

Prime Minister introduces the National Agency for Drug Control Bill

In a powerful and unwavering address to the National Assembly, Prime Minister Dr. Navin Ramgoolam presented the second reading of the *National Agency for Drug Control Bill* (No. VI of 2025), a landmark proposal that seeks to overhaul Mauritius' national strategy in combating drug trafficking, abuse, and their devastating consequences.

Positioned as a defining moment in the country's fight against a deepening crisis, the Prime Minister described the Bill as a "*national commitment*" - a holistic vision to rescue the nation from what he called "a lost and wasted decade" under previous administrations.

Dr. Ramgoolam launched a scathing critique of past governments, particularly the MSM-led regime, accusing them of complicity, negligence, and enabling drug barons to infiltrate state institutions. Referencing infamous incidents - from the 1985 "*Amsterdam boys*" scandal to the 2017 record heroin seizure involving politically connected individuals - the Prime Minister laid out a disturbing narrative of corruption, inaction, and systemic decay.

He recounted findings from the 2018 Lam Shang Leen Commission of Inquiry on Drug Trafficking, which revealed high-level political links to drug traffickers and unethical conduct among legal professionals and ministers. "*This is their legacy*," he declared, referring to the widespread addiction among youth and erosion of public trust.

The Birth of the National Agency for Drug Control (NADC)

At the heart of the Bill is the establishment of the National Agency for Drug Control (NADC) - a centralized, empowered body tasked with coordinating Mauritius' national drug response across prevention, enforcement, treatment, rehabilitation, and harm reduction.

Key provisions of the Bill include:

- Creation of a National Drug Control Commission, chaired by the Prime Minister himself.
- Establishment of dedicated divisions within the NADC, including Policy Research, Treatment and Rehabilitation, Prevention and Public Awareness, and a HIV and AIDS Coordination Division.
- Legal protections for whistle-blowers and individuals acting in good faith.
- Introduction of a real-time monitoring system and a 24/7 hotline to enhance responsiveness and data-driven policy.

The Prime Minister underscored a critical shift in approach: distinguishing between traffickers and victims of drug abuse. Citing the late Sir Maurice Rault, he called addiction a "*modern form of slavery*", advocating for compassion, treatment, and social reintegration for addicts.

Drawing on recent UN and U.S. reports, Dr. Ramgoolam highlighted the alarming rise in the use of synthetic drugs - with Mauritius identified as a leading user of synthetic cannabinoids in Africa. He criticized the previous government's failure to leverage its membership in the U.S.-led Global Coalition Against Synthetic Drugs, despite clear opportunities for technical and financial assistance.

The Prime Minister announced the setup of a National Maritime Information Sharing Centre, with Indian government support, to bolster surveillance and intercept drug shipments via sea — the main entry point of narcotics into Mauritius. A new coastal surveillance system, funded by Japan, and renewed coordination with Seychelles and Madagascar were also outlined.

Dr. Ramgoolam emphasized the importance of national unity in this effort. *“Il faut une prise de conscience collective,”* he said, calling on every Mauritian to take ownership of the fight. The NADC is designed to unify ministries, NGOs, and civil society under one coordinated strategy.

He also announced the enlistment of experts such as former Minister Sam Lauthan and Dr. Faizal Sulliman - a Johns Hopkins graduate with expertise in addiction medicine - to ensure an evidence-based approach grounded in global best practices.

“This is not just a Bill,” said Dr. Ramgoolam. *“It is a moral duty, a national necessity”*. With an impassioned plea, he urged all members of Parliament to rise above political divisions and support the legislation.

“We must not allow our children to be lost to predators and parasites who seek to profit from this criminal trade. In this battle, each one of us is on the front line”.

The *National Agency for Drug Control Bill 2025* marks a transformative chapter in Mauritius’ effort to build a safer, healthier, and drug-free society - a vision Prime Minister Ramgoolam insists is no longer optional, but urgent and overdue.