



REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

# Debates of the House of Representatives

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1st Session – 11th Parliament (Rep.) – Volume 3 – Number 19

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**OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)**

THE HONOURABLE BRIDGID ANNISETTE-GEORGE  
SPEAKER

THE HONOURABLE ESMOND FORDE  
DEPUTY SPEAKER

**Friday 19th February, 2016**

**CLERK OF THE HOUSE: JACQUI SAMPSON-MEIGUEL**

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## CONTENTS

	Page
LEAVE OF ABSENCE ... ..	479
PAPERS LAID ... ..	479
URGENT QUESTIONS	
ArcelorMittal Point Lisas Limited (Assistance for Laid-off Workers) ... ..	480
Cocoa and Coffee Farmers (Compensation For) ... ..	481
WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS	
Rental Payment for Properties (Details of) ... ..	482
... ..	528
ISIS Recruitment (Details of) ... ..	482
... ..	530
ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS	
Princes Town Presbyterian Primary School (Commencement of) ... ..	483
Recent Job Losses (Proposed Plan For) ... ..	483
Total Budget Allocation Financial Year 2016 (Details of) ... ..	483
International Accreditation Agency (Accreditation) ... ..	484
Barataria Community Centre (Opening Date of) ... ..	485
Soca Monarch/Chutney Soca Monarch (Funding For) ... ..	485
Caesaran Sections (Percentage Performed or Directly Supervised) ... ..	486
DEFINITE URGENT MATTERS	
(LEAVE)	
Foreign Exchange (Restrictive Access to) [ <i>Mr. D. Lee</i> ] ... ..	487



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES***Friday, February 19, 2016*

The House met at 1.30 p.m.

**PRAYERS**[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]**LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Members, Mrs. Christine Newallo-Hosein, MP, Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla, has asked to be excused from today's sitting of the House. The leave which the Member seeks is granted.

**PAPERS LAID**

1. Nomination of His Excellency, the President, in respect of the nomination of Mr. Dinanath Ramkissoon for appointment as a Member of the Police Service Commission. [*The Minister of Finance (Hon. Colm Imbert)*]
2. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the Financial Statements of the Arima Borough Corporation for the year ended September 30, 2005. [*Hon. Colm Imbert*]
3. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the Financial Statements of the Arima Borough Corporation for the year ended September 30, 2006. [*Hon. C. Imbert*]
4. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the Financial Statements of the Arima Borough Corporation for the year ended September 30, 2007. [*Hon. C. Imbert*]
5. Annual Report of the Financial Intelligence Unit for the period October 01, 2014 to September 30, 2015. [*Hon. C. Imbert*]
6. Value Added Tax (Amendment to Schedule 2) Order, 2016. [*Hon. C. Imbert*]

*Papers 2 to 4 to be referred to the Public Accounts Committee.*

7. Annual Administrative Report of the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs for the fiscal year 2012. [*The Minister of Energy and Energy Industries (Hon. Nicole Olivierre)*]
8. Annual Report of the Environmental Management Authority for the year 2006. [*Hon. C. Imbert*]

9. Annual Report of the Environmental Management Authority for the year 2007. [*Hon. C. Imbert*]
10. Annual Report of the Environmental Management Authority for the year 2008. [*Hon. C. Imbert*]
11. Annual Report of the Environmental Management Authority for the year 2009. [*Hon. C. Imbert*]
12. Annual Report of the Environmental Management Authority for the year 2010. [*Hon. C. Imbert*]
13. Annual Report of the Environmental Management Authority for the year 2011. [*Hon. C. Imbert*]
14. Annual Report of the Environmental Management Authority for the year 2012. [*Hon. C. Imbert*]

#### URGENT QUESTIONS

##### **ArcelorMittal Point Lisas Limited (Assistance for Laid-off Workers)**

**Mr. Rudranath Indarsingh** (*Couva South*): Thank you very much Madam Speaker. To the Minister of Labour and Small Enterprise Development:

In light of the lay-off of 498 workers laid off by ArcelorMittal Point Lisas Limited, could the Minister state whether any assistance will be provided by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago?

**The Minister of Labour and Small Enterprise Development (Sen. The Hon. Jennifer Baptiste-Primus)**: Madam Speaker, in response to the hon. Member's question, I would like to inform this House that the Government remains very, very concerned regarding the lay-off of these 498 permanent workers employed by ArcelorMittal for the period February 03 to March 13, this period representing the second period of a lay-off. The Government, through the Minister of Labour and Small Enterprise Development, and the Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development, called in both parties on Carnival Friday, which was Friday, February 05, meeting the employer at 10.00a.m and the union at 1.30p.m to bring both sides to some point of agreement.

The Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development was able to influence the employer that workers should receive remuneration during this period and, therefore, the employer placed a 40 per cent of basic wage for a 40-hour workweek on the table with access up to 10 days' vacation leave.

That position was conveyed to the union. The union required time, of course, to speak to its members, and under the aegis of the Minister of Labour and Small Enterprise Development, a second conciliatory meeting was held on Ash Wednesday. The Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development was able to influence the employer to push the envelope a little further to 50 per cent of basic salary, along with the access to 10 days' vacation leave. Unfortunately, both sides have not yet arrived at an agreement and they are still meeting. As a matter of fact, under—

**Madam Speaker:** Minister, your speaking time has expired. The Member for Mayaro.

#### **Cocoa and Coffee Farmers (Compensation For)**

**Mr. Rushton Paray (Mayaro):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. To the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries:

Could the Minister state whether cocoa and coffee farmers will be compensated for their losses due to spoilage of crops as a result of the absence of a Cocoa and Coffee Board? Thank you.

**The Minister of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries (Sen. The Hon. Clarence Rambharat):** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, by way of background: In 2014, our friends, who are now on the other side, took the unprecedented decision to come to this Parliament and eliminate, by way of repeal of legislation, the decades-old mechanism for the State's involvement in the buying, selling and export of cocoa and coffee beans. That was by Act No. 7 of 2014, and at section 7, in one line, the legislation which had underpinned this sector was removed without anything being put in place.

Madam Speaker, the Cocoa Development Company was incorporated and a board was appointed. Nothing further happened. After 18 months, that board put absolutely nothing in place to deal with the buying, selling and export of cocoa. Since 2013, tons of cocoa beans have remained in warehouses across the country, unsold.

In this fiscal year, this Government has allocated \$1.7 million to deal with financial liabilities arising from the closure of the Cocoa and Coffee Industry Board as a result of Act No. 7 of 2014. This Government has allocated \$14 million to the Cocoa Development Company to fund its work in developing the cocoa sector. And very recently, this Government appointed a new board of the Cocoa Development Company to clean up the mess left by the transition of the cocoa sector after the closure of the Cocoa and Coffee Industry Board.

In closing, Madam Speaker, at this time, this Ministry has received no claim for compensation from cocoa or coffee farmers for losses. [*Desk thumping*]

**WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS**

**Rental Payment for Properties  
(Details of)**

**6. Mr. Rodney Charles** (*Naparima*) asked the hon. Minister of Public Administration:

Could the Minister indicate:

- a) the total estimated sum to be paid by the Government in financial year 2016 for rental payments in respect of properties used for accommodation by Government Ministries and Statutory Bodies;
- b) whether the Government intends to review this significant expenditure;
- c) in the case of the ten most costly rentals:
  1. the names of the landlords and
  2. the estimated rent payable for the financial year 2016;
- d) whether the Government intends to establish a policy on lease/purchase options?

**ISIS Recruitment  
(Details of)**

**18. Mrs. Vidia Guyadeen-Gopeesingh** (*Oropouche West*) asked the hon. Minister of National Security:

Could the Minister indicate:

- a) the number of citizens currently in Syria or Iraq engaging in ISIS activities;
- b) what efforts are being made to prevent young persons from joining such terrorists groups;
- c) what efforts are being made to counter ISIS recruitment of citizens and the total funds allocated to these efforts; and
- d) the number of staff recruited for this project and the criteria for such recruitment?

*Vide end of sitting for written answers.*



**ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS**

**The Minister of Finance (Hon. Colm Imbert):** Madam Speaker, the Government is in a position to answer Questions Nos. 19, 39, 40, 41, 45, and we will ask a deferral of the other two questions on the Order Paper. We are also prepared to circulate the written answers to the two questions on the Order Paper, thereby responding to almost 90 per cent of the questions on the Order Paper. [*Desk thumping*]

*The following question(s) stood on the Order Paper:*

**Princes Town Presbyterian Primary School  
(Commencement of)**

- 25.** CTD Could the Minister of Education indicate when the construction of the Princes Town Presbyterian Primary School No. 1 will commence? [*Mr. B. Padarath*]

**Recent Job Losses  
(Proposed Plans For)**

- 44.** Could the Minister of Labour and Small Enterprise Development state the proposed plans to address the recent job losses in the construction, energy and other sectors? [*Mrs. R. Ramdial*]

*Questions, by leave, deferred.*

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Oropouche West.

**Total Budget Allocation Financial Year 2016  
(Details of)**

- 19. Mrs. Vidia Gayadeen-Gopeesingh** (*Oropouche West*) asked the hon. Minister of National Security:

Could the Minister state:

- a) the total budget allocation for the financial year 2016 for acquisition and maintenance of patrol boats;
- b) the total budget allocation for the financial year 2016 for:
  - i. the Boy Scouts Association of Trinidad and Tobago;
  - ii. the Girl Guides Association of Trinidad and Tobago;
  - iii. Police youth clubs;
  - iv. anti-gang initiatives; and

- v. preventative measures targeting children at risk?

**The Minister of National Security (Hon. Maj. Gen. Edmund Dillon):** Madam Speaker, hon. Members, the Ministry of National Security has projected an expenditure of a sum of \$466 million in fiscal 2016 for the acquisition and maintenance of patrol vessels. This total incorporates the following: \$273,300,000 for coastal vessels and interceptors procured from the Damen Shipyard, Holland. This sum will be obtained from loan resources being sourced from the ING bank of the Netherlands; \$158,700,000 for one multi-purpose vessel. Thirty per cent has already been paid by the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago; 70 per cent of the remaining cost of this vessel is to be obtained from a loan from the China Exim Bank; \$34 million for fuel, lubricants and general maintenance of the patrol boats. This will be covered by the loan resources being sourced from the ING Bank of the Netherlands.

Part (b): Neither the Boy Scouts Association of Trinidad and Tobago nor the Girl Guides Association of Trinidad and Tobago is under the purview of the Ministry of National Security. These associations are non-governmental organizations which receive Government subventions from the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs. The subventions allocated for the Girl Guides Association and Scout Association are \$84,000 and \$126,000 respectively.

The Trinidad and Tobago Police Service has advised that there is no specific budgetary allocations for anti-gang initiatives as these initiatives form part of the normal operations of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, with the accompanying cost being absorbed into the organization's overall operations allocation.

With respect to the youth clubs, the police youth club got an allocation of \$5 million; the fire service youth club, no budgetary allocation; prison youth club, no budgetary allocations; cadet force, \$6,559,650; the National Mentorship Programme, \$3,500,000. [*Desk thumping*]

### **International Accreditation Agency**

#### **(Accreditation)**

**39. Dr. Fuad Khan** (*Barataria/San Juan*) asked the hon. Minister of Health:

Could the Minister indicate whether the following hospitals are accredited by an international accreditation agency:

- a) Port of Spain General Hospital;
- b) San Fernando General Hospital; and
- c) Point Fortin General Hospital?

**The Minister of Health (Hon. Terrence Deyalsingh):** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and the answer is: none of the above-named hospitals have ever been Accredited by an international accreditation agency.

**Dr. Khan:** Supplemental. Could the Minister indicate whether the Couva Children's Hospital was built to international accreditation standards?

**Hon. T. Deyalsingh:** Please ask a supplemental question. That was not part of the question.

**Hon. Member:** No, no. You do not know.

**Hon. T. Deyalsingh:** You should know. You should know.

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Barataria/San Juan.

**Barataria Community Centre  
(Opening Date of)**

**40. Dr. Fuad Khan (Barataria/San Juan)** asked the hon. Minister of Community Development, Culture and the Arts:

Could the Minister provide the opening date for the Barataria Community Centre?

