

REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA



Ministry of Education, Science, Vocational Training and Early Education

Ministerial Statement to the National Assembly by Hon. Dr. John T. N. Phiri MP and Minister of Education, Science, Vocational Training and Early Education on the Zambian students who were Battered up in Russia as well as the closure of Chizongwe and Chiwala Technical Secondary Schools

27th March, 2012

Mr. Speaker

Following the point of order raised on 22nd March, 2012 by Honourable Member of Parliament for Chadiza Mr. Mbwe who asked me to clarify reports that some Zambian students studying in Russia were beaten up and also to explain the closure of Chizongwe Technical Secondary School in Chipata and Chiwala Technical Secondary School in Ndola, you directed Sir, that I make a Ministerial Statement on the three issues as raised by Hon. Mbewe.

Mr. Speaker

I rise to make a Ministerial Statement on the issues raised in that point of order. Allow me to first clarify the situation of the Zambian students reported to have been battered in Saint Petersburg, Russia.

Sir, first and foremost, it is important for me to give this August house background information on the Russian Government scholarships.

Mr. Speaker

Immediately after attaining independence, the Zambian Government and the then Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

(USSR) entered into Agreements which culminated into the signing of the first technical and cultural co-operation in 1966. This was aimed at assisting the new nation of Zambia which then had a limited pool of highly trained human resource to attain self sufficiency in the area of education and be able to administer the country well. Technical Co-operation has grown further even after the disintegration of the Soviet Union and has continued with the Russian Federation.

Mr. Speaker,

The scholarships offered to Zambia by the Russian Federation have assisted Zambia train her young citizens to attain university education at both undergraduate and post graduate levels in various important fields such as Architecture, Mining, Engineering, Pharmacy, and Medicine. The number of scholarships have increased gradually from about thirty (30) per year to the current one hundred (100) per year. The Ministry has just completed the selection of hundred (100) Zambians for the 2012 Scholarships.

Currently, there are four hundred and seventy five (475) students in the Russian Federation out of whom eighty seven (87) are studying in Saint Petersburg. In addition, there are also a number

of Zambian students on self sponsorship at various universities in the Russian Federation. We pay tribute to the Russian Federation for the support Zambia continues to receive in form of scholarships.

Mr. Speaker,

I wish now to inform this August house on the circumstances leading to the battering of Zambian students in Saint Petersburg.

On Sunday, 18th march, 2012 at about 03:00 hours three Zambian students, Christopher Bwanga, Chrispine Bwanga and Leonard Kabanda, were beaten up by suspected non-Russian students who were doing part time guard duties at the Pub.

The Zambian Embassy reported that these students had earlier hosted a party for one of their Russian girlfriends at their hostels and later decided to continue their drinking at a nearby Pub where they met their fate.

Two Zambian students namely William Mulenga and Nathan Kaumba managed to escape and ran away leaving their three colleagues behind.

In terms of the students' injuries, Christopher Bwanga, suffered a broken skull, Chrispin Bwanga had a broken jaw while Leonard Kabanda had a deep cut on his head.

His Excellency the Ambassador to Russia Mr. Fredrick Hapunda has informed us through a detailed report dated 24th March, 2012 that the hospital authority could not immediately operate on Christopher Bwanga who had a spot on the brain. The hospital felt that his condition needed to be monitored for the next seven days. The other Bwanga with a broken jaw was due to be operated on 26th March, 2012 and would be in hospital for a further seven days after the operation.

His Excellency the Ambassador further advised that the battering of the Zambian students had nothing to do with hate crimes. The bar is usually patronized by African students some of whom were present at the time and could not be attacked. The focus of the fight was on Chrispin Bwanga who had a confrontation with the two Russian girls in the bar. The other two joined in the fight to rescue him. Excessive beer drinking and relations with Russian girls by the Zambian students is a major source of concern. Sometimes the students tend to even fight among themselves

after taking intoxicating liquor. This is despite the orientation and security awareness given to them by the Mission officials.

In view of this, the reports by the Zambian Private Media that the Zambian students were beaten by Russians could be dismissed as the people involved were in fact not Russians or Skin Heads.

Mr. Speaker,

Allow me to turn your attention to the closure of Chizongwe Technical Secondary School in Chipata. I wish to inform the House that the Ministry of Education, Science, Vocational Training and Early Education was compelled to close this School on 20th March, 2012.

The decision to close the school has been arrived at following the riotous behavior that the school was involved in on 16th March, 2012.

The boys at Chizongwe went to Anoya Zulu Secondary School and caused excessive damage to the school infrastructure and seventeen (17) motor vehicles parked within the school grounds.

Mr. Speaker,

The riot started because one Chizongwe boy was allegedly assaulted by Anoya Zulu boys during a sports festival at which a

confrontation had erupted between the two Schools on 16th March, 2012. Chizongwe boys did not react immediately, instead they waited and marched from Chizongwe in the night around 23:00 to damage property at Anoya Zulu Secondary School. They broke window panes of classrooms, office block and the library. They also shuttered windscreens for 15 (fifteen) private motor vehicles and two GRZ vehicles.

Mr. Speaker,

School infrastructure is built and maintained at a very high cost. The Government cannot condone wanton destruction of such infrastructure. The total cost of damage at Anoya Zulu has been estimated at K121, 628,050.

It is in view of this that the Ministry will surcharge all pupils from Chizongwe for the damage caused on the property. Further to this action, the Ministry will take appropriate disciplinary action against perpetrators and such other pupils found wanting once investigations have been exhausted. The school will open three weeks earlier than the other schools to compensate for the lost time

Mr. Speaker,

It saddens me to note that there is lack of leadership in many schools. There is lack of supervision and guidance from our teachers. It is difficult to understand how the pupils at Chizongwe planned the riot, and without detection, marched eight (8) kilometers to Anoya Zulu Secondary School to carry out their evil act. Should investigations prove that the School management and/or their staff were negligent on their part, my Ministry will ensure that appropriate measures are taken to address the anomaly.

The 73 boys who were picked up by the Police and remanded in custody have since been released on Police bond.

Allow me Sir to pay tribute to the Provincial leadership (The Hon. Deputy Minister, Permanent Secretary and the Provincial Education Officer) for managing the situation exceptionally well. The lives of both Chizongwe and Anoya Zulu pupils were endangered.

Mr. Speaker

Let me now conclude my Ministerial Statement by explaining the Chiwala Secondary School closure. Chiwala pupils rioted on the 19th March, 2012.

The facts about these riots are that pupils rioted because there was no water supply for five (5) days. The school has its own water supply and the only water pump had broken down. There was also a blocked sewer which the sanitary officers found challenging to unblock.

The management talked to pupils who appeared calm as they awaited for two pumps which had been donated by First Quantum Mine. However, due to the delay in the delivery of the pumps the pupils lost patience and rioted. They smashed window panes to the Administration block, classrooms, workshop, sick bay, dining hall and dormitories. Assessment of damages is being done and the cost will be borne by the pupils.

Mr. Speaker,

This practice where pupils riot and damage property whenever aggrieved cannot be tolerated and learners are hereby strongly

advised to use the laid down procedures in presenting their grievances.

In order to address the challenges of riots in our secondary schools, the Ministry will intensify its drive in the formation of students' councils in all institutions. Councils will provide a vehicle through which learners can dialogue and resolve issues amicably with management and other parties. The students' councils are an initiative of Save the Children - Norway. Their pilot work in Southern Province schools suggests that it is a possible solution.

Mr. Speaker

I submit