

PRIMARY

SCHOOLS/TEACHERS

(15711/11) 07

PRIMARY SCHOOLS – SECURITY

(No. B/874) Mr V. Baloomoody (Third Member for Grand River North West and Port Louis West) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications whether, in regard to the primary schools, he will state if he will consider liaising with the Commissioner of Police to reinforce security thereat, following the recent dangerous and violent incident which took place in the presence of the students of a primary school in Vacoas.

Reply: I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that on 07 September 2011, at Vacoas Police station, a child attending a primary school in Vacoas, reported in the presence of his father, that during the second semester, on a date unknown to him, his teacher called him in front of the class and asked all other pupils to come forward to beat him.

I am informed that the Ministry of Education and Human Resources on being apprised of the case by the Police, carried out an internal inquiry into the matter which revealed that no such incident was reported to the Head Master of the primary school. The mother of the pupil subsequently applied for the transfer of the child to another school in the same catchment area and the request was acceded to by the Ministry of Education and Human Resources.

Police enquiry is ongoing.

It is normal practice for Police officers to be posted in the vicinity of the schools in the morning between 07.30 hours and 09.30 hours and in the afternoon between 14.30 hours and 16.30 hours to regulate traffic, ensure the safety and security of students and help children/parents/teachers crossing the road outside the school premises.

I am also informed that the Police and the Ministry of Education and Human Resources have taken a series of measures to address security in schools as follows –

- (i) regular sensitisation programme for pupils are carried out by the Police on crime prevention issues. Focused working sessions have also been held with Head of schools;
- (ii) the Ministry of Education and Human Resources has established close networking and collaboration with the Police and the *Brigade pour la Protection des Mineurs*. Such networking is being reinforced by exchange of information and communication;
- (iii) Heads of schools are called upon to have regular interactions with the Police in their region, and
- (iv) pupils are sensitised about the need to show disciplined behaviour.

R. SEWPAL GOVERNMENT SCHOOL - CHILD K. T. - CAUSTIC SODA - SWALLOWING (15/11/11)

(No. B/893) Mrs L. Ribot (Third Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the case of child K. T. who swallowed caustic soda at the R. Sewpal Government School, in Chemin Grenier, on 11 June 2011, he will state if an inquiry has been carried out into the circumstances thereof, and if so, the outcome thereof.

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have been informed of that unfortunate incident whereby a pupil named K.T is reported to have swallowed caustic soda at R. Sewpal Government School in Chemin Grenier on 11 June 2010.

An enquiry has been carried out into the circumstances which led to that incident at school.

However, I wish to inform the House that in relation to the above case, a plaint with summons has been lodged by the responsible party of the child and the case is coming for mention before the Supreme Court on 26 January 2012.

As the matter is *sub judice*, it is considered that it would not be proper for me to comment further on this case.

Mr Speaker: Before any Member or a Minister raises the issue of *sub judice*, they have to consult me. I agree with the hon. Minister that he has been given an answer, but the *sub judice* rule does not apply in this case. The *sub judice* rule applies in a civil matter when the pleadings are closed and are awaiting trial.

(Interruptions)

I know the Minister is not to be blamed because he has been given the answer. But next time, I would like that they let me know when they are going to raise the issue and the pleadings must be sent to my office for me to decide.

Dr. Bunwaree: This is what we ought to have done, but I was given that advice. I would plead with the hon. Member if we can meet and sit down and see what is the best way forward, because it is a pathetic case, in fact, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mrs Labelle: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. The hon. Minister has mentioned that an inquiry has been carried out. May we know from the hon. Minister whether he has been given the findings of the inquiry carried out by his Ministry?

Dr. Bunwaree: Yes, I have got the findings; I have seen the file. But, as I said, the case is on. I don't want to give information here that can play in one way or the other, but I think the best thing is what I have said.

Mr Bérenger: I am sure he has already taken corrective measures at that school and, in any other school, for that kind incident not to happen.

Dr. Bunwaree: Yes, certainly, Mr Speaker, Sir. There were some precautions taken already, but children are children and sometimes things happen.

Mrs Labelle: May I ask the hon. Minister whether, among the measures he has already taken, there is proper labeling of contents?

Dr. Bunwaree: Of what contents? This was *une fiole avec une solution*, which was found among the remains of what was being used or not used for the construction purposes. It so happened. This is not something that we find in all schools where we have to do labeling.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, excuse me to insist. Very often, these cleaning companies bring products in small portion and put it in any bottle. It can be a coke bottle; it can be in any bottle. This is the reason of my question: whether we are ensuring that products are being put in proper lodgment and that we label it properly. For example, for such product, according to the Health and Safety Regulations, it has to be put in something with a red cap and so on. Are these being followed?

Dr. Bunwaree: What is mentioned in the question is an isolated accident which took place where there was construction going on in the school. What the hon. Member is saying is about companies which take care of the cleaning. Of course, we have to look into it. We will take care of that.

Mrs Ribot: Mr Speaker, Sir, it seems that that child, however, exceptional be the case according to the Minister, is suffering from *une sévère érosion de la membrane muqueuse bucale et pour se nourrir maintenant il a besoin d'avoir recours à un tube*. I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether the Government is envisaging to pay for the full cost of the treatment of the child?

Dr. Bunwaree: The parents were given the authorisation to collect funds and so on. This is one thing...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Let the hon. Minister answer. He is answering. Don't become impatient!

Dr. Bunwaree: It is because I am not satisfied with that, this is why I said that other things have to be done. But what I want to say is that we can't enter into the details of the medical aspect of the case, because then other questions will have to be put. So, I prefer not to enter into the details. But being a medical practitioner

myself, I believe that there are things that should be done, in fact, for this family and this is the point I made at the beginning of the question.

Mrs Ribot: Mr Speaker, Sir, we are a bit shocked to hear that the family is raising funds.

(Interruptions)

Ce n'est pas fini, M. le président! Il a y un enfant qui souffre et on demande à la famille de soulever des fonds. By the time, the outcome of the inquiry comes out, I think the Government should foot the bill.

Dr. Bunwaree: The case is in court. Now if the hon. Member says that Government should foot the Bill, she understands that Government is already...

(Interruptions)

... providing all the necessary for the health problem. This is why I am saying that we can solve this matter entirely, but I can't do it alone. This is why things have to be done – *les bons offices doivent être utilisés.*

Mr Bodha: In view of the fact that funds are required for the treatment of the child and there is a case in court as regards to damages, can the hon. Minister consider the possibility of an out of court settlement where the Government will take into consideration the expenses for the treatment of that child?

Dr. Bunwaree: This is, in fact, what I meant, Mr Speaker, Sir.