**The Minister of Community Development, Culture and the Arts (Hon. Dr. Nyan Gadsby-Dolly):** Thank you. The Barataria Community Centre will be opened by the end of February 2016.

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Barataria/San Juan.

**Soca Monarch/Chutney Soca Monarch  
(Funding For)**

**41. Dr. Fuad Khan (Barataria/San Juan)** asked the hon. Minister of Community Development, Culture and the Arts:

Could the Minister state whether the Government will be providing funding for the Soca Monarch and Chutney Soca Monarch competitions?

**The Minister of Community Development, Culture and the Arts (Hon. Dr. Nyan Gadsby-Dolly):** By Cabinet Minute No. 450 of December 17, 2015, Government approved funding to support Carnival 2016 activities of the Caribbean Prestige Foundation for the Performing Arts Soca Monarch, and

*Oral Answers to Questions*  
[HON. DR. N. GADSBY-DOLLY]

*Friday, February 19, 2016*

Southex Event Management Company Limited Chutney Soca Monarch, in the total sum of \$6,400,000—total to Soca Monarch being \$3.45 million; and Chutney Soca Monarch, \$2.95 million.

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Barataria San/Juan, a supplemental question?

**Dr. Khan:** No, no. Thank you.

**1.45 p.m.**

**Caesarean Sections  
(Percentage Performed or Directly Supervised)**

**45. Dr. Lackram Bodoë** (*Fyzabad*) asked the hon. Minister of Health:

Using statistics from 2015, can the Minister state what percentage of caesarean sections were performed or directly supervised by a Specialist Medical Officer/Consultant at public hospitals?

**The Minister of Health (Hon. Terrence Deyalsingh):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. The total number of caesarean sections performed during the year 2015 at public hospitals was 3,550. Based on the information received from the Regional Health Authorities, an average of 38 per cent of these caesarean sections were performed or directly supervised by a special medical officer or consultant.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Supplemental.

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Fyzabad.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Thank you. In view of the recent maternal deaths associated with caesarean section deliveries, is the hon. Minister satisfied that this percentage represents an appropriate and adequate expert care for women undergoing caesarean sections at our nation's hospitals? If he is not, what are his plans to correct this situation?

**Hon. T. Deyalsingh:** Thank you. No one can be happy with these figures and these are figures for 2015. What I can tell you, since assuming office these figures have gone up considerably from 38 per cent in 2015 to almost 50 per cent now under this administration. What we plan to do—first of all, our Prime Minister, the hon. Dr. Keith Rowley, took the unprecedented step of appointing Dr. Winston Welch and a committee to look into the operations of the RHAs, and one of the terms of reference is the whole issue of the relationship between consultants and the employer and how they work in the private sector. This, I believe, when that report comes in would have a significant impact on those figures, and I assure you we are doing all that we can to correct all the misgivings of the past.

Thank you very much. [*Desk thumping*]

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Supplemental.

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Caroni East.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Hon. Minister, would you be able to tell how many of the caesarean sections were elective as opposed to emergency?

**Hon. T. Deyalsingh:** That is another question. The details of that I do not have now. It was not asked. Thank you.

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Barataria/San Juan.

**Dr. Khan:** Minister of Health, I just want to ask you, when do you expect to get the report of the Winston Welch committee?

**Hon. T. Deyalsingh:** As we announced, when the committee was first unveiled to the public, that report is hopefully due by April of 2016. So we expect to have it within the next two months, Sir.

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Barataria/San Juan.

**Dr. Khan:** Thank you. We have been waiting for the Children's Life Fund audit report since December 21<sup>st</sup>. Would the Winston Welch report take that same amount of time and that delay?

**Madam Speaker:** Member, I will not allow that as a supplemental question.

**DEFINITE URGENT MATTERS  
(LEAVE)**

**Foreign Exchange  
(Restrictive Access of)**

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

**Mr. David Lee (*Pointe-a-Pierre*):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. In accordance with Standing Order 17 of the House of Representatives I hereby seek your leave to move the adjournment of the House at today's—Friday, February 19, 2016—sitting of the House, for the purpose of discussing a definite matter of urgent public importance, namely the crippling effects of the restrictive access to foreign exchange by businesses and individuals.

The matter is definite because it pertains to the current situation faced by businesses and individuals who are constrained by the minimal and nominal amounts of foreign exchange made available to them for purchase from commercial banks in Trinidad and Tobago.

*Definite Urgent Matters*  
[MR. LEE]

*Friday, February 19, 2016*

It is urgent because if this disastrous situation is not rectified as soon as possible businesses and individuals will not be able to honour the contractual and financial obligations to foreign suppliers. It is of public importance because if this situation is allowed to continue it will lead to the collapse of businesses, the loss of jobs, the destabilization of the economy, a loss of confidence in Trinidad and Tobago by foreign investors and suppliers in an unprecedented plethora of social problems. [*Desk thumping*]

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Members, I am not satisfied that this matter qualifies under this Standing Order. I advise that the Member pursue this matter under Standing Order 16. The Member for Caroni East. [*Desk thumping*]

**Zika Virus**  
**(Health and Welfare of the Country)**

**Dr. Tim Gopeesingh (Caroni East):** Madam Speaker, in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order 17, I hereby seek leave to move the adjournment of this House for the purpose of raising the following definite matter of urgent public importance at today's sitting of the House and, that is, the confirmed threat to the health and welfare of the country by the Zika virus.

The matter is definite because the hon. Minister of Health has declared the virus as a national public health emergency. The World Health Organization (WHO) has also declared the virus a global health emergency, and this was emphasized in a statement by the hon. Prime Minister at the 27th Inter-Sessional Meeting of the Caricom Heads of Government recently in Belize.

The matter is urgent because of the real and dreadful potential to affect the lives of all citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, and requires the need for a collective and dedicated approach by all to the prevention and eradication of this debilitating and dangerous virus and development of protocols as indicated by the hon. Prime Minister at the Inter-Sessional Meeting in Belize recently.

The matter is of public importance because of the widespread fear now being experienced, Madam Speaker, particularly by approximately 17,000 pregnant patients at risk this year, and the critical implications for the health of our national population of becoming affected by the Zika virus.

Thank you.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Members, I have considered the Motion of the Member for Caroni East and I am satisfied that this Motion qualifies to be raised as a [*Desk thumping*] definite matter of urgent public importance. Is this agreed by the honourable House? Could all those who are agreed please stand?

[*Members of the Opposition Bench stand*]

**Madam Speaker:** Okay. Therefore, in accordance with Standing Order 17(4), the debate of this Motion will stand over until 6.00 p.m. [*Desk thumping*]

**FAMILY AND CHILDREN DIVISION BILL, 2016**

Bill to make jurisdiction for all family matters and children matters exercisable in a division of the High Court to be called the Family and Children Division and to make provision for matters connected therewith [*The Attorney General*]; read the first time.

**PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION  
(NOMINATION OF MR. DINANATH RAMKISSOON)**

**Madam Speaker:** Leader of the House.

**The Minister of Finance (Hon. Colm Imbert):** Madam Speaker, I beg to move the following Motion standing in my name:

*Whereas* section 122(3) of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, Chap. 1:01 (“the Act”) provides that the President shall, after consultation with the Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition nominate persons, who are qualified and experienced in the disciplines of law, finance, sociology or management, to be appointed as members of the Police Service Commission;

*And Whereas* section 122(4) of the Act provides that the President shall issue a Notification in respect of each person nominated for appointment under subsection (3) and the Notification shall be subject to affirmative resolution of the House of Representatives;

*And Whereas* the President has nominated Mr. Dinanath Ramkissoon to be appointed as a member of the Police Service Commission;

*And Whereas* the President has on the 28th day of January, 2016 made a Notification in respect of the nomination;

*And Whereas* it is expedient to approve the Notification:

*Be It Resolved* that the Notification of the nomination of Mr. Dinanath Ramkissoon be approved.

Madam Speaker, in bringing this Motion to the House of Representatives in an expeditious manner, the Government has underscored the importance that it

*PSC (Nomination of Mr. Ramkissoon)*  
[HON. C. IMBERT]

*Friday, February 19, 2016*

places on ensuring that the Police Service Commission is fully constituted to effectively discharge its critical role in the management of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, foremost of which would be the appointment of a permanent Police Commissioner and Deputy Police Commissioner. And, Madam Speaker, we expect that if this Motion is successful—and we expect it will be; we do not expect any objections from hon. Members opposite—that the Police Service Commission, being further strengthened by the addition of an additional member, will move with dispatch to the task of the appointment of a permanent Police Commissioner.

The role of the Police Service Commission is critical to our national security effort. The socio-economic conditions within which the police service operates have changed over the years, with new patterns of rural and urban development and settlement, social media and other demographic factors affecting how the police perform their duties. Modern policing requires an independent police force that is held accountable, not just by the Government, but by a wider network of agencies and organizations working on behalf of the interest of the people. It calls for strategies to address public safety and requires a comprehensive approach including problem-oriented and intelligence-led and data-driven policing.

In this context, an effective Police Service Commission is expected to be an innovative and proactive oversight body that sets, facilitates and monitors governance and accountability, and professional standards by assessing, reviewing and evaluating operations, plans and strategies. Given this role, one of the primary functions, as I have said before, is to appoint a Commissioner of Police. We intend that the duly constituted body will be given all assistance that it requires to allow a qualified Police Commissioner to be appointed in the shortest possible time. The current situation, where you have had an acting Police Commissioner with, I believe it is seven acting stints of six months since 2012, has gone on for far too long and must be rectified.

The mandate of the commission—just let me inform hon. Members—under section 123 (1d) of the Constitution is to monitor the efficiency and effectiveness of the Commissioner and the Deputy Commissioner of Police. Some of the commission's other functions include appointment and removal of the Commissioner of Police and Deputy of Commissioner of Police; the exercise of disciplinary action in respect to those officers; the hearing and determination of appeals of police officers or claims made by police officers against decisions of the Commissioner of Police on promotions and discipline; and, as I indicated, the monitoring of the effectiveness of the Commissioner.



In moving forward, the commission must continue to focus on strengthening its capacity in terms of evaluation of the effectiveness of the police service, human resources, public communication, organizational reform and recommendations for legislative reform.

Let us move straight into the nominee, Madam Speaker. I do not think we need to detain this House with any lengthy debate today. So let us move straight in to the qualifications of the nominee, Mr. Ramkissoon. The CV or the résumé of Mr. Dinanath Ramkissoon should have been circulated to Members and his qualifications are:

- Master of Laws in Public Law at the University of the West Indies;
- Legal Education Certificate from the Sir Hugh Wooding Law School;
- Bachelor of Laws from the University of London; and
- A Diploma in the Science of Fingerprint from the Joint Services Staff College, among other qualifications.

He has a Police Training College Diploma as well and a number of certificates with respect to participation in workshops and conferences on anti-money laundering, investigation of corruption, procurement and so on.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Define his work experience.

**Hon. C. Imbert:** His work experience? He is currently the Vice-President of Legal Services at the National Infrastructure Development Company, having joined that organization in 2008 as the senior legal officer.

**2.00 p.m.**

Prior to that, prior to joining NIDCO, his duties were as a state prosecutor in the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions. Prior to that, he was a police officer. He attained the rank of Detective Inspector, Senior Fingerprint Expert and prior to that, he was a part-time lecturer—or during that period, a part-time lecturer at the Cipriani College of Labour and Co-operative Studies lecturing in criminal law, civil law, environmental planning, legislation and criminology. And he has as his references: Justice Henderson, Judge of the International Criminal Court and Mr. Alkins, retired Registrar of the Office of the Integrity Commission. I am also advised that he has done work for the Integrity Commission. He was Counsel, investigation and compliance, working with the Integrity Commission between the years 2004 and 2008.

