

## SECONDARY SCHOOLS – ILLICIT SUBSTANCES ABUSE – ALLEGED CASES – JULY 2022-JULY 2024

*(No. B/630) 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 abuse of illicit substances involving students inside and outside school premises, she will state the reported number of alleged cases thereof in State and Private Secondary Schools, respectively, since July 2022 to date.*

**The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun):** Mr Speaker, Sir, I apologise for my voice. Please bear with me.

In my reply to the Parliamentary Question B/795 in July 2022, the House was informed that in accordance with the established protocol in schools, drug-related cases are categorised as criminal offenses and are reported to the Police.

I am informed that since July 2022, the number of reported cases of alleged abuse of illicit substances inside school premises stands at 18 and outside school premises, stands at 11.

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Dr. Gungapersad!

**Dr. Gungapersad:** Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. In her reply to my PQ dated 01 July 2022 – as mentioned by the hon. Minister – the hon. Minister had informed the House that there were 81 cases of drug abuse inside and 182 cases outside school premises from January 2015 to June 2022. And now in her reply, we have just heard the figures, 18 and 11. May I ask the hon. Minister as to why the Drug Use Prevention Rebound Programme has been completely phased out?

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the Drug Use Prevention Rebound Programme is starting as from now. We are presently training the teachers whereas the Get Connected Programme is on and has already touched more than 29,000 students and more than 1,051 teachers have been trained. The Get Connected Programme has not phased out. It is meant for Grade 8 students whereas the Rebound Programme is meant for Grade 10 students, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mr Speaker:** Alright. Hon. Dr. Gungapersad!

**Dr. Gungapersad:** Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. I went through the National Drug Control Master Plan 2019-2023, where there is only a brief section dealing with the Ministry of Education. May I ask the hon. Minister why it has not been deemed necessary in view of the alarming figures regarding illicit substances, to come with a master plan exclusively to address the problem of illicit substance abuse in our educational institutions to protect our children and all stakeholders?

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, there is a National Committee chaired by the Prime Minister with a number of other Ministries involved dealing with the whole issue of drug abuse not only in the community but also in our schools. The Prime Minister himself carried out several meetings with students in different State schools and at the university level and at the Polytechnics. Only recently, about a week back or two weeks back, there was a huge campaign 'Unir contre la drogue' at the Côte d'Or with hundreds of students present, Mr Speaker, Sir. We take the issue very seriously and it is being taken at the highest level, at the level of Government.

**Mr Speaker:** Last question, hon. Dr. Gungapersad!

**Dr. Gungapersad:** Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. May I ask the hon. Minister, as she has just mentioned the special programme in the curriculum called Get Connected is for Grade 8 and rebound for Grade 10 students, what about primary school students, hon. Minister?

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, work has started, primary school students are being sensitised. We have the Educational Psychologists, the Educational Social Workers also, addressing the issue at the level of primary schools.