

SECONDARY

DRUGS PROBLEMS

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

DRUG PEDDLING FOR TRAFFICKERS – MINORS

(05.12.2023)

(No. B/1644) Dr. A. Boolell (First Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to drugs involving minors, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to –

- (a) if cases of sale of sweets laced with cannabis sold to school children have been reported, and
- (b) the number of children below the age of 14 years involved in drug peddling for traffickers, if any, and if so, indicate in each case, the actions taken in relation thereto.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, in regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that there have been no cases of selling sweets laced with cannabis to school children reported to the Police over the period January 2015 to 30 November 2023.

Regarding part (b) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that in May 2019, two children below the age of 14 years were suspected to be peddlers for traffickers as they were involved in a case of importation of dangerous drugs.

The minors, who were unaccompanied brothers, arrived in Mauritius from France on Saturday 11 May 2019. As certain irregularities were observed in the luggage of one of the minors, a search of his luggage was carried out by the Customs Officers in presence of the ADSU where 39 packets each wrapped with black cello tape were found in a toy carton box containing the following –

- (i) 2,310 Buprenorphine (Subutex) 8mg tablets in their original blistered packets;
- (ii) 128 Tramadol Biogaran of 37.5mg, 50mg and 100mg tablets in their original blistered packets;

- (iii) 54 tablets of Paracetamol Codeine;
- (iv) 14 Zopiclone Zentira 7.5 mg tablets in their original blistered packets;
- (v) 6 tablets of Sildenafil; (vi) 20 tablets of Doliprane, and (vii) 20 tablets of Paracetamol.

When the elder brother was questioned, he informed that the packets were given by his grandmother, residing in France. The packets were meant to be delivered to his mother in Mauritius. The two children were placed under the care and custody of the ADSU at the airport.

On the same day, the mother and the step brother of the children, who came to pick them up at SSR International Airport, were arrested. On Monday 13 May 2019, they were provisionally charged before the District Court of Grand Port for the following offences –

- (i) Drug Dealing with Aggravating Circumstances, Causing Dangerous Drug to be imported with an averment of trafficking in breach of sections 30(1)b(i), 41(3)(4) and 47(2)(5)(a) of the Dangerous Drugs Act, and
- (ii) Drug Dealing, Causing Dangerous Drugs to be Imported in breach of sections 30(1)(b)(i) and 47(5)(a) of the Dangerous Drugs Act.

On Tuesday 14 May 2019, the two minors were referred to the Child Development Unit of the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare for their protection and welfare. They were then placed in a shelter where they were provided with psychological support.

On 16 September 2021, the mother was released on bail whilst the step brother was bailed out on 19 January 2023.

On 16 June 2023, the enquiry into the above case was completed and needful is being done by the Police to refer it to the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions for advice.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the House would recall that on several occasions, I have enumerated the measures being taken by Police in consultation with the Ministry of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology and the Ministry of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation to protect our children against the drug scourge. Thank you.

Dr. Boolell: Thank you very much. This is a very serious matter, the gravity of which cannot be underestimated. Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister to see to it that there is a vast sensitisation campaign being waged to sensitise those youngsters at large and their parents equally?

The Prime Minister: I have already replied in previous PQs, Mr Speaker, Sir, and given a list of measures that have been taken, including sensitisation campaign that has been done at the level of the Ministry of Education, at the level of the Police, at the level of ADSU, and also by the Ministry of Youth Empowerment. Therefore, I do not want to repeat all these measures that have been put in place.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Bodha!

Mr Bodha: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. May I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether there were any cases of possession among children or cases of complicity such as playing the role of sentinel?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Member must come with a specific question because this question is about drug peddling for traffickers, and now he is asking for possession. This is a different matter. Of course, I will provide all the information with regard to possession.

Mr Speaker: Last supplementary question!

Dr. Gungapersad: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Recently, there was a case in a primary school in Grand Gaube, Jean Eon R.C.A., where two kids aged 11 were involved in a case of drug. May I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he may inform the House what has been the follow-up at the level of the Police?

The Prime Minister: Again, I am informed by the Police - this is not the case of Grand Gaube; I know about it, I have been given information about it - it is not a case which involves drug peddling for traffickers. I am restricting myself to the question which has been asked. Probably, if the hon. Member wants more details about it, another specific question must be asked.