*PSC (Nomination of Mr. Ramkissoon)*  
[HON. C. IMBERT]

*Friday, February 19, 2016*

On the face of it, and not having any adverse reports about Mr. Ramkissoon, I beg to move. [*Desk thumping*]

*Question proposed.*

**Dr. Roodal Moonilal** (*Oropouche East*): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to contribute on this Motion presented by the Leader of the House. Madam Speaker, before us is a Motion that seeks to affirm the notification of His Excellency the President of the appointment of a citizen, Mr. Dinanath Ramkissoon, to the Police Service Commission. We have heard the presentation from the Member for Diego Martin North/East who presented the CV in the context of the appointment to the Police Service Commission and, in a brief address, spoke to the roles and responsibilities of the Police Service Commission, and the critical importance that the commission plays, particularly at a time like this, challenged as we are by a spate of crime, murders and serious offences being committed on a daily basis.

Madam Speaker, it is noteworthy that by virtue of Act No. 6 of 2006 that amended our Constitution and our legal arrangements to ensure that persons proposed to the Police Service Commission come before the Parliament, at least their résumé. It was a very landmark achievement by 2006 coming out of a bipartisan approach of the then Opposition, United National Congress and the incumbent Government of the former Member for San Fernando East, Mr. Patrick Manning.

It was meant to ensure that, in this one critical commission because I believe this is the only commission where the members are brought to the Parliament for public scrutiny in this manner. It was because of the critical need to ensure that we move the envelope yet again towards transparency, openness and public scrutiny of persons who are appointed to such commissions. It was an attempt that started, I imagine, since 1962. My friend from Moruga/Tableland who regaled us on a previous occasion of his knowledge of economic history, regrettably believing himself to be a stepchild of the Ministry, [*Laughter*] but he understands economic history well and understands the history of the country.

And it came out of our independent experience where the early founding fathers of the independence movement sought to protect citizens from the political directorate by virtue of creating the independent service commissions. And that had moved and moved and moved until a major goalpost came in 2006 that allowed for something like the American, akin to the American congressional

system, where a person can be scrutinized by elected officials, and this is done in the Lower House by the elected Members of Parliament. Maybe in another time in the future, the persons themselves may have to present themselves to the House or a committee of the House and be interviewed in another forum, but, as it is now, those persons come here by virtue of the CV and we are allowed to scrutinize. We may look at their CV, ensure that it is consistent with the intent of the legislation and to ensure that those persons are fit and proper.

I want to begin by congratulating, first, Mr. Ramkissoon on accepting the offer to serve in this manner and by subjecting himself to public scrutiny. There was a time in this country when persons would be serving on service commissions—Teaching Service Commission and other commissions—and the general public would not even know who is on a commission. You would not know who because, in time gone by, it would be persons of a certain class, in some cases, you believe a certain clique, a certain club, and by virtue of connections to a political elite, they will serve on commissions and so on. That we sought to change over the last few decades to ensure that persons now come before us and the national community can scrutinize such persons for the appointments and that is something that we are very mindful of.

Madam Speaker, the mover of the Motion spoke about the importance of modern policing, developing independent institutions and new strategies to combat criminal activity. And in doing so, the Police Service Commission serves a very, very critical function and we cannot overstate the function of the Police Service Commission, and if by virtue of the delivery of the mover, he dealt with one matter, and I think concentrated on one matter as well, which is the critical matter of the appointment of the Commissioner of Police. It is a very critical matter, the appointment of the Commissioner Police, and within recent time, that matter has been in the public domain by virtue of other parliamentary sittings and other initiatives of the Government and the Government of the past as well, I dare say.

It is not the only function of the commission to deal with the matter of appointment of a Commissioner of Police. Indeed, the Police Service Commission, by virtue of section 123 as well, undertakes critical functions dealing with the police service and it involves a critical function as an appeal tribunal as well, an appellant body, to listen to appeals of police officers against decisions made by the Commissioner of Police pursuant to his role, expanded role by the amendments that were brought and the new laws including the Police Service Act that was brought in 2006.

Madam Speaker, a Government cannot speak about strengthening institutions, independent constitutional institutions in one breath and do not seek to approve and support persons who are well-equipped and fit to occupy those positions and it is, of course, for that purpose, we are here. The Minister indicated to us clearly the qualifications of the nominee before us. It is something that we have all had an opportunity to take a look at and I will get to that in a few minutes.

But Madam Speaker, it is also important to note that the Police Service Commission has the responsibility, apart from appointing persons to hold or act in the Office of Commissioner of Police, by virtue of section 123 and by virtue of the amendment Act of 2006, to hear and determine appeals by police officers against decisions made by the Commissioner in respect of promotions and discipline; to exercise disciplinary control over the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner of Police, including removal of those officers from office. But the Police Service Commission also plays the role of monitoring the efficiency and effectiveness of the performance of the Commissioner and the Deputy Commissioner of Police in the discharge of their function. They also prepare an annual performance appraisal report in such a form as may be prescribed by the commission, respecting and for the information of the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner.

Madam Speaker, this is a very, very critical function that the Police Service Commission plays. Over the past years, they have also had, as the Member indicated, the opportunity to involve themselves in the public discourse on crime and have hosted stakeholder consultations. There was one, I believe, in 2012, 2013 there, which ended with something called the Hilton consensus which dealt with the reform of the Police Service Commission. The critical role of this commission revolves around not just the appointment of the Commissioner of Police. I would have thought that the Minister presenting this would have indicated to the House, not only the Government's commitment to the independent institution of the Police Service Commission, but what do they foresee the role of the independent Police Service Commission, what role that commission would play in the future.

Now, if we are to look at the role and responsibility of the commission, it must synchronize with the qualifications of the nominee, because if you have a role and responsibility of a task, you must mesh the task with the qualifications of persons who are going to occupy the office to fulfil that task.

The Government, at some time today or in the very near future, ought to tell the country as well what would be the relationship between another policy proposals this Government made in the national budget. What is the relationship between the proposed police management agency and the Police Service Commission? Because the law, as currently structured, allows the Police Service Commission to monitor the performance of the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner and those persons can bring their reports—and I will speak to that reporting process in a bit—to the commission as far as they manage the human and the financial resources that are available to the commission.

So that the Police Service Commission monitors the effectiveness of the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner; and the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner, in the law, have now the authority to manage their budget, to manage their human resources, but what happens when a police management agency evolves? Since the police management agency, so far, is not connected to the Police Service Commission, does the police management agency supersede the management of the Commissioner of Police and, if so, will the police management agency report to the Police Service Commission? What is the relationship? And those are critical issues that the Government ought to address its mind to, if not today, certainly in the near future, because there are implications for management, for authority and for control.

If it is that the Government believes that the Police Service Commission has not played a satisfactory role in calling the Commissioner of Police and the Deputy Commissioner to account for their management, because, Madam Speaker, I want to submit that the very policy of introducing a police management agency supposes that the Government has no confidence in the Police Service Commission. They have no confidence in the Police Service Commission and, on a previous occasion, issues were raised concerning the changing role of the Police Service Commission in the appointment of the Commissioner of Police where it is now left to an independent firm—and I imagine that process has been triggered quite recently by the Ministry of National Security—to undertake the recruitment process, the assessment process and pass on by way of almost a messenger—the Police Service Commission becomes a messenger to the President to appoint a Police Commissioner. So we have already seen this Government watering down the role of the Police Service Commission and today, the Government should tell us what is the role of the police management agency vis-à-vis the Police Service Commission and are they committed to a truly, independent Police Service Commission?

**2.15 p.m.**

That is a fundamental issue that they ought to deal with because, Madam Speaker, there is a disquiet in the society today about this creeping incidence of the Government seeking to control constitutionally independent institutions. Colleagues have raised the issue which I will just raise in passing, because it is not the subject of this debate. I hope we can debate on another occasion the role of the Government and the Executive in taking away the authority of the Parliament, in its own construction of its own parliamentary building.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Member, I would just like to remind you of Standing Order 48(1). I have allowed you a certain measure of leeway, but please confine yourself to the subject matter of this debate.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. So, as I said, I just mentioned that in passing because I am dealing with the independent institution of the Police Service Commission, not the Red House and the hijacking of the Red House project.

The Police Service Commission has the functions in law to deal with appeals from the police officers. We are informed that at this time there may be over 200, possibly 250 appeals before the Police Service Commission by police officers. In one year, in 2013, I believe, three appeals were dealt with. The commission has been crying out for help, had been crying out for help for resources.

I am very happy that when we were in office, it was under the Government of the People's Partnership that the Police Service Commission got help by the relocation of their offices to Tunapuna. For many years they had been seeking assistance for accommodation. It became so bad, Madam Speaker, that employees of the Police Service Commission did not want to work in Port of Spain, in fear of crime. We had to take urgent action to relocate their offices to Tunapuna, and since then they have been crying out for other facilities and other processes.

Madam Speaker, I am informed that the current arrangement where the Police Service Commission is dependent on the Director of Personnel Administration for assistance with human resources, finance, minor goods and services and so on is unworkable. I am told that for six months they could not even move the newspapers arriving from the Port of Spain office to the office in Tunapuna; for six months. Simple things like getting chairs and furniture and so on, takes a long time. Now, I am not blaming anybody or any particular agency, these are systems that evolve over time and in the public service, they take a lot of time.

Over the years I have known of problems in the Immigration Division where we had to move overnight with another agency just to help, because the established processes take a long time. It may well be that the time has come for the Government to consider the recommendations that have emerged over the years in terms of providing the Police Service Commission with greater control over resources and over its budget, so that the Police Service Commission has been asking.

Madam Speaker, I would make reference because we have already in the Parliament, two reports of the Joint Select Committee appointed to enquire into and report on Municipal Corporations and Service Commissions with the exception of the Judicial and Legal Service Commission. We have reports, the fourth report and the eighth report. The fourth report dated—published by the Parliament, of course—of 2012 and the eighth report of 2013, where it is very clear that the Police Service Commission came to the Parliament, to the Joint Select Committee, made their case and recommendations. The issues were heard, recommendations were made.

Madam Speaker, the appointment of Mr. Ramkissoon who is qualified, as the Member indicated, in matters of law, but also qualified in matters of management, not just law, contract negotiations as we see here, dealing with human resource and industrial relations matters as well, and would have come through the rank of the police service, would have some knowledge of the operations of the police service, but would also have knowledge of the operation of oversight organizations, organizations that exercise oversight. And the recommendations included, Madam Speaker, emanating from the work of Parliament itself.

So we do not have to go and reinvent the wheel. You do not have to go and have a next consultation on the Police Service Commission and how to make it more effective. We have reports at the Parliament. The Government has to indicate a commitment to implementing the recommendations, which they themselves signed off to, because as you know, the working of these committees suggests that we have had Members of the Government and Opposition and the Independent Benches. In fact, there are a couple Members of this committee who are today in the House at this moment, and they would be aware of those reports, where recommendations were made for the commission to have its own separate vote of funds in the national budget, and its own dedicated accounting officers, because the arrangements with the Director of Personnel Administration are efficient and outmoded.

The recommendations, and I want to come to a key recommendation, involve a matter that someone like Mr. Ramkissoon here would be very much alive to, would very much have to work with, and this has to do, Madam Speaker, where the committee recommends provisions be made for the Appeals Tribunal to function on a full-time basis. That is a critical recommendation because it is known that when appeals are made and they take ages to be determined, it is to the disadvantage of the police officers; it is to the disadvantage of the society.

Officers who ought to be fighting crime and working in the service, they are demotivated, because their matters are pending years, their morale is low. In some cases, but not in all, they may be off duty, on full-pay leave pending determination of their appeals. If the system is not strengthened to ensure that appeals are heard—and we started this work. It is not to say we did not know of it. We know of it. We started the work by providing professional accommodation, adequate accommodation and facilities for the Police Service Commission by 2013, but more is required to be done, including legislative change to ensure that the Appeals Tribunal functions effectively, by providing support infrastructure to assist the tribunal to fulfil its mandate. If this is not done we can appoint Mr. Ramkissoon today, and we could appoint persons eminently qualified like Mr. Ramkissoon and others, but if we do not provide the infrastructure for them to operate, do not bring the legislative reform needed and the policy change required from Cabinet, then the commission would continue and would be struggling to deal with appeals, to deal with a simple—with the one area of appeals.

