The Minister of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun): Madam Speaker, with your permission, I proposed to make a statement on a matter raised by hon. Veda Baloomoody, on the 16 July 2019, regarding the recruitment and promotion exercise at the MIE and to set the record right.

The undertaking of the quality audit exercise of the public higher education institution is a regular and on-going exercise. The MIE, as the higher education institution, is accordingly subject to this periodic external audit that is carried out every five years. This is done by an independent team appointed by the Tertiary Education Commission and the team that carried out the exercise last year comprised three international assessors as well as two local ones.

Madam Speaker, the third cycle quality audit carried out in October 2018 underscored that there has been an overall significant progress in following up on the 2013 quality audit recommendations, particularly in areas where the Mauritius Institute of Education has institutional autonomy to address them. The quality audit 2018 made 13 recommendations which depict the MIE as an institution of quality in its areas of expertise. I am providing some of the recommendations as follows –

- Implementation of in-house communication channels;
- In-house capacity building sessions for academic staff;
- Well defined organisational structure;
- Development of level descriptors and professional standards for undergraduate and graduate programmes;
- A number of strong and efficient partnership with national and international institutions;
- Its maturity in relation to its recently gained degree awarding powers.

Madam Speaker, the audit report also makes a list of 28 recommendations. The hon. Member referred to one recommendation to further transparency, clarity and quick feedback for
all HR processors at the MIE. The recommendation of the external auditors, Madam Speaker, pertains to further transparency which clearly implies improvement to the process.

This is not worthy that the MIE has already taken the initiative to keep all staff informed through its website including matters related to promotion, staff development and recruitment. This information is available for internal circulation and accessible only to the staff.

In the light of any high educational institution, Madam Speaker, continuous improvement towards excellence remains a permanent goal and this is always an aspiration across all high education institutions globally. The reported paragraph 5.37, page 37, highlights that and I quote: “Staff are very positive about the working climate at the MIE” and there is a sense of community and commitment to the educational mission of the institution. Further, the staff turnover values are rather low.

Madam Speaker, with regard to the issue of recruitment and promotion, this exercise is carried out in line with sections 8 and 11 of the MIE Act and is a well-defined and structured process which I will, with your permission, elaborate –

- funded vacancies are approved by the Council;
- the posts are advertised;
- screening is carried out in line with the scheme of service to shortlist eligible candidates;
- eligible candidates are then called for interviews;
- interviews are carried out by an Appointment Committee, and
- all candidates are marked on the basis of specific criteria in line with the scheme of service.

The recommendations of the Appointment Committee are submitted to the Council for approval. Thereafter, the recommendations are sent to the Ministry for final approval in line with the MIE Act. This process is well entered in the organisational structure of the Mauritius Institute of Education and is followed to the letter.

Madam Speaker, reference was also made to a young lady, one Ms K. who allegedly is close to the Minister and who, according to the hon. Member, has been selected. I must report to
the House that there is no Ms K. who has been offered appointment as lecturer at the MIE and I repeat no one close to the Minister has been appointed.

Further, the hon. Member referred to a candidate who is a PHD who was not selected; I will not make any comment on the matter as the case is before the Supreme Court.

Madam Speaker, with regard to the appointment of one, Mr A. A., who, according to the hon. Member, is not qualified, I wish to point out that he does have all the necessary qualifications for the post. He is a holder of a Bachelor of Fine Arts, a postgraduate diploma in Brand Management, a postgraduate certificate in Education and MA in Educational Leadership and Management. This candidate, Madam Speaker, who had applied for the post of senior lecturer, was interviewed around July 2018 by an Appointment Committee on the basis of existing vacancies. 10 candidates were offered appointment on the 30 August 2018 and there was a reserve list of two candidates. Following the resignation of one senior lecturer, in January 2019, MIE offered appointment to the next candidate on the reserve list, that is, Mr A. A. on the 08 July 2019. Moreover, the second candidate on the reserve list is also being appointed following the retirement of another senior lecturer.

Madam Speaker, there is a single post of Registrar at the MIE as it is the case in other higher educational institutions. As for the position of Assistant Registrar, the MIE currently has only four in post and all four incumbents have well defined functional responsibilities. It is worth highlighting that there are four funded posts the Assistant Registrars at the UTM, at the University of Technology as well.

Madam Speaker, I wish to remind the House that the MIE is already a degree award institution as per MIE Act, which was amended, and subsequently proclaimed on the 16 April 2018. The MIE has already a long record of teaching and postgraduate masters and doctoral levels.

I thank you, Madam Speaker.

(4.24 p.m.)