

## **STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS**

### **MITD - FACT FINDING COMMITTEE (09/04/13)**

**The Minister of Education and Human Resources (Dr. V. Bunwaree):** Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, with your permission, I wish to make a statement to inform the House of the main findings and recommendations of the Fact Finding Committee set up by Government under the chair of Mrs Veronique Kwok Yin Siong Yen, Presiding Magistrate, Intermediate Court (Criminal), to look into the case of the alleged abuse of a minor student, V.A., of the MITD, by an Instructor, N.C, then employed by the Institute.

As the House is aware, I made a statement on Tuesday 20 November 2012 about the setting up of a Fact Finding Committee, to be presided over by a Senior Magistrate, to look into this case of alleged abuse, which was the subject of a Private Notice Question by the hon. Leader of the Opposition on Saturday 17 November 2012.

The Fact Finding Committee, which was mandated to carry out an in-depth enquiry into the case of alleged abuse and to make recommendations on actions to be taken, started its assignment in January 2013, and has submitted its Report on Friday 29 March 2013.

In the context of its assignment, the Fact Finding Committee had, on 08 January 2013, issued a press communiqué to invite members of the public at large to provide information and/or to give evidence before the Committee.

The Fact Finding Committee heard 28 witnesses between 12 February and 15 March 2013, and examined documents and exhibits produced.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the main findings and recommendations of the Fact Finding Committee are as follows –

- (a) None of the 28 witnesses, who deponed during the hearing, came forward to say that they had seen Instructor N.C and Minor V.A together involved in an inappropriate behaviour.
- (b) No independent evidence has been adduced to support the allegation of abuse.

The then owner of the “*pensionat*” where the acts were alleged to have taken place, had declared that the “*auberge*” had already ceased operation a few years ago.

*(Interruptions)*

*Respectez, ena enn tifi ladan!*’

(c) In view of the Medico-legal Report submitted to the Fact-Finding Committee, it has been found by the Committee that the issue of sexual intercourse between Instructor N. C. and minor V. A. cannot stand. According to this Medico-legal Report, the examination of the minor on 25 February 2013 has revealed that there could not have been any sexual intercourse upon her in view of the intact genital conditions. The Fact-Finding Committee finds that this medical evidence is crucial to put an end to speculations.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Report further points out that failure to manage the problem efficiently by the authorities, led some of the persons who deponed before the Fact-Finding Committee and the public at large, in view of wide media coverage in the country, to believe that there was cover-up.

The Fact-Finding Committee made the following recommendations on actions to be taken as follows -

- (i) Police should act promptly upon receipt of a complaint, especially when a child is involved in order to reinforce public confidence.
- (ii) To protect children from being exposed to harm, staff of a school or a medical or a paramedical staff must notify the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare as per section 11 of the Child Protection Act.
- (iii) The Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare should communicate more with other institutions and improve its standard practice with regard to provision of information.
- (iv) In light of the information to be obtained from telecommunication service providers as per section 32 of the Information and Communication Technology Act 2001, the Police should pursue its enquiry and refer the matter to the Director of Public Prosecutions for any further action.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is being proposed to institute a high level Inter-Ministerial Committee to look into the implementations of the recommendations of the Fact-Finding Committee, including the need to revisit the law and current administrative procedures relating to such alleged cases including minors, procedures used by the Police, by the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare and the Child Development Unit.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

*(Interruptions)*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Silence, please!

*(Interruptions)*

Hon. Ms Deepalsing!

*(Interruptions)*

Order! Order, please! Hon. Ms Deepalsing! Please, remain silent now!

*(Interruptions)*

Hon. Minister, you have got a statement to make, please!

*(Interruptions)*

Order! Order! Order, please!

*(Interruptions)*

I said, Order!

*(Interruptions)*

Hon. Minister, go ahead with your statement! I want order in the House! Hon. Ms Deepalsing, stop! Enough now! Allow the hon. Minister to make her statement!

(4.34 p.m.)