I am very happy when I read the CV of Mr. Ramkissoon. We were very happy to look at the breadth of experience and the professional training and experience. There was a time, Madam Speaker, when a matter concerning a nominee came before this House and we spent an entire night, I believe, debating “and” or “or”, and we went down the wire with great discourse on interpretation as to the—what “qualified and experience” as opposed to “qualified or experience” in law, finance and management and so on. Thankfully, I do not think we will go down that road today, given the clarity with which the Minister presented his Motion.

But, Madam Speaker, a critical function of this commission is also to engage the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner, to engage them in a scientific method not by “vaps” and not by calling in people and by asking them any old question “and ting”, but on a scientific—using, you know, scientific methodologies to engage them on performance appraisal, measuring their performance. It is to that issue that I speak now, because if we do not have persons with the necessary qualifications to undertake such a task, then the performance appraisal function can go down the drain.



Mr. Ramkissoon has that type of training as well, apart from the legal training and so on. He has that training as well in overseeing high-level officials in the public service, in monitoring their performance and so on, and in auditing their work. Because the Police Service Commission is really a commission that is there in a way to audit the work of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, and the Government now is preoccupied and fascinated by auditing. Everywhere you go now they are auditing everything and my friend from Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West could tell us if he joins the debate. I know he has a big interest in auditing government work, the functions and so on. Tell us about that.

The Police Service Commission is in effect auditing the work of the Commissioner of Police, and they are an independent institution. They are not a private institution that you take an audit—you are auditing at a private institution, and Government Ministers are regularly visiting private accounting firms to influence in one way or another, politically influence the conduct of audits, Madam Speaker, that is taking place today. This is an independent institution, the Police Service Commission. A Government Minister cannot walk in the Police Service Commission and seek to bully or influence the conduct of audits on agencies of the Government. And if any Minister is doing that, they ought to stop; cease and desist, because they will pollute auditing reports coming from private auditing firms.

So, Madam Speaker, and this is why the Police Service Commission is so important—*[Interruption and laughter]* and the Attorney General may wish to speak to that, because he is aware of the problem, and he does nothing about it.

As I am on the issue of the audit of the police service, over the years, the Police Service Commission has been proactive. I recall a couple years ago the Police Service Commission called in a former Deputy Commissioner, and actually sought to question the Commissioner on the allegation of the appointment of a flying squad or something like that. Today, the Police Service Commission may want to call in the Commissioner of Police to ask him what is the policy on police officers hosting TV programmes; on whether these TV programmes are sponsored by the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service—*[Interruption]* and you see this will upset them; I know this because they know they are interfering in the conduct of independent audits.

Madam Speaker, the Police Service Commission may wish to engage the Commissioner of Police on the role and function of police officers undertaking multimedia and media presentations, whether they represent the police service or

*PSC (Nomination of Mr. Ramkissoon)*  
[DR. MOONILAL]

*Friday, February 19, 2016*

they do not, that was a matter that arose a couple years ago. That has serious consequences for discipline and for the conduct of police duties.

When you look at the résumé of the gentleman before us as well, you are also seeing qualifications, certification, and participation in programmes and so on—that deals with the overseeing important institutions. I think he came from NIDCO, if I am not mistaken, yes, but also with experience at the Integrity Commission and investigations dealing with allegations of corruption and so on, and these are matters in the police service that they are dealing with now. So it is timely that someone like this can find himself on the Police Service Commission.

Madam Speaker, the Police Service Commission may also want to discuss with the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner, the introduction of more stringent, more regular psychological evaluation of police officers. This is a country today where criminals are killing innocent citizens, where policemen are killing themselves. It may require greater emphasis on the psychological evaluation and regular evaluation of police officers in a manner that is very systematic, calculated, without any need to disgrace or shame police officers and so on. The Police Service Commission ought to take a look at this.

Someone like Mr. Ramkissoon with his qualifications and also the experience, I think he joined the police service in 1975, yes. In 1975, he joined the police service, Madam Speaker, 1975 to the year 2000 he would have a good knowledge of the police service, the functioning of the police officers, the stress that they subject themselves to on duty and off duty, and whether or not that type of stress over a period of time can cause a level of depression/distress that leads them to commit criminal actions themselves, or to endanger the lives of ordinary citizens, and their own lives. And the Police Service Commission is well poised to undertake that matter.

### **2.30 p.m.**

Madam Speaker, the issue also arose over the past with the Police Service Commission having responsibility to appoint the Commissioner of Police. That has been brought to the Parliament earlier. I do not want to spend too much time on that either, but to indicate that it is not a straightforward matter at this time, although the Government may wish to suggest that it is a straightforward matter now, because the role of the Police Service Commission has been undermined. It has been undermined in that process, and we are at a very important critical juncture in the evolution of the Police Service Commission, and it is an issue that Mr. Ramkissoon and other commissioners may well want to consider at this time.

There is a feeling that the Police Service Commission will not be strengthened, but will be weakened at a time like this in terms of their capacity to undertake their function. You could have a sense of it, Madam Speaker, because in the recommendations coming out of the Eighth Report of the Joint Select Committee it was very instructive that the Police Service Commission made recommendations to the Parliament which the Parliament adopted. So these are recommendations which the Parliament agreed to, but they have to be translated into policy and law that the Police Service Commission—*[Interruption]*

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Member, your speaking time has expired. You are entitled to a 15-minute extension. Do you intend to avail yourself of that?

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** Yes, Ma'am.

**Madam Speaker:** Leave is granted.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** Thank you very much. *[Desk thumping]* Madam Speaker—*[Interruption]*

**Mr. Indarsingh:** I want to know who is that Minister walking in in audits and so.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** We will come to that. We will come to that. Madam Speaker, so that the Police Service Commission in undertaking its duties needs to be cognizant as well of that changing political environment. It needs to be cognizant of the fact that they may be understaffed, under-resourced, given a changing political climate, the coming of the Police Management Agency and the watering-down of their role as it relates to the appointment of a Commissioner of Police. And now, Madam Speaker, I took note of the statements of the Minister when he moved the Motion and spoke of the qualifications—speaking of the mandate and professional standards required and so on—that it struck us that it may also be an attempt by the Government to delay the implementation of recommendations in the Joint Select Committee reports.

They have recommended here, which the Parliament accepted, that the law be changed to allow the Police Service Commission greater teeth to mandate and to ensure that the Commissioner of Police and Deputy Commissioner, as the case may be, present in a timely manner their reports and other documents requested by the Police Service Commission. As it is now, the Police Service Commission can request documents, can request reports. The police will tell the commission, “Yes, we are working on that, but of course we are very busy, we are doing other things.” Months can pass., possibly years, and the Police Service Commission will not get the documents available.

*PSC (Nomination of Mr. Ramkissoon)*  
[DR. MOONILAL]

*Friday, February 19, 2016*

In fact, at the last call, they said they were at 60 per cent completed on the evaluation of the Commissioner of Police. They are waiting on documents. And the Parliament agreed that the law and policy be so changed to allow, Madam Speaker, the Police Service Commission to mandate and order the Commissioner of Police and Deputy Commissioner to ensure that they supply information in a timely manner to the Police Service Commission. Because, Madam Speaker, what is the sense you have all these commissions, independent commissions and so on and on paper they are there, but you do not give them the resources, you do not change the law, reform the law to ensure that they have greater teeth to do their work and then you try to invent new institutions like the Police Management Agency, new institutions to manage the police service while the existing institutions are understaffed, under-resourced and, clearly, without personnel. In fact that is another matter that they raised in this same report.

Madam Speaker, I do not have the time to read in detail the findings of the Joint Select Committee, but to indicate that the Police Service Commission requested and the Joint Select Committee accepted that the strength of the Police Service Commission, the human resources, the professional resources be increased to allow them to do their job, whether it is those persons on the tribunal for the appeals or simple office staff, and those things take ages working with the current arrangements with the Director of Personnel Administration.

They recommended here that another method be found to ensure that the commission gets effective support in human resources and physical resources since the current arrangement with the Director of Personnel Administration is not effective. That is the recommendation. And the Government ought to come to the Parliament and indicate to us today whether they believe that they will bring a legislative agenda.

And, Madam Speaker, I wanted to note in passing that over the year's matters like these came at the end of a parliamentary sitting where we would have debated three or four Government Bills and, at the end, we passed this. Today, this is the only thing on the agenda, the only thing that we came here for because the Government themselves having complained for five years, today they have no legislative agenda. They started on the wrong foot when the Attorney General announced the budget date and the Minister of Finance spoke to the legislative agenda. They started on the wrong foot. They have no legislative agenda that is why we are here today at 1.30 to deal with a matter that really ought to come at the end. [*Desk thumping*] They have none! [*Desk thumping*] Their agenda is to

blame the last Government, prosecute and conduct politically polluted audits where Ministers are polluting that process. That is the agenda.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Who are those Ministers?

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** That is their agenda. Madam Speaker, coming to the résumé of the nominee, because the Minister anticipated that the Opposition will support. I do not know where he got that from, but looking at the qualifications of the person in fact, the only thing they do not have here, I think is his date of birth [*Laughter*] but he must be a seasoned and experienced man to join the police service in 1975.

So, looking at the CV here as presented, the person is qualified to serve on this commission, has the requisite qualification. The only thing that we are in fear of is that a person like this making the sacrifice for public service, putting his name up today—[*Crosstalk*] I think he is from the glorious constituency of where? Oropouche East? Well, everybody claiming now, but I think he is a prominent citizen who has really dedicated himself to public service as well and subjected himself to this scrutiny. One wants to be careful that persons when they subject themselves to this scrutiny do not go on to commissions, and then the very Executive that proposed them undermines the commission and undermines their roles, because that has been a problem in this country where we elevate prominent citizens to commissions and so on, and then you undermine the commission. They leave in disgust, in disgrace. They believe that their work is undermined and that ought not to happen at the Police Service Commission given where we are.

So, Madam Speaker, the Government of the day has certain responsibilities before it if they are serious. This as you know, and as I know, is not a crime debate. This is not a time for us to talk about the crime debate. I am sure the Minister of National Security can do that at another time. Needless to say, I think the murder rate is, how much? Sixty-eight for this year. [*Crosstalk*] While I am talking somebody was shot.

So, Madam Speaker, it is a critical problem facing this country today. It is a critical problem. Over the years while we were happy that serious crime decreased by almost 50 per cent over the period 2010 to 2015, the murder rate was going down, the murder rate was edging down.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Member, may I again remind you of the Standing Order with respect to relevance. You bring it back to the matter before us.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. So, as I said, crime is the issue. The Police Service Commission, by virtue of its role and

*PSC (Nomination of Mr. Ramkissoon)*  
[DR. MOONILAL]

*Friday, February 19, 2016*

responsibilities, is a crime-fighting commission. It has to be. The Police Service Commission is a crime-fighting commission. If they collapse and do not do their job effectively, it will not help in the fight against crime. It will not help.

So, Madam Speaker, I understand clearly this issue, and the Government ought to make a commitment to increase the resources, properly staffed, provide the independence necessary for the Police Service Commission in terms of its own budget, its own capacity to command the human resources, goods and services. It is not a joke when you hear that a Police Service Commission says it takes six months before a newspaper could change—the *Express*, *Guardian* and *Newsday* come from one address, to change it to a next one, it takes six months to do that. And these are the issues that the Government ought to be dealing with. These are the issues, not threatening people, not blaming others. They are there now. They cried out to be there, they are there. They are in charge now. They are in charge now, so do not blame the former administration.

When we were there we gave some resources, we gave office accommodation, we moved to ensure, and we brought nominees to the House and ensured they were affirmed and so on. The task is now to the Government to ensure that this commission works, because as we have stated it is critical. It cannot be that 247 appeals are before a commission and they deal with three per year. How many years it would take to deal with all of that? And your human resources lay idle. Surely, a matter like that deserves emphasis, policy and legal intervention by the Government.

