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Chambers

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27th September, 2024

DPP'S CHAMBERS PRESS RELEASE – COMMUNITY OUTREACH MEETINGS TO REGION 9

Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP), Mrs. Shalimar Ali-Hack, SC and a team from the DPP's Office on Wednesday 25th September, 2024, concluded a 3-day community outreach to Aishalton South Rupununi, Kumu and St. Ignatius Villages in Central Lethem, Region 9.

The DPP's Team was joined in Lethem by Resident Magistrate Omadatt Chandan and Divisional Police Commander Raphael Rose and Police Ranks from the Lethem Police Station.

The objective of the meetings was to raise awareness of the functions of the DPP's Office within the Criminal Justice System and to educate the local communities on the law pertaining to criminal offences. In particular, the DPP spoke to the scourge of Sexual and Domestic Violence Offences, Teenage Pregnancy, Consumption of Alcohol and Smoking of Marijuana and other illicit substances, Suicide, Child Neglect and Truancy and Cybercrime.

The team met and held meetings with students and teachers of the Aishalton Secondary School, the Kumu Primary School and the St. Ignatius Secondary School. During these meetings, DPP Ali-Hack, SC, stressed on the seriousness and prevalence of Sexual Offences, use of alcohol, smoking of marijuana and cocaine by school children in Region 9.

In particular, the DPP comments were based on the number of police files that continue to be forwarded to her office for Sexual Offences from Region 9. In 2023, the DPP's Office received 49 such files and so far for 2024, it has received 21 police files for Sexual Offences.

The DPP encouraged the students to speak out against all forms of abuse and for them to report these issues to their parents, teachers and the police.

Mrs. Ali-Hack further emphasized the need for them to stay focused on their education with the aim of developing themselves. She beseeched them to study for their examinations and get good grades so that they can become the person they want to be in any profession. The DPP pleaded with the students not to become involved in sexual relations at this time of their young lives and to occupy their spare time mean fully with their studies.

While Divisional Police Commander Rose and Magistrate Chandan also reiterated the importance of education.

Commander Rose told them that “when you the students are educated, then we will have less crimes, it all starts with you.” Magistrate Chandan also instilled that education can “take you anywhere, to be anyone you want to be, but it starts right here in the class room, it’s all about chartering your own course.”

There were vibrant questioning and answering sessions at the schools where students spoke to various social ills that affect them. At one venue, the topics of sexual relations between teenagers and teenage pregnancy were brought to the fore. Students questioned whether they can be charged for being in sexual relations with their fellow students to which the DPP explained that they can be charged in accordance with the Juvenile Justice Act and taken before the Juvenile Court.

During other meetings with parents and residents of the three communities, concerns were raised about the lack of social and welfare services in their respective communities to assist in addressing the issues that continue to plague them.