

EBENE - CULTURE HOUSE - CONSTRUCTION (17/05/16)

(No. B/429) **Mr K. Ramano (Third Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes)** asked the Minister of Arts and Culture whether, in regard to the proposed construction of a Culture House in the region of Ebene, he will state where matters stand.

Mr Baboo: Madam Speaker, as you may already be aware, the project to construct a Culture House dates as far back as the 1990s.

I wish to refer the hon. Member to the reply I made to PQ No. B/629 at the National Assembly on 06 October 2015. Since then, the progress achieved to date is as follows -

(a) With regard to the site for the proposed construction of the Culture House, necessary procedures have been initiated for the swapping of the lands between the Hindi and Urdu Speaking Unions and my Ministry as recommended by the Chinese experts.

(b) Concerning the funding of the Culture House Project, I am informed that it will be co-financed by the Government of Mauritius and the Chinese authorities. In this regard, a request for funding has been made to the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development in the forthcoming budget. The project, which is a priority of my Ministry, will be undertaken in two phases and will be kick-started during the Financial Year 2016/2017.

Madam Speaker, the House may wish to note that the Culture House will accommodate the National Archives Department and the National Library for the time being. The extension of the building to accommodate the departments and the parastatal bodies operating under the aegis of my Ministry, will be envisaged later as Multi Carrier Mauritius Ltd has imposed a limit of five floors only for the construction.

Mr Ramano: Madame la présidente, dans une interview du journal l'Express en date du 29 avril 2016, le *Chairman* de la Bibliothèque Nationale est en train de tirer la sonnette d'alarme concernant une véritable urgence de la situation. Il ajoute même que d'ici cinq ans à dix ans on peut se demander combien de documents valables et historiques on va perdre. Est-ce que d'ici la construction de ce centre, y a-t-il des mesures urgentes que le ministère envisage de prendre?

Mr Baboo: As an urgent measure, my Ministry is considering to relocate the National Archives Department and the National Library to a new rented building. Funds for the purpose have been requested from the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Rutnah! Yes, hon. Leader of the Opposition!

Mr Bérenger: For clarification, I think I heard we are talking about a new Culture House that will host the archives and so on, and now the hon. Minister says another building. Can he be more explicit?

Mr Baboo: No, as hon. Ramano just asked: whether measures have been taken. We are relocating a new building in the meantime that we set up the new building at the Triangle of Ebene. So, we will put an Expression of Interest in order to rent a building.

Mr Bérenger: We have been following that for decades now. We are committing a crime against our archives and the worst thing that you can do with archives is move them about. Everybody knows that. The worst thing is that every time you move archives from one building to another, you lose, I don't know what part thereof and now we are being told that, in the meantime, this will be done. There would not be any archives left in Mauritius if we carry on like that!

Mr Baboo: I do agree, but the necessary precaution will be taken.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Rutnah! You want to?

(Interruptions)

You have got a reply to the hon. Leader of the Opposition!

Hon. Rutnah!

Mr Rutnah: Can the hon. Minister state whether pre-construction surveys have already been carried out and when construction works will actually kick off in relation to this Culture House?

Mr Baboo: The kick-off will be after the Budget and let me tell the hon. Member, even today, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development and the Chinese Authorities just had a meeting regarding that matter.

Madam Speaker: Time is over!