or HSC.

Mr Speaker, Sir,

462. Government recognises the financial challenges faced by retirees, widows and disabled individuals in raising dependent children.

463. We are therefore increasing the monthly child allowance provided to them from Rs 2,000 to Rs 2,500, irrespective of the number of children.

464. This measure, together with the allowances of Rs 2,500 for all children aged up to 3 years and Rs 2,000 to children aged up to 10 years aim to enhance the quality of life of these families.

465. We will further increase the support to families having more than one child; be it twins, triplets or more.

(a) The household income ceiling to qualify for Multiple Birth Allowance is being increased from Rs 390,000 to Rs 500,000; and

(b) The monthly allowance is being increased from Rs 3,272 to Rs 5,000.

For the Youth

Mr Speaker, Sir,

- 466. Our youth are our future, our tomorrow.
- 467. We place in them our hopes, dreams and ambitions for the nation.
- 468. This Government wants each and every young individual to be fulfilled, integrated and connected to the world.
- 469. Last year, we introduced the Independence Scheme to provide a one-off grant of Rs 20,000 to each citizen at the age of 18 years.
- 470. We are going even further in our support to our youth.
- 471. We will provide a free monthly data package for all citizens aged 18 to 25 years of age, to enable some 80,000 youth to benefit from free internet.
- 472. Moreover, the DBM will introduce a zero percent loan on IT equipment for those aged 18 to 25 years old.

For the Elderly

Mr Speaker, Sir,

- 473. Our elderly are the foundation of our society.

474. They have made the success of Mauritius over the past five decades.
475. They have written our national story since independence and created possibilities for our younger generations.
476. They have contributed to our development, built our homes, and established our businesses.
477. They deserve, as a sign of recognition and solidarity, that we offer them our full support, gratitude and respect.
478. Let me recall that it is this Government who has raised gradually the basic retirement pensions for our elders since 2014.
479. In 2014, the pension of our elders, widows, and disabled was at a mere Rs 3,623, less than 60 percent of the poverty line.
480. For us, this was unworthy of their contribution to our society, and their basic needs.
481. We had thus promised to bring the basic pensions to Rs 13,500 monthly.
482. And we have acted on our promise.
483. During this period, we have increased more than three-fold the basic pensions from Rs 3,623 to Rs 13,500.

484. Despite the worst crisis of our history, this Government has neither shied away from its responsibilities nor abandoned the commitment it has made to its citizens.
485. We have increased the retirement pensions for those aged 65 to Rs 14,500 and those aged 75 years and above to Rs 16,000.
486. Finally, we have aligned all basic pensions to the Basic Retirement Pension.
487. At the time, orphans below 15 years not in full-time education, were only getting a pension of Rs 1,810 monthly.
488. Those aged three to twenty in full-time education were getting a mere pension of Rs 3,330 monthly.
489. We have corrected those injustices.
490. Both figures have been aligned to Rs 13,500 monthly.

Mr Speaker, Sir,

491. Let me assure this House, and the population that the elderly, the disabled, the orphans and the widows will continue to benefit from our support.
492. This Government is proudly announcing a double increase in the pensions in the next six months.

493. First, we are increasing, as from the 1st of July 2024 itself, the monthly basic retirement pension to Rs 14,000.
494. The Basic Widow's Pension, the Basic Invalid's Pension and the Basic Orphan's Pension will also be increased to reach Rs 14,000.
495. It is an increase of over Rs 10,000 in less than 10 years.
496. Hence, from the 1st of July 2024 up to the 31st December 2024, retirees at the age of 65 years will gain Rs 15,000 and Rs 16,500 at the age of 75 years.
497. Those aged between 90 and 99 years, will gain Rs 24,210 and a centenary will gain Rs 29,210.
498. Second, as from the 1st of January 2025, we will further increase the Basic Retirement Pension and all basic pensions to bring it to Rs 15,000.
499. Hence, retirees at the age of 65 years will gain Rs 16,000 and Rs 17,500 at the age of 75 years.
500. Those aged between 90 and 99 years, will gain Rs 25,210 and a centenary will gain Rs 30,210.

Mr Speaker, Sir,

501. In a spirit of compassion, we are increasing the monthly rent allowance to beneficiaries of basic pensions living alone from Rs 2,286 to Rs 3,500.