Today, this was an opportune moment—I am hoping that the moment is not lost—for the Government to make such a commitment, which certainly the Member for Diego Martin North/East deputizing, I imagine, to do this job, reading from a prepared text which someone gave him a few minutes before, would not have been in a position to make those commitments, but if the debate—if the Minister of National Security, the Attorney General, the Deputy Attorney General—I almost “go to say” the junior Minister, but they do not like hearing that—the Minister in the Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs, the hon. Minister, if the Minister in the Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs would join the debate, they would tell us what are their proposals as far as it relates to the Police Service Commission. It cannot be that the Government just come today and say, “Look, this is the name, the fella is well qualified, we support this, let us move.” It cannot be that. That is really to take a superficial approach to a public debate on the Police Service Commission.

When the laws were drafted, the intent was not just to bring a CV and say, “This is a good CV, let us deal with it” and pass it that way. It was really to engage in a debate on the citizen, the nominee, and the functions and challenges of such a critical Police Service Commission. So that I am very disappointed that the Minister in introducing this chose to take that really contractionary, short and brief approach without—[*Crosstalk*—he was short on substance, but he did not surprise us. It is sad that the Government did not elaborate and, particularly, with this troubling issue of this Police Management Agency which they shoot off policy on the hoof during the budget, and to this day nobody knows anything about the legal and policy framework for the implementation of a Police Management Agency. Nobody! I imagine the Government Members do not know either of how are they going to deal with this matter.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Is the Member for Toco/Sangre Grande aware?

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** And they have introduced the issue of the municipal police as well to expand that. All their proposals they introduced must be functioning within the context of an overall perspective including the Police Service Commission. They made a lot of noise over the years about certain members on the commission. Today, hearing the Minister, I imagine they are in support of this nominee and that is fine, but supporting a nominee and a good nominee to the Police Service Commission will not change anything unless you do not go the full distance in providing support for such an independent commission. And unless—and I warn again, in closing, Madam Speaker, I warn again against this tendency to undermine constitutionally independent institutions and their work in favour of private institutions, because they have privatized the recruitment of a Commissioner of Police. They have privatized auditing. The Auditor General is there to conduct audits on government offices and government Ministries—they pass that clean—and the Police Service Commission is here to audit the police service, the management and function and the use of resources.

**2.45p.m.**

We are very happy. When we were in office the police never had it so good. [*Desk thumping*] They never had it so good. A fleet of cars, bulletproof vests, you call, you name it, everything. [*Interruption*]

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Largest wage increase.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** Largest wage increase, \$1,000 a month, and so on—never had it so good, you know, never had it so good. They speak about low detection rate, and what are you doing about it? You are detecting little or nothing, because

*PSC (Nomination of Mr. Ramkissoon)*  
[DR. MOONILAL]

*Friday, February 19, 2016*

you speak about that over the years but there are no plans. It is a Government, as far as the Police Service Commission is concerned, and this area, it is a Government without plan, without policy, and this is a betrayal of the people. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker, while we affirm and support this nominee, we are afraid that this is very little, precious little because this Government does not have the willpower to bring the institutional changes necessary. [*Desk thumping*] And they will not bring the institutional changes necessary; six months is coming—I think it will go just now—and the country will ask itself, are we better off today than we were prior to September 2015, and the resounding answer will be no. [*Desk thumping*] It will be no.

Murders continue, joblessness, business closure, and the Police Service Commission, Madam Speaker, the Police Service Commission, in managing probably the most critical area of national importance, will need the best help that they can get.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Member, your speaking time has expired.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** Thank you very much. Madam Speaker, we do support the nominee, and wish him all the best in his future endeavours. [*Desk thumping*]

**Madam Speaker:** Leader of the House.

**The Minister of Finance (Hon. Colm Imbert):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I will just deal briefly in reverse order with the statements made by the hon. Member for Oropouche East, whose relocation to the lower benches of the Opposition has lowered the level of his contributions, not that that might have been possible, but today it has been proven that it was. [*Desk thumping*]

The hon. Member said that the intent of the legislation with respect to the matter before the House, which is the confirmation, or not, of the notification of the President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago of a nomination of a person to be a member of the Police Service Commission, the hon. Member for Oropouche East told us that the intent of the legislation that created this forum was not to bring a CV and say, “This is a good fellow”, but to debate the role and function of the Public Service Commission.

Madam Speaker, the matter before the House is the notification of the President of the nomination of Mr. Dinanath Ramkissoon, nothing more, nothing less. I know that the hon. Member has a tendency to be loquacious but I would refer him to his own contribution on January 21, 2015, when the hon. Member for



Oropouche East, then the Minister of Housing and Urban Development, had this to say, after going through the CV of the nominee, Dr. Maria Therese Gomes to be a Member and Chairman of the Police Service Commission, after going through the CV, work and research experience, publications, and areas of service of Dr. Gomes—that is how he started off—he regaled us with the CV, the qualifications and experience of Dr. Gomes, and then had this to say, and then sat down:

“...this nominee is eminently qualified to serve as a member of the Police Service Commission. We are here—may I remind my colleagues opposite”—

He was talking to us.

—“to accept the nominee of His Excellency to serve as a member of the Police Service Commission. The Government stands by this nominee, and will ask Members opposite to give support as the House can now move to approve the nomination...”

—and he sat down. That was the contribution of the Member for Oropouche East on January 21, 2015. [*Interruption*]

**Hon. Member:** Shame.

**Hon. C. Imbert:**—read out the CV of Dr. Gomes and told us, we are not here to talk about the police service, we are not here to talk about the Police Service Commission, we are not here to talk about crime, we are not here to talk about police car, or anything like that, we are here to approve the nomination of His Excellency, and he sat down. And I have to come here today and hear this hon. Member say the intent was not to bring a CV and say that he is a good fellow but to debate the role and function of the Public Service Commission.

As I said, the relegation of the Member to the lower benches of the Opposition has lowered the standard of his contributions. [*Desk thumping*] And he was right then, that is all we are required to do. It is like a confirmation hearing that they have in Congress, or in the Senate in the United States where they bring someone, as someone for the Supreme Court, or as an ambassador to a foreign country. All they do in those places is go through the track record, the qualifications and experience of the person and debate whether the person is fit and proper for the position, full stop—confirmation. That is all they do in the United States, and this is all this is about. [*Interruption*] And, yes, he had to be interrupted on several occasions because he was on an adventure, a frolic into all sorts of irrelevant areas. [*Interruption*] Yes, and since he has been relegated to the lower benches he has been prevented from speaking.

*PSC (Nomination of Mr. Ramkissoon)*  
[HON. C. IMBERT]

*Friday, February 19, 2016*

Clearly he wants to replace the Member for St. Augustine in the speaking order, [*Laughter*] since the Member for St. Augustine is no longer Leader of the “Congress of the Person”. [*Laughter*] Obviously, the Member for St. Augustine, by practice, should be relegated to the lower benches of the Opposition, and he, by virtue of his loquaciousness, should be elevated to the upper benches of the Opposition. But, anyway, let us see some of the things the hon. Member told us: that TV shows involving police officers, he implied that something is wrong with that, and the Police Service Commission needs to look at that.

**Dr. Rowley:** That started under him.

**Hon. C. Imbert:** It started under the UNC. *Beyond the Tape* was under the UNC. “A-a, yuh didn’t have ah word to say when yuh in government”, but five months into Opposition, all of a sudden, you have everything to say about television shows involving police officers. [*Interruption*] I tell you, he went on the programme—I tell you, I tell you.

Anyway, so I would not attach any credibility—I would not attach any credibility to the Member’s sudden interest in television shows about the police. The Member also told us that he and his administration presided over the brilliant move of moving the PSC office to Tunapuna. Now, the police headquarters is in Port of Spain but you are moving the Police Service Commission to Tunapuna when they are required to deal with appeals by police officers, and also to monitor the effectiveness of the Commissioner of Police. Does that make sense? Why would you want to put the Police Service Commission in Tunapuna when police headquarters are in Port of Spain?

**Dr. Rowley:** Somebody had a place to rent in Tunapuna.

**Hon. C. Imbert:** Yeah, somebody must have had a place to rent. That is all I have to say. [*Interruption*]

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Check Nahous.

**Hon. C. Imbert:** It does not matter who it is, somebody had a place to rent.

Now, let us deal with the role of the Police Service Commission vis-à-vis the role of the Police Management Agency. One of the things I would never accuse the hon. Member for Oropouche East of is illiteracy—never. So I know that the hon. Member for Oropouche East has read the terms of reference to the documents relating to the role and function of the Police Service Commission, and I know that he knows, because he is a widely read man, that the commission is empowered by the Constitution to evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of

the performance of the Commissioner and the Deputy Commissioner of Police, to hear and determine appeals by officers against the Commissioner, his decisions to appoint the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner of Police, and to remove from office, the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner of Police. That is the function and role of the Police Service Commission. And I know the hon. Member would have read this.

I also know, since he is a widely read man, that he would have read the seminal work, *Let's Do This Together*, PNM 2015 election manifesto. [*Desk thumping*] I know he is a widely read man. In fact, I think I gave him a copy, and if he went to page 24 of the PNM manifesto he would see what the role and function of the Police Management Agency is, and that is:

“Uphold accountability;”—in the police service

“Develop the skills and professionalism of the workforce;

Enhance the capability to plan and execute police operations;

Implement effective operational processes, practice and doctrine;

Set and maintain the ethics and values that need to be embedded in the service’s”—and—“professional culture;”—of the police service.

So that since the hon. Member for Oropouche East is a very literate man, and I know he has read this, I know that he knows the difference between appointment of the Commissioner and monitoring the effectiveness of the Commissioner, and all of these things, which is to develop professionalism and skills, and training and effectiveness within the lower ranks of the police service.

The agency is simply an organization that would help to build professionalism, uphold accountability, would enhance the capability of the police force, implement operational processes, practice and doctrine, and set and maintain ethics and values. Chalk and cheese, all the Police Service Commission does is appoint the Commissioner and the Deputy Commissioner, and monitors the effectiveness of these two people, and it also has the power to remove the Commissioner and Deputy Police Commissioner, and it deals with appeals coming from police officers. The Police Service Commission has no mandate to deal with operational matters within the police, with respect to training of the police, to enhancing the capability of the police to execute operations, to implement practice and doctrine, and set and maintain ethics and values; that is not the business of the Police Service Commission.

*PSC (Nomination of Mr. Ramkissoon)*  
[HON. C. IMBERT]

*Friday, February 19, 2016*

So the difference between the agency, which is an organization which would build the capacity within the police service at the ranks below the Commissioner of Police and its service commission, which simply appoints the Commissioner, is something as wide as the Grand Canyon, and, therefore, I am very disappointed that the hon. Member would seek to pretend that the Police Management Agency, as proposed by the People's National Movement, and the Police Service Commission are one and the same—chalk and cheese.

With respect to the process for the appointment of a Commissioner of Police, I can report that the Minister of National Security has fulfilled his responsibility and he sent a request to the commission on Wednesday of this week to initiate the process for the recruitment of a Police Service Commissioner. [*Desk thumping*]

Let me deal with the final piece of mischief brought into this House by the hon. Member for Oropouche East, and that is that under the new regulations all the Police Service Commission would become is a messenger, a post office. Let me read into the record for not the first time what the new regulations say. After the appointment of the firm, and the firm goes through its process of advertisement and evaluation, the firm then submits to the Police Service Commission the results of its assessment process in the form of a short list, a report on the assessment process, including the application, the biography of the candidates, the scores, the feedback, the medical report, security report, and so on; and the operative section follows, which is 3(e):

The Police Service Commission shall then take into account all of the information presented to it and thereafter establish an Order of Merit list.

So, there is no change in terms of the powers and the authority of the Police Service Commission under the new regulations.

**3.00 p.m.**

The Police Service Commission is still required, after receiving the results of the process from the firm, to make its own decision. It is empowered to change the Order; it is empowered to place one candidate higher than another. The Police Service Commission makes its own decision as an independent body, when it receives the information from the firms, as to which candidate in its absolute discretion is first on the order of merit list, which candidate is second on the merit list, third and so on. Then the Police Service Commission sends that to the President to come to this Parliament for debate.

