

## Covid-19

### **ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS SCHOOLS - PRIMARY & SECONDARY - SYLLABI - PLANNING (23.11.2021)**

(No. B/1172) Mr D. Ramful (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology whether, in regard to the syllabi for all subjects for the current school year at primary and secondary levels, she will state if same will be completed as planned and, if not, indicate the measures that will be taken in relation thereto.

**The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun):** Mr Speaker, Sir, as the House is aware, in the context of COVID-19 pandemic, arrangements were made for the continuity in teaching and learning whilst respecting the sanitary norms and conditions to ensure the safety of learners.

As I had already explained in reply to PQ B/450 at the Sitting of Tuesday 18 May 2021, in view of the prevailing situation, discussions were held with stakeholders before the start of the first term on school resumption and coverage of the programme of study. It was decided to resume school, in a phased and staggered manner as per the plan announced by my Ministry, to enable face to face teaching and learning for the new academic year.

Consequently, from 05 July 2021 to 05 October 2021, lower primary pupils attended school on 2 days while upper primary pupils attended school on 3 days. Similarly, secondary students having taken national and international examinations attended school on 3 days while the remaining students attended school on 2 days.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as the House is also aware, as from Monday 18 October 2021, we switched to a new staggered mode of schooling with the lower grades (Grades 1 to 4 in the Primary and Grades 7 to 8 in the Secondary) attending school on 3 days, whereas the upper grades (Grades 5 and 6 in Primary and Grades 9 to 13 in the Secondary sector) attended school on 4 days.

Following the closure of schools on 10 November 2021, we have proceeded with online classes for students of Grades 10 to 13. The remaining grades are having

educational programmes on the 4 national television channels and the Student Support Programme daily, so as to ensure continuity of learning.

In addition, my Ministry has had discussions regarding curriculum reprioritisation for both the primary and secondary subsectors.

The framework for assessment with the prioritised curriculum contents has been finalised and Heads of Primary Schools have been informed accordingly.

As for the Secondary sector, the Mauritius Institute of Education (MIE) and the Mauritius Examination Syndicate (MES) have already worked out the de-loaded curriculum and a meeting with stakeholders has been scheduled for this week.

Arrangements had been made for the extension of the 2<sup>nd</sup> term by 2 weeks and it will now end on 17 December 2021. The 3<sup>rd</sup> term will be extended by 2 weeks as well and will end on 29 April 2022. The extension of the two terms, will allow teaching and learning to continue resulting in a broader curriculum coverage.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Educators are extending their full support for an optimum use of teaching time. However, as for the curriculum of SC and HSC, the Ministry of Education is closely monitoring the situation, and the MES is keeping the Cambridge Assessment International Education (CAIE) informed. The MES will reiterate a request for special consideration as was the case last year.

The current situation which has been internationally recognised as volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous is being closely monitored. Should the need arise, necessary adjustments will be made accordingly.

**Mr Ramful:** Thank you. The hon. Vice-Prime Minister stated that should the need arise, then other possibilities will be considered. Do I therefore understand that one of the possibilities would be to include a 4<sup>th</sup> semester retaining the option for SC and HSC students to take part in the exams in May, if they feel they are ready, and consider also returning back to the normal calendar year for next academic year?

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, it is a bit too early, too premature, for me to say what exactly will be the situation in a few weeks' time. But, what we are hoping is that by next year we may have full-fledged classes and students would not be penalised. We will try our very best to ensure that whatever decision is taken, it will be keeping the interest of the children foremost. So, that is what we intend to do. But, to be

able to say, right now, whether we are going to shift to the former system or not is not appropriate. I will wait and see. We are monitoring, as I have said, and we are going to see whether it will be needed for us to shift back or not. But, right now, I think it is in the interest of the students for them to continue to study, *et de rester appliqués, M. le président. Je ne voudrais pas à ce stade venir semer des doutes dans la tête des élèves. Je voudrais, par contre, leur demander de continuer à bosser et essayer de travailler, et on verra si jamais la situation s'améliore, on va trouver des moyens pour assurer qu'ils puissent couvrir le programme. Autrement, comme je vous ai dit, on prendra les mesures nécessaires.*

**Mr Speaker:** Next question!

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## **ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS COVID-19 - EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS (PRIVATE & PUBLIC) - POSITIVE CASES (23.11.2021)**

**(No. B/1163) Dr. M. Gungapersad (Second Member for Grand’Baie & Poudre d’Or)** asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology whether, in regard to the COVID-19 pandemic, she will state the number of staff members and students of private and public educational institutions who have been COVID-19 positive tested since the resumption of studies for the second semester, indicating the number thereof who –

- (a) contracted the Delta variant;
- (b) had to self-isolate, and
- (c) lost their life after contracting the virus.

