

COPYRIGHT ACT – AMENDMENTS (30/06/09)

(No. B/698) **Mr J. C. Barbier (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West)** asked the Minister of Education, Culture & Human Resources whether, in regard to the proposed amendments to the Copyright Act, he will state where matters stand.

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, my Ministry is already in consultation with the State Law Office for the drafting of amendments to the Copyright Act on the basis of recommendations received up to now.

However, a study on the Mauritian Cultural Industry has been commissioned by my Ministry and the University of Mauritius with the support of UNESCO since 2006. The report, which is an outcome of extensive consultations with the community of artists, performers and creators, will be submitted to my Ministry, I understand, today. It is most probable that certain recommendations for proposals will have to be considered while amending the Copyright Act.

This may require further amendments to be prepared or amendments to the amendments already submitted to the SLO.

Furthermore, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in order to ensure compliance to international standards of the Intellectual Property Rights, the Board of Investment has agreed to arrange for the urgent services of an expert from Singapore to expedite matters.

All the recommendations will be taken into consideration while finalising the draft amendments to the Copyright Act.

In view of the multifaceted dimensions and complications of the issues involved like Information and Communication Technology, Intellectual Property Rights requirements, use of internet and border control measures, just to mention a few, the amendments will require some more time to be finalised.

I can assure the House that the amendments to the Copyright Act are high on Government's agenda, and we are doing our level best to finalise same within the shortest possible timeframe.

Mr Barbier: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is not the first time we hear such a speech from the Government side. It's a long time now since the artists are waiting for the amendments to be brought to this Act. I am happy that the Minister has mentioned the IT problem, as we know today we have so much music which is being downloaded from the internet. An artist is having nothing for this type of transaction, if I may express so. Now, it is the moment to give us a time frame, and tell us when finally this Act or amendment will be brought to the House for a debate.

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as I mentioned, there are amendments which have already been submitted to the State Law Office. But I must inform the House that I have, myself, questioned many of these amendments when I took office. I just mentioned the complications that can arise, and I don't want to have a *travail baclé*. This is a very, very important issue. I want to go as quickly as possible, but I must be given some indulgence. I am going to go as quickly as possible, and do a very beautiful piece of work.

Mr Bérenger: I think I heard the hon. Minister say that, probably, today or in a few days, he is going to receive a report from the University of Mauritius on cultural affairs in general, having an impact on the proposed amendments to the Copyright Act. Will this be made available to Members and to artists? It is no top secret, and I think it will provoke a debate.

Secondly, I heard that we are receiving assistance from Singapore in such matters. Why Singapore, of all places, when we are dealing with cultural matters?

Dr. Bunwaree: It is not only a question of matters, because the most important part of it is the difficulty that has arisen, I must say, with the problems accompanying the IT and Communication Technology. As hon. Barbier mentioned, this is the real crux of the matter. On the other side, we are waiting for the report on the cultural industry from the University of Mauritius. I don't think this is going to hamper on the work that is in progress, but we believe that when the report will come, there could be important issues that are raised in this report that will have to be taken on board. But, the most important part is coming from the IT matters. So, we are looking into all this, and when the report comes from the cultural industry, I personally would wish to have a whole national debate on that, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.