So there is absolutely no question that under the new regulations the commission has been relegated to a post office box or a messenger. That is utter

mischief, and it is reprehensible of the Member to peddle that mischief in this House. [*Desk thumping*] I repeat, section 3(e) of the Order states that the commission shall take into account all information and thereafter establish its own order of merit list. It could go with what the firm proposes or it could change everything and then submit it to the President for submission to this House—in its own absolute discretion.

With those few words, Madam Speaker, I return to the business of the House as so eloquently put by the hon. Member on January 21, 2015—the matter before us is to accept the nominee of His Excellency for a member to the Police Service Commission. I beg to move.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Resolved:*

That the Notification of the nomination of Mr. Dinanath Ramkissoon be approved.

#### ARRANGEMENT OF BUSINESS

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Members, as mandated by Standing Order 126, I am to announce that the Leader of the House and the Opposition Whip have reached agreement on the conduct of today's business as it relates to the matter of the Definite Matter of Urgent Public Importance. Therefore, in accordance with that agreement, we now transact that item of business. I now call upon the Member for Caroni East.

#### DEFINITE URGENT MATTER (LEAVE)

#### **Zika Virus (Health and Welfare of the Country)**

**Dr. Tim Gopeesingh** (*Caroni East*): Thank you very much, Madam President. Thank you for giving the Opposition the opportunity to work with the Government and be a collaborative and participatory aspect of the governance of Trinidad and Tobago, to support the Government in its actions in terms of ensuring the health and safety of all the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

It is in that context that I am speaking, to indicate that we in the Opposition are prepared to work with the Government on this matter and to give our expertise where available and where it is accepted, so that we could ensure that the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago are protected, and to ensure that the Zika virus does not

*Definite Urgent Matter*  
[DR.GOPEESINGH]

*Friday, February 19, 2016*

give the type of pain and discomfort and the suffering that we experience with the same ubiquitous *Aedes aegypti* mosquito, now identified with the white leg, which has been causing problems around the world for a number of years, first with malaria in Africa and then with the dengue and the dengue haemorrhagic fever and the dengue haemorrhagic symptoms, which have been the main cause of death as far as the *Aedes aegypti* being a causative factor with the dengue problem. We know that we have had many deaths occurring in Trinidad and Tobago as a result of the dengue problem.

Then came the chikungunya and now, as the hon. Minister had indicated earlier on, that we now have in Trinidad and Tobago a national health emergency. The WHO also spoke about the global health emergency with the coming on of this Zika virus. With the symptoms of the Zika virus, about four out of five patients who would be affected by it will not know that they have this virus, because basically it is asymptomatic in a number of patients. The symptoms are almost similar to the flu-like symptoms of fever and headache and possibly a little joint pain and so on, but not much respiratory problems.

The real problem with the Zika virus is who it affects and what consequential damage would occur as a result of somebody becoming infected with it. From the perspective of the health of the population, the most important people who will stand the consequential problem are the pregnant patients. In Trinidad and Tobago we have an annual birth rate of approximately 17,000 to 17,500 patients delivering live babies. So at this moment we have approximately 17,000 pregnant patients in Trinidad who will be extremely worried now that the Zika virus is here and found in Diego Martin in the Victoria area.

The hon. Prime Minister was there in Belize recently where he worked with the Caricom Heads of Government and CAF, where he spoke about determining the need for a protocol for the prevention first, for the eradication and for the treatment and management of patients who may have the Zika virus. We have had one case confirmed, but this vector moves around, and we know how fast this mosquito can cause its damage across the country. So far it was found in Diego Martin, but it could be across the country.

It is in this context that we first of all must commend the media for its work in bringing the awareness to the population of this virus, particularly for our pregnant patients. In Brazil, we have about 1.3 million people affected, and there are about 4,500 suspected cases of microcephaly, and that is the most dangerous issue facing the population with this Zika virus.

The adult population or the children would not be affected as badly as with the chikungunya or the dengue, but the ones who are going to be affected are the pregnant patients who we know have an associated risk factor, a risk of having children with microcephaly. If we have patients with microcephaly—it is pronounced both ways, “microcephaly”, “microkephaly”, and there are other etiologic causative factors for microcephaly, as my colleague from Fyzabad, a gynaecologist like myself know, fetal alcohol syndrome. If a patient takes just one or two drinks of alcohol—we do not know how many drinks will cause the baby’s head to become smaller, but we always advise not even one drink for a patient who is pregnant, not one alcoholic drink.

But in Brazil, out of the 4,500 cases of microcephaly, they have now confirmed serious brain damage in at least 242, and the work is going on. The United States Centers for Disease Control are sending out guidelines and protocols for people travelling to countries that have the presence of the Zika virus. We have it in Brazil, we have it in Colombia, we have it in Venezuela, next door in Barbados, it is in Jamaica and we have it now in Trinidad and Tobago. A number of tropical countries, the Latin American and Caribbean countries, are going to be more severely affected from time to time. Therefore, we want to ask the Government—I know the Minister of Health has been speaking about it from time to time, and he has indicated that he is finding about \$7 million for funding for defogging and spraying of homes and areas.

The media is doing its part in bringing the awareness to the national population, like the *Express* today, “Zika Zap”; the *Guardian*, “Zika Alert”, and then speaking about what the Minister of Health is doing. And he said, first of all, he would get about \$5 million to fight Zika, and now he is saying that we will get about \$7 million, and wanting to give approximately \$500,000 to each one of the regional corporations. That is important and that is quite good.

The Minister said do not panic, at one time on February 18, but hon. Minister and colleagues, as a gynaecologist, I have received hundreds of calls within the last two weeks from our patients who are pregnant and they are very frightened as to what to do. So as the hon. Prime Minister indicated at the Inter-Sessional Meeting in Belize, we need to develop some protocols for the management of suspected patients who are pregnant. A lot of patients would not know that they have had the virus, so what are we going to tell the 17,000 pregnant patients how to be managed? That is the important question that has to be answered. *[Interruption]*

*Definite Urgent Matter*  
[DR.GOPEESINGH]

*Friday, February 19, 2016*

Madam Speaker, the hon. Prime Minister is disturbing me. [*Laughter*]

**Dr. Moonilal:** He is disturbing the country.

**Dr. Rowley:** That is happening long before Zika.

**Dr. Moonilal:** He is a menace to the country. [*Crosstalk*]

**Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** So what is the Ministry of Health going to set up for the 17,000 patients who stand the risk of having babies with microcephaly? Now the consequence of a baby with microcephaly is serious brain damage. Could you imagine what consequential, financial, emotional distress will occur to a family, to a mother who has a child with microcephaly and that child has brain damage? The rest of that couple's life is dedicated to that one child, and all their energy will be spent on that. Could you imagine if we have a number of cases like that, what consequential damage to the psyche of the population and mothers would be? It is imperative that we work together, and that is just from the microcephaly part and brain damage resulting from the Zika virus in pregnant patients.

When do we screen these patients who are pregnant, is in the first trimester up to 14 weeks, the second trimester, or both the first and second trimesters and across the third up to 40 weeks? We have to be able to measure the size of the baby's head as the baby grows in utero. So we have to find ultrasounds across the country, whether in the health centres, the hospitals or in the private centres, and the competent people to be able to measure these children's head sizes as we go along in the pregnancy.

The Minister would want to look at that. We have 17,000 deliveries, we have to look at that to see how best you are going to monitor these patients, who is going to monitor them, how often you are going to have ultrasounds for them and what you are going to do for these patients who have now discovered, unfortunately—hopefully we do not have a case, but we have to look to the future to make sure we prevent it. But if we do have a case, what are we going to do? You cannot offer them abortions, because abortion is illegal in Trinidad and Tobago. Anybody who procures an abortion or attempts to procure an abortion is guilty of a felony. So what are we going to do with patients if, God forbid, they end up with a problem of having a microcephalic patient.

The second issue is the question of the Guillain-Barré syndrome. That is an ascending neurologic disorder that causes paralysis from the limbs come up. There are a number of patients who have been found to be associated with Guillain-Barré syndrome, having developed the Zika virus. That Guillain-Barré syndrome can move up to the body to affect the respiratory system and cause



people not to be able to breathe. Patients have died as a result of Guillain-Barré syndrome. We also have to alert the population, if there are cases of Zika found in certain areas, to look at that possible sequelae as well.

So it calls for a lot more public information; a lot more awareness to the population. It is important that I have seen that he has given \$7 million to the mosquito assault. The other issue with the Zika virus and the microcephaly is the Zika virus and etiologic or causative factor in the microcephaly. The Argentine scientists are now saying that they feel that what Brazil has been saying is not so. They believe that it is the insecticide being sprayed that is causing that. So the Minister must have his research team looking at that very critically to see whether the constituents of the Malathion that they are spraying across the country and with the defogging, whether that was used in the area in Brazil that has caused this microcephaly. And, we have to be careful.

### **3.15 p.m.**

Now, how do we prevent the spread of this? Well we all know that the defogging exercise is one; the cleaning up of the environment. The homes have to work well to ensure that they do not have any utensils with clean water because these viruses thrive in clean water. They multiply during the day in vases, in uncovered barrels of water anywhere around the home. And there are a number of lots in the country which I know the hon. Minister was speaking about which the regional corporations, and our regional corporations that we manage from the UNC, are taking the lead. The Member for Tabaquite was with a number of the regional corporations working with them to see how fast they could clean up a number of the lots across the country to make sure that these lots are not inhabited with these mosquitoes.

Well we know from the research perspective you have the genetic factor, modified mosquitoes that some countries have brought in Latin America, but we do not want to go there because that has more side effects than anything else. So, I am glad the Minister has indicated that we are not thinking about the modified approach, the genetically modified mosquitoes and the male mosquitoes bringing them in to deal with this situation.

Now, I want tell the Government and the hon. Prime Minister that the World Bank has also launched a campaign together with WHO and is giving US \$150 million to Latin American and Caribbean countries so that they can seek to get some funding, additional funding from that as well. And the World Bank is in fact speaking about the same issues that we are talking about in the quest to reduce the

*Definite Urgent Matter*  
[DR.GOPEESINGH]

*Friday, February 19, 2016*

deadly virus continuing to become a dangerous issue across Latin America and the Caribbean.

But also countries that are not in the tropical region are advising their people—be careful in travelling to countries where the virus is present. Now, we—the world knows now that Trinidad has a case and as we speak now I understand there are two more suspected cases in central Trinidad.

So, Madam Speaker, how much time do I have left?

**Madam Speaker:** You have less than five minutes.

**Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** Five minutes. Thanks. So in central Trinidad I understand there are two cases that are suspected.

**Dr. Deyalsingh:** CARPHA? Have they been confirmed by CARPHA?

**Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** No. Suspected so far. They are not confirmed. So we will have to—Now, I want to say, Madam Speaker, our People’s Partnership Government when it came for renewing—the former Minister of Health will tell you—the centre where CARPHA has to be relocated, made sure that in Cabinet he came and he said, “Prime Minister and team, we must keep CARPHA in Trinidad and Tobago. And this is one of the benefits that CARPHA is giving to Trinidad by being right here so we can get the results [*Desk thumping*] right here in a quick space of time. And of course, CARPHA gives support to the entire Caribbean countries within the Caricom area. So, Minister it would be very important.

Now the point that I was making about tourism. The Caribbean countries will not have the amount of tourists as we are supposed to have because of this virus situation. Because nobody would want to come to our country, pick up the virus and go back home and have problems, the thing spreading. So obviously it is going to affect the tourism sector within the Caribbean. It will affect our tourism sector possibly. Well we do not have as many tourists in Trinidad, but we have more in Tobago. But you never know how fast it could reach to Tobago.

So, the issue of the Zika virus is a problem for the pregnant patients and the Ministry with its advisors and technical team must focus on developing the protocols for management of patients with suspected cases and what do they do for them. If they are proven to be positive for the Zika virus, how are they going to manage them and the sequel to the management of these patients who may or may not, God forbid, develop microcephalic infants. And of course, the issue of the Guillain–Barré syndrome has to be brought to the forefront as well.

