

MINISTRY OF ARTS AND CULTURE
- DOCUMENTATION UNIT - DAMAGED DOCUMENTS (07/06/16)

(No. B/538) Mr S. Mohamed (First Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Arts and Culture whether, in regard to the Documentation Unit of his Ministry, he will state if books, documents and press cuttings found thereat have recently been damaged and, if so, indicate the remedial measures that will be taken in relation thereto.

Mr Baboo: Madam Speaker, I am informed that recently there has been no damage to the Documentation Unit of my Ministry. However, following heavy rainfall in December 2014 and January 2015 respectively, two office spaces at the Renganaden Seeneevassen building, including the Documentation Unit, were overflowed.

The maintenance company of the building confirmed that this was due to obstruction in the drainage system. This problem has been addressed accordingly. Madam Speaker, as regards damaged books and newspapers, copies of most of these books and all the newspapers are available at the National Library.

Mr Mohamed: I thank the hon. Minister for, obviously, not stating the obvious that yes, they have been damaged, but there are copies available at National Art Gallery.

According to my information - and could he confirm that - back in 2014, there were approximately 2,000 books, out of which from Mauritian authors in various languages, art books of masters such as Vincent Van Gogh, magazines, newsletters, journals of art etc. So, those documents are no longer in this Documentation Unit and this, not to the benefit obviously, but *au détriment* of all the students who come to use the Documentation Unit as reference. So, what has the hon. Minister done ever since January 2015 - I am sure the rain has not gone on, but has stopped - and what does he plan to do, in order to replenish those very important works of art and those literary documents that have been damaged since then?

Mr Baboo: Thank you, hon. Mohamed! Well, Madam Speaker, some 150 books were damaged. It was not 2,000 books. I am confirming, it was 150 books and out of these 150 books, 76 books are available at the National Library. An order has been placed for the remaining books.

Regarding press cuttings, all duplicates are available at the National Library. According to the National Library Act, it is mandatory to have a deposit of six copies there at all times.

Mr Mohamed: Could the hon. Minister do two things - consider the possibility I am just trying to suggest to be constructive - firstly, to have a notice there to inform all those

students that those are documents that are available at another place, the National Art Gallery, and also to consider the possibility of simply having copies made and sent to the Documentation Unit instead of having those students and those who want to use those documents as reference run around. Just give them service instead.

Mr Baboo: Well, we have got flooding problems. There is a notice that has already been put there where we are informing all the students to move to the National Library, not to the Art Gallery. We have already done the necessary.