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EIGHTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

TUESDAY 04 MARCH 2025

**PRIMARY & SECONDARY SCHOOLS – DRUGS REPORTED CASES – 2015-2024**

**(No. B/84) Mr C. Lukeeram (Third Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resource whether, in regard to drugs in primary and secondary schools, he will state the number of reported cases thereof between 2015 to 2024, indicating the preventive measures being envisaged.**

*Dr. Gungapersad:* Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. Third Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien for this Parliamentary Question which will allow me to delve, albeit briefly on the prevalence of drugs in our schools.

Today, unfortunately, even our schools have not been spared from the insidious tentacles of drug traffickers. These ruthless criminals are even mercilessly exploiting our school children and are using school premises to expand their business.

Drug-related cases are categorised as criminal cases and are reported to the Police as per the protocol established in schools. I am informed that between 2015 to 2024, the number of cases reported to my Ministry in regard to drug-related incidents is as follows –

- 1 in primary school,
- 71 in secondary schools.

Madam Speaker, these figures are not taken lightly by my Ministry. The fight against the scourge of drug abuse in schools holds a prominent place in my Ministry's agenda. That is why on 30

January 2025, I chaired a high level multisectoral meeting with several stakeholders to address issues related to substance abuse as well as growing indiscipline in schools.

The meeting comprised representatives of the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare, Ministry of Health and Wellness, the Police Force, ADSU, SEDEC, Managers of Private Secondary Schools, officers of the Rehabilitation Youth Centre, among others. The discussions revolved around the effective strategies to combat the proliferation of drugs within and around school premises.

Madam Speaker, I would like to inform the House about the preventive measures currently in place to combat drug abuse in our schools –

(a) Regular awareness talks are organised in schools to sensitise students and staff against the risks associated with drugs, especially synthetic drugs.

(b) There are two drug prevention and education programmes known as –

i. Rebound,

ii. Get Connected Programmes.

These two programmes are run with the collaboration of the United Nations Office on Drug and Crime as to deter the students from surrendering to the temptation of substance abuse.

(c) The National Education Counselling Service provides support to vulnerable students and their families so that they navigate the complex issue of substance abuse.

Apart from these preventive measures, Madam Speaker, my Ministry is fully committed to walk the talk. That is why we have solicited the support of other stakeholders to further enhance preventive measures. In concrete terms, we have initiated the following –

(i) Targeted crackdown operations with the help of the Police department, particularly ADSU and Brigade pour la protection de la famille.

(ii) Enhanced surveillance at school level by the school personnel, whom I would like to salute for the good job they are doing, and intelligence

led policing and community involvement by organising sensitisation campaigns and increasing Police patrol in high-risk areas.

(iii) We are also committed to reviewing and tightening relevant legislation to deter students from engaging in criminal activities, including drug use and trafficking both within and outside school premises.

(iv) I hereby solicit the collaboration of NGOs specialised in drug prevention, the support of student councils, the school prefects and PTAs in our quest to prevent substance abuse. I make an appeal to our grandparents to promote human and moral values in order to enhance ethical behaviour and standards among our children.

Madam Speaker, very often, students do not have the necessary skills to deal with those who influence them to take drugs. They do not know what to do and how to resist temptation. That is why, it is imperative to engage our students in meaningful dialogues and programmes which deal principally with prevention. The battle against drugs cannot be confined to the four walls of school premises only. It is a relentless battle that we must fight together as a nation. Every parent, teacher, police officer, citizen, and politician has a key role to play in breaking the stronghold of drug trafficking. We must all be vigilant, proactive and unwavering in our commitment to eradicating the scourge of drugs from our schools, our community and our nation.

Madam Speaker, in the Government Programme 2025-2029, on page 28, paragraph 56, we can read the following –

“The fight against drug trafficking and use will be one of the major priorities of Government. (...) Government will adopt bold measures to end the suffering of families and society in general, as a result of the significant increases in drug trafficking over the [past ten years] and the breakdown in law and order.”

Thank you.

*Madam Speaker:* Thank you, Minister! Yes, hon. First Member for La Caverne and Phoenix!