So, Madam Speaker, we all want to work together, the community as a whole, the nation as a whole, and people across Trinidad and Tobago are very determined

to make sure that it does not occur close to their neighbourhood or in their home and they are doing their part, and we congratulate the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. We must tell them to continue to do what they are doing in terms of ensuring their surrounding is clean. We want to see a more aggressive media aspect of this programme in terms of preaching to the population the continued necessity to keep their environment and the surroundings clean.

And beside the defogging and the spraying of the homes, the World Bank has also recommended—and this is what they are giving the finances for, to:

“...support a range of activities critical to the Zika virus response, including vector surveillance...”

That is important, have people going around checking. I know we have 1.3 million population. We probably have 400,000 households or even less so that could be looked at:

“and control; identification of the people most at-risk...”

—the pregnant patients.

“...especially pregnant women...”

—it says here.

“...and women of reproductive age;”

And let me make this point. There are a number of young teenagers in this country who become pregnant. I made this point about three—more than five years ago while I was in Opposition I remember, I think, in the Lower House. There are over 2,500 cases of teenage pregnancies in this country, and therefore—  
[*Interruption*]

**Madam Speaker:** Member, your speaking time has expired.

**Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** Thank you Madam Speaker. We look forward to working with the Government on this issue and give you all our support in the interest of the people. Thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

**Madam Speaker:** Minister of Health.

**The Minister of Health (Hon. Terrence Deyalsingh):** Thank you very much, [*Desk thumping*] Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, when I got notice of this Motion I was very happy for it because I think it is an important issue. However, my joy at having to come here to give a responsible reply has been lessened by the diametrically opposite positions taken by UNC spokesmen, and I will come to that very soon. Because it is absolutely amazing how those opposite cannot speak with one voice on a very important, national health issue like this.

*Definite Urgent Matter*  
[HON. T. DEYALSINGH]

*Friday, February 19, 2016*

[*Desk thumping*] And I will demonstrate that to show the fear and panic and the inconsistency of views amongst their own medical doctors which is staggering. It is reckless. It is actually reckless.

Madam Speaker, my contribution is themed from “plan to action”. On December 29, 2015 the Ministry of Health called a meeting of CARPHA, PAHO, Ministry of Local Government, and Ministry of Health, to come up with an integrated management system approach to deal with Zika. December 29, 2015, when the country was partying between Christmas and New Year’s. On January 29 with the approval and guidance and advice of the Cabinet and the hon. Prime Minister, we announced a national public health emergency. And this is where the doublespeak of the UNC has now begun.

When we announced that, no other person than the former Minister of Health accused me of causing panic in the country, panic. Chastised me in the media for causing panic, but here today you have a Motion, and what does the Motion say? The Motion talks about the confirmed threat to health and welfare. Where was the Member for Caroni East on January 29 to support this Government’s call to action? Where was he? Where was he?

That national call to action, Madam Speaker, the purpose was to do exactly what this Motion speaks about and which we have done, develop the protocols to ease fear and tension and to focus resources and inject a sense of urgency [*Desk thumping*] into the fight against Zika. We developed the local government response protocols on that same day. On January 29 after my press conference I hurried down to Kent House and met with all chairmen of all 14 regional corporations. And today, out of that meeting you are seeing the protocols being applied—the cleaning of the lots and so on, and a half a million dollars to each corporation to start this fight against Zika.

What did the declaration of a public health emergency mean? As I said, the concentration of resources and thinking, and the University of the West Indies, I am not saying a response to Trinidad but responsibly so, has developed the Zika task force to conduct research and surveillance in the Caribbean. And that is what we are doing. We are partnering with everyone, not only spraying, but the university.

The WHO, three days later, after Trinidad and Tobago took the lead, declared a global public health emergency. But I did not hear the Member for Barataria/San Juan—[*Interruption*]

**Dr. Khan:** For Brazil.

**Hon. T. Deyalsingh:** I did not say—[*Interruption*]

**Dr. Rowley:** Global means world.

**Hon. T. Deyalsingh:** Global means world. I did not hear the Member for Barataria/San Juan tell WHO that they are causing fear and panic. We were in the forefront, we were ahead of the curve. [*Desk thumping*] And what did we do? What did we do? We started developing the protocols to treat with the impending arrival of Zika. So out of those protocols was the establishment of the rapid response unit which we trialled on February 2 in Bagatelle. Then we trialled it this week, March 17 in Penal. I personally went down to Penal, met with the corporation, met with Insect Vector Control, met with public health, alerted them as to what we are doing to get buy-in from all 14 regional corporations. That is what a proactive government does. [*Desk thumping*] So we plan.

But on Thursday 18, after we had confirmation of the first case—as I said this contribution is “plan to action”—we actioned, we operationalized the plans. Because when we got word of the confirmation on Wednesday 17, we put the plan into action and, Madam Speaker, I can report to this House that the plan worked flawlessly. [*Desk thumping*] It was a flawless execution of the rapid response unit. It was a proactive response.

Madam Speaker, the doublespeak that emerges from speakers opposite—my colleague the Member for Caroni East supports me and I thank him for his support in not bringing genetically modified mosquitoes to Trinidad. But do you know, the former Minister of Health under your administration was actively engaged in Oxytech to bring them here? Do you know that?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** No. But he did not bring it.

**Hon. T. Deyalsingh:** Do you know that? So, I do not understand who is the spokesman opposite for Zika? He is supporting me for not bringing genetically modified mosquitoes, but there was active consideration, active talks to bring it, not to think about it, to bring it under the last Minister of Health.

**Mr. Imbert:** Seriously?

**Hon. T. Deyalsingh:** I am telling you.

**Dr. Rowley:** Yes. [*Crosstalk*]

**Hon. Member:** What?

**Hon. T. Deyalsingh:** And I came out in public and said—[*Interruption*]

**Dr. Khan:** That is too expensive.

**Hon. T. Deyalsingh:** I will not do it. [*Crosstalk*]

**Dr. Rowley:** [*Crosstalk*]—bring it when we “aint have no money.”

**Dr. Khan:** I never asked to bring that.

**Hon. T. Deyalsingh:** It was not a matter of money.

**Madam Speaker:** Please, I would like to hear the contribution of the Minister of Health.

**Dr. Khan:** He is saying that.

**Hon. T. Deyalsingh:** And it is not a matter of the money and the expense. It is a matter of you do not introduce an invasive, radioactive species into your country without having independent peer review testing that tells you that this thing is safe and practical and does not wipe out your indigenous ecosystem. And I am happy for the support of the Member of Caroni East on this. The Member for Caroni East spoke about the cancelling of tourism, but it was the Member for Barataria/San Juan who urged us on this side to cancel Carnival after WHO declared a global public health emergency. To whom does the country look opposite for guidance on this issue? One saying about tourism, one saying cancel Carnival. To whom do we look for guidance on that side? The country looks for guidance on this side. The country looks for guidance from this Prime Minister and his Ministers. [*Desk thumping*]

Because if we had listened to them we would have done nothing on Zika, because they did not support us on January 29 when we declared a national public health emergency.

**3.30 p.m.**

I want to go to this issue of testing for Zika. The only lab that test for Zika is CARPHA, the Caribbean Public Health Agency funded—[*Interruption*]—CARPHA is a post-runner to CAREC, which Dr. Eric Williams brought to Trinidad and Tobago. CAREC was here, CARPHA is here. If you want to argue about that we would go outside. But the fact of the matter is, I saw on Facebook a post stating that there are two cases of Zika in south Trinidad and the Minister of Health is

hiding it. I want to tell people who are intent on causing mischief, the Government repository of information on these diseases is not any private lab or hospital lab. It is CARPHA. And I want to urge people on Facebook not to go into that realm. It is only CARPHA.

That is why when the Member for Caroni East spoke about two cases in central, I asked him, has that been confirmed by CARPHA? And the answer is, no. Ministry of Health, the Government does not determine these cases, it is CARPHA via blood testing. The Member for Caroni East—and I say, I was glad that he brought the Motion, but then he injected some confusion with the Argentinian finding of putting a larva side in the water supply and malathion. We have been using malathion in Trinidad for “donkey’s years”, and we have had no adverse events. The situation is, the Argentinians are pointing to a larva side put into the public water system. The two are totally different. So, let us not confuse the issue. We on this side will think with clarity and come to the public with clarity.

Let us talk about protocols again. The hon. Prime Minister, after Trinidad and Tobago abdicated its responsibility and leadership role in Caricom for five years, went to Belize and took a leadership position in asking for a Caribbean protocol response to Zika. And I am happy that if the independent agencies within Caricom, like UWI with the Zika taskforce, and CARPHA, really work with the political directorate of Caricom to come up with protocols to deal with Zika Caribbean-wise. Let us do that. Let us do that.

Madam Speaker, what are the protocols we are using to protect all citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, all 1.3 million citizens? Public education, as part of the integrated management system. It is a whole of Government and whole of society approach, and that is what we have started to do. In the schools we have started it, in the communities we have started it. So, public education is vital. Because, if the public does not buy into the message, we could do what we want, but if the public does not accept some personal responsibility to keep their surroundings clean, we will not have the effect that we want. So, public education is crucial.

The other protocols are these: we have to follow WHO protocols when it comes to dealing with Zika. The protocols are established and the protocols are clear. And as yesterday we reported to WHO, we have our first confirmed case of Zika. What are the other protocols? In the case in Diego Martin what we instituted was protocols, again, based on WHO, and based on the integrated management response. So, what did we do? We contacted the immediate family of the patient—and I saw in the news she was being referred to as a victim. She is not a

*Definite Urgent Matter*  
[HON. T. DEYALSINGH]

*Friday, February 19, 2016*

victim, she is a patient. She is a patient. So, the CMOH we operationalized the response. The CMOH visited the patient, visited the immediate family, they were examined; blood investigations taken on all her immediate family, and even those family members who do not live within her immediate surroundings. We traced them and we took blood samples.

The protocols also dictate that we go to her workplace, which we did. No symptoms were displayed by any of her colleagues, thankfully. So, those were the immediate protocols to treat with the patient. The field operations protocols also kicked in because we practised it twice, as I said, in Bagatelle and in Penal. And as at 6.30 yesterday morning, Thursday morning, less than about 15 hours after we got confirmation at 2.30 on Wednesday, about 15 hours later, Insect Vector Control was in there, the Diego Martin Regional Corporation was in there, the protective services were in there, and the CMOH was in there.

We did perifocal inspections of 252 houses around the area, 43 were locked, and that is a problem we have, the locked homes. But we are treating with that. Of the houses we could have gotten into, Madam Speaker, three were found positive for *Aedes aegypti* larvae, and samples of the larvae have been taken away for testing to see if the larvae are in fact positive for Zika. The remaining houses have been notified and they are to be sprayed today. We did thermal fogging for 45 houses and residual spraying for 108 houses, and I just got word five minutes ago that what we promised to do yesterday with the closed houses, we have done today, and of the households notified, we have sprayed all and we have sprayed an additional 300 houses [*Desk thumping*] in and around that index case.

So, the protocols to protect all citizens—man, woman, child—have been developed, but the Ministry of Health, since December 29—they were practised in Bagatelle, they were practised in Penal, and they are now into full swing. And I could give this country the assurance that no stone is being left unturned to protect all 1.3 million people against Zika.

We urge all citizens to follow the WHO protocols to treat with Zika. The WHO protocols speak about source reduction, that if you are pregnant, thinking about being pregnant, use light, long clothing, cover your skin as much as possible, use insect repellent on your exposed hands, cover yourselves. We are giving out free nets at all our antenatal clinics; that is a significant move to protect those populations. [*Desk thumping*] So, we are doing all that we can.

But, Madam Speaker, at the end of the day, the integrated management system has two components: the ongoing components which are health education and



social communications, we are doing that. And I agree with the Member for Caroni East, that we need to ramp up our media presence, and that will be done. I take your advice, and we would do that. We need to ramp up our surveillance, that has been done; our integrated vector management is ongoing, has been done and is ongoing. I do not want the population to feel that all this activity is only as a result of the index case discovered on Wednesday. This has been an ongoing exercise since the start of this year.