**The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun):** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that since resumption of studies for the second semester on 13 September 2021 till closure of the school on 09 November 2021, 2407 students and 951 teaching and non-teaching staff were tested positive for COVID-19. All of them were asked to self-isolate and follow treatment as advised by the Ministry of Health and Wellness.

With regard to the information being sought in respect of the Delta variant, my Ministry does not have such information as it is the Ministry of Health and Wellness which conducts a genomic sequencing.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (c) of the question, the Ministry has learnt with much regret the passing away of four educators: three from the State sector and one from the Private sector, as well as one caretaker from a primary government school. I seize the opportunity to express my deepest sympathy to the bereaved families.

**Dr. Gungapersad:** Thank you, hon. Minister. I join you to present my condolences to these families. Now, hon. Minister, could we have saved these students

from contracting the virus or whatever unpleasant experiences we have had if we had closed the schools earlier?

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I have been answering questions in this Parliament a number of times, and we have been saying that all over the world we are going through really hard times, and UNESCO and UNICEF have been saying that we should try as far as possible not to close schools and to keep schools open. Yet, we have at heart the interest and the safety of our children and we have decided to close schools when we felt it is important to do so. We must not forget that children have to carry on with their studies, education continuity remains a major issue and, therefore, we took the decision when we felt it was the right time to take it.

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Lobine!

**Mr Lobine:** Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. May I ask the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, if vaccination of children under the age of 12 is being considered by Government?

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** At this point in time, Mr Speaker, Sir, considering the number of vaccines that we have on the island, we are planning to do the vaccination of students from Grade 7 onwards. But, right now, we have been doing it for students between 15 and 17 years of age. Once we have completed this batch, we can think of moving to the lower classes, but not earlier.

**Dr. Gungapersad:** Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. May I ask the hon. Minister, whether emotional support is being provided through educational psychologists to our kids whose families have come across tragedies in recent weeks?

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the National Education Counselling Services of the Ministry is in fact working closely with people, parents and students who have asked for support at the level of the Ministry.

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Members, I'll suspend the Sitting for one hour and a half.

*At 12.58 p.m., the Sitting was suspended.*

*On resuming at 2.32 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.*

**Mr Speaker:** Please, be seated. Hon. Dr. Gungapersad!

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### **MATTERS RAISED MITD TRAINEES – COVID-19 PROTOCOL (19.11.2021)**

**Mr N. Bodha (Second Member for Vacoas & Floreal):** Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. My request was addressed to the Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training but he has just left. It is with regard to trainees attending the MITD classes. I think there is a confusion as regards the protocol, as to whether the classes are online or whether the trainees have to attend those classes at the MITD. So, I am making a humble request to the Minister so that we can have a clear protocol as to whether the trainees should attend the courses or whether these courses are going to be provided online. Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Thank you. You shall take the request?

**The Deputy Prime Minister:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the point shall be conveyed to hon. Minister.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Aadil Ameer Meea!

(10.12 p.m.)

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**WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS  
COVID-19 PANDEMIC – EDUCATION SECTOR - ASSISES DE  
L'EDUCATION  
(16.11.2021)**

(No. B/1138) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (Fourth Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology whether, in regard to the education sector, she will state if she proposes to organise an *Assises de l'Education* in consultation with the different stakeholders thereof to look into all the problems facing same amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

*(Withdrawn)*

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**WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS  
COVID-19 – EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS (PUBLIC & PRIVATE)  
POSITIVE CASES  
(16.11.2021)**

**(No. B/1122) Dr M. Gungapersad (Second Member for Grand Baie & Poudre d'Or)** asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology whether, in regard to the COVID-19 pandemic, she will state the number of staff and students of private and public educational institutions who have been COVID-19 positive tested since the resumption of studies for second semester, indicating the number thereof who – (a) contracted the Delta variant;

(b) had to self-isolate, and

(c) lost their life after contracting the virus.

*(Withdrawn)*