RODRIGUES – CHILDREN'S COURT – ESTABLISHMENT

(No. B/423) Mr F. François (Second Member for Rodrigues) asked the Attorney-General whether, in regard to the Children's Court, he will –

(a) for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Master and Registrar, information as to the number of sessions thereof held in Rodrigues since its coming into operation to date, indicating the number of cases heard, and

(b) state if consideration will be given for the establishment thereof in Rodrigues.

The Minister of Housing and Lands (Mr S. Mohamed): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. Section 3(1) of the Children's Court Act provides for the establishment of the Children's Court and furthermore, Section 3(4) of the said Act makes provision for the Children's Court to sit in such place and at such time as the Chief Justice may direct.

With regard to part (a) of the question, I have been informed according to information obtained from the Master and Registrar that there has not been any sitting of the Children's Court in Rodrigues as the Children's Court does not sit in Rodrigues.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (b) of the question and in regard to the specialised nature and jurisdiction of the Children's Court, consideration may be given for the

establishment thereof in Rodrigues. Accordingly, Government will act in consultation with the honourable Chief Justice for any decision to be taken thereof.

Notwithstanding the establishment of the Children's Court in Rodrigues, I wish to inform the House that any matter involving a child is dealt with by the Court of Rodrigues as the Magistrate for Rodrigues shall, within Rodrigues, have the same powers and jurisdiction as conferred on every District Magistrate in Mauritius. And the District and Intermediate Court (Civil Jurisdiction) Act and The District and Intermediate Court (Criminal Jurisdiction) Act, the Criminal Procedure Act and the Court's Act shall extend to Rodrigues with sections 2 and 3 of Court Rodrigues Jurisdiction Act.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Minister, just for the record, you are the Acting Attorney General.

Mr Mohamed: The Acting Attorney General, yes.

The Deputy Speaker: Just for the record.

Mr François: If you will allow me, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Acting Attorney General aware that in the absence of Children's Court or even a probation home or hostels in Rodrigues, girls, minors with behavioural concerns have to be sent to Mauritius thus, certainly, aggravating their situation. Will he look into the matter with local stakeholders, with Rodrigues Court and others, for urgent remedial action thereof, maybe as a proposal for next budget itself?

Mr Mohamed: I have taken good note of the observations of the hon. Member. I shall apprise the substantive Minister of same and I shall also apprise other members of Government, relevant Ministries of his remarks and this will be looked into.

Mr François: Being given that, there is also no Bail and Remand Court during weekends in Rodrigues, will the hon. Acting Attorney General also look into the matter for remedial action thereof?

Mr Mohamed: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, you will realise, and the hon. Member as well, that this does not form part of the question as far as Bail and Remand Court is concerned. However, in a spirit of trying to be helpful obviously, we will look into all these issues since it is a relevant issue, I do agree – not to the question, but it is an important issue. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. Minister. The hon. First Member for Savanne and Black River.