CHAMAREL - PRE-PRIMARY SCHOOL – CONSTRUCTION (23/04/13)

(No. B/181) Mrs J. Radegonde-Haines (Fourth Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the construction of the pre-primary school of Chamarel, he will state the -
(a) expected start and completion dates thereof respectively, indicating when it is scheduled to be operational, and
(b) cost thereof.

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, in regard to part (a) of the question, works started on 15 June 2012 and were expected to be completed by end of December 2012.

However, implementation of the project has been delayed due to, firstly, the nature of the site which I am informed, warranted additional external site works and also due to bad weather conditions.

Works are now expected to be completed in the second week of May 2013. The Pre-primary Unit will consequently be operational in the third week of May 2013, that is, in two to three weeks' time.

Regarding part (b) of the question, the cost of the project is Rs5.3 m.

Mrs Radegonde-Haines: Mr Speaker, Sir, please allow me to make reference to two PQs that I asked the hon. Minister on 03 May 2011 and 15 November 2011, where we were informed that the construction of the pre-primary school was initiated since 2009. We understand that there have been two circumstances: nature of the site or bad weather conditions.

But the project was scheduled to be completed in January 2012, and thereafter, delayed to January 2013 and until now being affected by considerable delays. In view of this, can the hon. Minister tell us as to whether the Construction Manager and the Project Manager have not recognised that the project was unlikely to achieve the target for completion, and if so, why measures have not been taken to drive the project forward to the earliest possible completion?

Dr. Bunwaree: I said, earlier, in my reply to my PQs, the reasons that were behind the delay of the project. Last time, when I answered the question, I talked about the long and laborious exercise for tendering procedures which lasted eight months and at the close of which, it was found that none of the bidders was found to be compliant. We had to start the exercise altogether. This is our system as we know. The hon. Member must also realise that I did mention and how much I was interested in having this project done because the idea was to get rid of that school over there. In fact, I did all I could to maintain the school. We are going to have

a beautiful school in that region which will be ready in two or three weeks' time. Well, we did talk to the Project Managers, of course, but, first of all, we were told that when the contractor started the job that he saw that there was a slope which was very difficult and that could be dangerous for children. Then, the site of the building had to be relocated on the land. That took some time but, fortunately, we are coming to the end of it.

Mrs Radegonde-Haines: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister tell us if the sum of Rs5.3 m. is the total value of the project as budgeted or it includes extra cost between the start of the project and the projected extension and, if so, give details to how much was the project estimated and the cost increase?

Dr. Bunwaree: A sum of Rs6 m. was earmarked for this. In fact - after tendering procedure - it cost Rs5.2 m. and I must also say that this is only for the construction cost of the building, but the land is something different. It cost Rs1.2 m. and it was bought previous to this procedure for the building itself.

Mrs Radegonde-Haines: Mr Speaker, Sir, from my information the contractor has underpaid his employees and worked on many contracts. May the Minister check the information, please?

Dr. Bunwaree: This is something that happens; we have so many schools concerned.

Not only schools, but the contractors have other contracts at the same time. In fact, this contractor has done all his best, but he has not charged anything extra for the slight delay where he was responsible.