502. The Inmate's allowance for retirees in charitable institutions is being increased by over 80 percent from Rs 830 to Rs 1,500.
503. Moreover, in order to assist households in recruiting carers for the elderly:-
- (a) An individual will be allowed to deduct Rs 30,000 for the employment of a carer to cater for his parents or grandparents; and
 - (b) An individual having reached the age of 60 years, may benefit from a permit to recruit a foreign carer, irrespective of the place of origin.
504. For retirees, we are increasing the exemption of income tax on the lump sum received from Rs 2.5 million to Rs 3 million.
505. Finally, we are further increasing the Guardian's Allowance for persons taking responsibility of orphans under their custody from Rs 1,100 to Rs 2,000 monthly.

For the Disabled

Mr Speaker, Sir,

506. An inclusive society is one that fully integrates and includes people with disabilities in socio-economic activities.
507. The recognition of disability is an ongoing struggle that too many families still face with difficulty.

508. We cannot accept that disability leads to inequities and vulnerability.
509. We must rise to the challenge of equality and solidarity which reflects the values of our society.
510. Because, every Mauritian must have the right to the same opportunities.
511. To help those with disabilities to achieve their full potential, we have increased the basic invalid's pension from Rs 3,267 monthly in 2014 to Rs 13,500 today.
512. We have also ensured that any individual suffering from amputation, benefits from the full basic invalidity pension.
513. We have also provided a CSG Disability Allowance of Rs 2,500 for those with a disability of between 40 and 60 percent.

Mr Speaker, Sir,

514. As announced earlier, we will further increase the Basic Invalid's Pension to Rs 14,000 in July 2024 and Rs 15,000 in January 2025.
515. We will also provide a refund of taxi fares to all students attending integrated units and special education needs resource and development centres.

516. The monthly incontinence allowance of Rs 1,800 will be increased to Rs 2,500 and patients suffering from Severe Spinal Cord Trauma will also benefit from it.
517. For parents of all children aged below 18 years of age with a disability, we are providing a duty-free concession on a motor vehicle.
518. Finally, for some 5,000 disabled children of less than 18 years, we will introduce an additional monthly allowance of Rs 3,000.

Consumer Protection

Mr Speaker, Sir,

519. Global supply chain disruptions, the Covid-19 pandemic, the war between Ukraine and Russia, and the ongoing tensions in the Middle East have indeed impacted on prices globally.
520. We have been faced with a cumulative inflation of 15.5 percent over the last two years.
521. Conscious of this challenge for numerous households, Government has implemented unprecedented and historic measures to preserve the purchasing power of households, in particular the most vulnerable and the middle-class.
522. We have ensured that the cost of the most basic of necessities are contained.

523. In line with our philosophy, we will maintain the price of “pain maison” at Rs 2.60 instead of Rs 4.80 without subsidy.
524. To do so, we will continue to provide: -
- (a) Rs 540 of subsidy on a pack of 25 kg of flour to bakers to maintain its price at Rs 109; and
 - (b) Rs 5 of refund per litre of gas oil to bakeries as from October 2023.
525. We will also increase the subsidy by 167 percent per “pain maison” to 24 cents.
526. The price of rice is being maintained at Rs 10.80 per kg against the actual price of Rs 35 per kg.
527. Finally, we are decreasing the price of a 12 kg cylinder of cooking gas from Rs 240 to Rs 190 instead of Rs 560 without subsidy.
528. In total, Rs 4.9 billion is being provided as subsidies on the price of LPG, flour, rice and bread.

Supporting Incomes

Mr Speaker, Sir,

529. Since 2022, this Government has introduced a historic measure, the CSG Income Allowance which benefits more than 500,000 employees.

530. We have introduced in 2022 the CSG Income Allowance of Rs 1,000 to all those earning up to Rs 50,000 monthly.
531. Last year, we increased the figure to Rs 2,000 for some 200,000 individuals earning up to Rs 25,000 monthly.
532. This year, we are maintaining the CSG Income Allowance for all employees and self-employed.
533. And we are going further.
534. We are increasing the CSG Income Allowance for some 320,000 individuals:-
- (a) Rs 3,000 for some 110,000 employees and self-employed earning less than Rs 20,000;
 - (b) Rs 2,500 for some 55,000 individuals earning less than Rs 25,000;
 - (c) Rs 2,000 for some 50,000 individuals earning less than Rs 30,000; and
 - (d) Rs 1,500 for some 105,000 individuals earning less than Rs 50,000.

Mr Speaker, Sir,

535. It is this Government that has introduced, on top of the Minimum Wage, the *Revenu Minimum Garanti* of Rs 15,000 last year.
536. In January 2024, we increased the figure to Rs 18,500.

537. Today, we are increasing the *Revenu Minimum Garanti* to Rs 20,000.
538. No individual in full-time employment will have a revenue of less than Rs 20,000 as from the 1st of July 2024.
539. It is an increase of Rs 7,925, over 65 percent from Rs 12,075 in 2022.
540. For all those who have a revenue, including the CSG Income Allowance of less than Rs 20,000, Government will top-up a maximum of Rs 500 monthly.
541. Through this historic measure, we are ensuring that more than 110,000 men and women will today have at least Rs 20,000 of income at the end of each month.

Mr Speaker, Sir,

542. We will make it easier for people to save for the future with the launch of the Mauritius Savings Bond, offering savers a guaranteed minimum rate of 3.5 percent annually.

Allocation Égalité des Chances

Mr Speaker, Sir,

543. Whilst all men are born equal, they are not equal in reality.
544. To correct these injustices which deprive some of our fellow citizens of access to the same opportunities, the Government of Honourable Pravind Kumar Jugnauth has tirelessly fought to reduce inequalities wherever they exist.

545. It has made the principle of redistribution its mantra with the promise of a fairer, more inclusive and more prosperous nation.
546. A society that extends its support to the most vulnerable, offering today's and tomorrow's generations a catalyst towards social mobility.
547. This Government has been the first to introduce the minimum wage for each citizen.
548. It has been the first to introduce a *Revenu Minimum Garanti* for all employees.
549. Today, we are introducing a historic measure for all households, and families.
550. We are introducing the *Allocation Égalité des Chances* for each and every household earning less than Rs 20,000 monthly.
551. It shall be an allowance of Rs 2,000 to a household monthly.

Mr Speaker, Sir,

552. This Budget is one where we build tomorrow.
553. We have engaged in visioning our tomorrow together.
554. A tomorrow where our economy grows robustly and sustainability.
555. A tomorrow where the benefits of growth is more equitably distributed to the Mauritians.

556. A tomorrow where the contribution of each and every citizen to the nation is duly recognised.

557. A tomorrow where the basic needs of housing, food, health, and education are guaranteed.

Mr Speaker, Sir,

558. Every Mauritian contributes a unique note to the symphony of our shared destiny.

559. Together, let us dare to make the common good our purpose.

560. Together, let us dare to make social progress our strength.

561. Because, tomorrow is ours.

Mr Speaker, Sir,

562. I cannot conclude without thanking the Honourable Prime Minister, who has entrusted me with this task, and provided me with his unwavering support ever since my very first Budget speech five years ago.

563. A hallmark of great men, his vision has given meaning to our actions.

564. I would also like to place on record my appreciation to my colleague Ministers and their staff for their valuable contribution in the preparation of this Budget.

565. Let me also express my sincere gratitude to my team, in particular the Financial Secretary, the Deputy Financial Secretaries and the staff of my Ministry and institutions for their firm commitment.

566. Finally, I would like to extend my appreciation to the stakeholders who have shared their views and all those who contributed to the preparation of this budget.

567. We have given due consideration to their suggestions.

CONCLUSION

568. Mr Speaker, Sir, this Budget is a covenant of trust with the population.

569. It is about investing in a better tomorrow for each and everyone.

570. With the measures unveiled, it is about investing in our tomorrow.

571. 320,000 employees and self-employed will receive higher monthly CSG Income Allowances.

572. 310,000 of our elderly, disabled and widows will have higher pension benefits today.

573. 110,000 individuals will have a Revenu Minimum Garanti of Rs 20,000 monthly.

574. 100,000 youth aged 18 to 25 will benefit from a free monthly mobile data package.
575. 80,000 families having children aged 3 to 10 years will benefit from a School Allowance of Rs 2,000 monthly.
576. 50,000 households will have a minimum of Rs 20,000 monthly thanks to the Equal Chance Allowance of Rs 2,000 monthly.
577. 36,000 families with children of up to 3 years will receive a higher Child Allowance of Rs 2,500 monthly.
578. 20,000 SRM beneficiaries will benefit from a monthly minimum income support of Rs 1,500.
579. 12,000 mothers will receive a monthly maternity allowance of Rs 2,000.
580. 5,000 disabled children will receive an additional monthly allowance of Rs 3,000.

Mr Speaker, Sir,

581. Through this Budget, we are creating more opportunities for those who have been deprived of it.
582. As Jean Tirole puts it *“l'économie est au service du bien commun”*.
583. Mr. Speaker, Sir, we care for our people.
584. Thank you.
585. I now commend the Bill to the House.