What we have done, we have looked at the map of Trinidad and Tobago where dengue and chickungunya are endemic. That therefore tells you the *Aedes aegypti* are in those areas. And just to explain to the national population—and I am so glad that the Member for Caroni East brought this Motion—the *Aedes aegypti*—and I have used this analogy—is like your pet dog. You find the mosquito around humans; the same way you find your pet dogs around humans, because the female mosquito cannot live without the blood of a human being. So, wherever you have human settlements is where you will find the *Aedes aegypti*.

You will have high indices of *Aedes aegypti*, especially in those communities that do not have pipe-borne water. So, they have to store water in drums and barrels. But, Madam Speaker, here is what I have noticed going into Bagatelle and Penal: many people are beginning to heed the warnings and they are turning over their plant saucers and they are cleaning. But, in the areas that do not get a pipe-borne water supply and people have their 400-gallon tanks, for those of us who use the tanks with a pipe-borne supply, there is a hole at the top of the tank which is the intake for water, three-quarter-inch hole. So, if you are getting water from your mains the water goes into the top of the tank and then you draw water from the bottom of the tank.

But, for those areas that do not have a pipe-borne water supply and rely on WASA or the corporation to fill their tanks, the little three-quarter-inch hole is left open. So, public education, a little thing like that three-quarter-inch hole which is left open at the top of the tank, you have to take a little piece of flash band which costs next to nothing, and cover that hole. Because inside the tank where you cannot see, as I said, you have the larvae, and the mosquitoes will come out in their thousands. So, local government could clean the drains every day; you could let your plants die as I have advocated, but if you do not cover with that piece of little flash band, that three-quarter-inch hole at the top of the tank which is supposed to be the intake from your mains, you are defeating the whole system. And that is part of the public education.

*Definite Urgent Matter*  
[HON. T. DEYALSINGH]

*Friday, February 19, 2016*

And I was very happy to see in Penal, I visited a church, and you could see this family love their plants, had about 100 plants, you know what I saw? They took out every single saucer, and I was so happy to see that.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Member, your speaking time has expired.

**Hon. T. Deyalsingh:** Thank you.

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Barataria/San Juan.

**Dr. Fuad Khan (Barataria/San Juan):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would not go down the route for a tit for tat over a very serious problem in Trinidad and Tobago.

The Member of Parliament for Caroni East brought this Motion to the Parliament and all you sought to do was to attack him, attack me about what happened. [*Desk thumping*] Madam Speaker, I would not go down that route. What I found is that his approach to Zika management is flash-band approach on water tanks. [*Desk thumping*] Now, that is the new flash-band approach to Zika. I commend the people at the Ministry of Health for looking at the Zika problem and advising the Minister to call a public health emergency. I commend the people at the Ministry of Health for that.

Now, you mentioned that I as the Minister of Health tried to bring in the GM modified mosquitoes from Oxitec, and I still believe that is a good thing, and you know why? You see, in the United States of America they are starting to look at that approach for using sterile real mosquitoes to impregnate female *Aedes aegypti* mosquitos to prevent any eggs being produced. And that is what it is. It is not a matter of radioactive things. So, I think you should check that out properly. Now, even Margaret Chan from the World Health Organization, the head of the World Health Organization said there is no correlation between Zika and microcephaly. There is none.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** So, then what is this thing about?

**Dr. F. Khan:** What I am saying is you have created the panic. You created the panic by saying Zika, public health and microcephaly, and you have gone down that route. One thing I will say, what I will have to say is that, yes it is an emergency, but it is not just Zika that is causing it.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** So, what is the Member for Caroni East's Motion about?

**Dr. F. Khan:** The Motion is because you have brought the population to a position where there is serious panic about pregnant women having microcephalic babies. And that is what it is.

**Dr. Rowley:** So, what foolishness you are saying then?

**Dr. F. Khan:** WHO has said there is no correlation.

**Dr. Rowley:** And what is the emergency?

**Dr. F. Khan:** There is no correlation—

**Dr. Rowley:** Well, what is the emergency for then?

**Dr. F. Khan:** Because there is Zika problem at that time, February 16—

**Dr. Rowley:** Sit down.

**Dr. F. Khan:** I am not sitting down, because I will tell you why. The Argentine doctors came up with the thing that is pyriproxyfen was the larva side that has been used.

**3.45 p.m.**

And it has been the microcephaly cases that were found in all those areas that had the pyriproxyfen. It has not been in Colombia. Colombia has almost 3,000 cases, no microcephaly. Uganda, no microcephaly. Zika rampant. So how could you possibly say one country that has microcephaly is caused by Zika. So what I am saying to you, you are doing a good job by attacking the mosquito.

Chikungunya is more dangerous and so too is dengue. Dengue kills. Dengue has haemorrhagic fever—four. It kills. So what you are doing really and truly is to attack the mosquito, you are not attacking Zika. So stop saying that it is the Zika you are attacking, you are attacking the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito. And that is what you are doing and that is what we were doing all the time, because dengue, chikungunya and Zika come from the same source. So once you decide to go on a campaign, which we did also, for chikungunya—chic-v and dengue to allow people to clean up their surroundings, have the media approach, et cetera, is a good thing. But what I am saying to you, everybody is taking on the Zika and say Zika is causing a, b, c, d and e, where as it has not been fully proven.

The epidemiological factor is now coming out—you should read the latest from WHO. Read it. And also they are looking at GM—modified mosquitoes to curb the female *Aedes aegypti*. That is the new fact. And this fact is less than one day old, not two, one, new things. They are questioning the Argentinian study where they are saying that the larvicidal caused that. But the only people who are questioning it but they are not attacking it are the people who are responsible for manufacturing the vaccines.

*Definite Urgent Matter*  
[DR. KHAN]

*Friday, February 19, 2016*

In other words, what is happening in the world today is that you create a fear and panic so you can supply a good, because the Argentinians are saying that microcephaly is only in those areas where the water was sprayed with the pyriproxyfen, but I will go into something, I do not have much time.

We started an approach to have 500 temporary employees to walk around Trinidad and Tobago attached to various regional corporations. We had already interviewed—the NUGFW had also put their input, but you all stopped it. They were supposed—*[Interruption]*

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Member for Barataria/San Juan, your speaking time has expired.

**The Attorney General (Hon. Faris Al-Rawi):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I am compelled in a short five minute interval to just respond to some of the material put forward by the last speaker, the hon. Member for Barataria/San Juan. Trinidad and Tobago has a Government installed. The Government's responsibility is to deal with threats and to engage in enabling an environment which can deal with efficient approaches.

The Minister of Health has put on the record that the vector, the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito, which is dealing with the cause and spread of chikungunya, yellow fever, of dengue and of the Zika virus, is being dealt with. It is the obligation of a responsible Minister of Health to inform the population of Trinidad and Tobago, because the last speaker spoke about genetically modified mosquitoes, advocating it whilst his colleague did not. And then across the floor earlier had to say, and I will put it on the record, that there is an extremely prohibitive cost with respect to genetically modified mosquitoes. A Minister of Health has as a primary responsibility the obligation to take the information to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. And I wish to publicly commend the Minister of Health for taking a drive which we have not seen with respect to the management of the vector, the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito, to walk the streets, ensure that information is spread, because prevention is better than cure.

Madam Speaker, I am able to tell the hon. Minister that he is receiving able support from the Attorney General's office. We are currently reviewing Regulation 27 as amended by the Law Revision Act, Chap. 303 of the Public Health Ordinance, Chap. 12, No. 4. That Public Health Ordinance is a 1979 ordinance which provides for a penalty of a mere \$500 with respect to people who fail to take precautionary measures with respect to the vector, then as associated with yellow fever only, the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito. The law is being looked at right now because every measure of assistance that Trinidad and Tobago can

*Definite Urgent Matter*

*Friday, February 19, 2016*

expect must be provided. And the Ministry of the Attorney General is actively reviewing the laws as it relates to the regulations, the Public Health Ordinance Regulations and we intend to deal with that imminently. It provides, Madam Speaker, for a term of imprisonment and for a pecuniary sum which can go up to \$3,500.

Let us not spare what we can easily afford. Let us engage as a nation in responsible management. We ask only that the Opposition manage to gather its pieces. As I have said before publicly in the Parliament, the economy, crime and the position of security, health, education, the laws of Trinidad and Tobago, they require a concerted unified effort of Government and Opposition. And it does not help the population, Madam Speaker, most respectfully, from my learned colleagues sitting on one bench opposite to have polar positions with respect to one issue of a vector control, when Trinidad and Tobago is witnessing, in a manner that it has not seen for years, a Minister of Health with the gusto and enterprise to stand up, walk the streets of Trinidad and Tobago to make sure that people are aware of a situation. [*Desk thumping*] And to do that, notwithstanding the clamour of other issues or the distraction of important events such as Carnival. How often do you get that kind of buy-in? Far be it from a condemnation of the hon. Minister of Health, there is a compliment due. Not that he is looking for one, this is the job we were retained to do, Madam Speaker, and which we will discharge for the benefit of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. I thank you for the opportunity to put the record clear. [*Desk thumping*]

#### ADJOURNMENT

**The Minister of Finance (Hon. Colm Imbert):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I beg to move, this House do now adjourn to Friday, February 26, 2016, at 1.30 p.m., which is Private Members' Day and on that day—could the Opposition please tell us what matter you will be dealing with?

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Speaker; thank you, acting Leader of Government Business. The Opposition intends to debate the second Motion on the Order Paper on Private Members' Day dealing with the Attention Deficit Disorder.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*House adjourned accordingly.*

*Adjourned at 3.53 p.m.*

**WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS**

*The following question was asked by Mr. Rodney Charles (Naparima):*

**Rental Payment for Properties  
(Details of)**

- 6.** Could the Minister of Public Administration indicate:
- a) The total estimated sum to be paid by the Government in financial year 2016 for rental payments in respect of properties used for accommodation by Government Ministries and Statutory Bodies;
  - b) Whether the Government intends to review this significant expenditure;
  - c) In the case of the ten most costly rentals;
    - The names of the landlords and
    - The estimated rent payable for the financial year 2016;
  - d) Whether the Government intends to establish a policy on lease/purchase options?

*The following response was circulated to Members of the House:*

**The Minister of Public Administration (Hon. Maxie Cuffie):**

The Property and Real Estate Services Division of the Ministry of Public Administration is the Division charged with the responsibility for overseeing the rental of properties by Government. According to the information currently available to the Division:

- a) According to the information currently available to the Ministry the total estimated sum to be paid by the Government in financial year 2016 for rental payments in respect of properties used for accommodation by government Ministries and Statutory Bodies is expected to amount to
- b) Cabinet by Minute No. 84 (2nd Session) dated October 8, 2015, agreed to the establishment of an Inter-Ministerial Committee to develop an accommodation policy for both State-owned and leased properties, together with its associated strategies and plans, with a view to rationalizing the accommodation required and owned by the State and addressing all matters related thereto. One of the Terms of Reference of this committee is:

“To develop comprehensive solutions to reduce the accommodation demands, whilst promoting consistency, equity, cost-efficiency, functionality, sustainability and accountability in all phases of accommodation management by evaluating the merits and demerits of co-location, collective accommodation, procurement, centralization versus decentralization, the business practices of the Ministries and the effective use of information and communication technology.”

<b>c). No.</b>	<b>Building Address</b>	<b>Landlord</b>	<b>Monthly Rental</b>	<b>Yearly Expenditure (2016)</b>
1.	Nos. 19, 29 & 29A Estate Trace, Barataria	GV Holdings Limited	\$1,069,228.60	\$12,830,743.20
2.	No. 47 Frederick Street, Port of Spain	Downtown Investments Limited	\$965,000.00	\$11,580,000.00
3.	Nicholas Tower, Independence Square, Port of Spain	Nicholas Tower Limited	\$823,830.00	\$9,885,960.00
4	Aranguéz Estates	Aran 88 Limited	\$800,000.00	\$9,600,000.00
5.	Nos. 39-43 St. Vincent Street, Port of Spain	Colonial Life Insurance Company	\$729,316.00	\$8,751,792.00
6.	No. 1 Alexandra Street, St. Clair	NJ Nahous Investments	\$600,000.00	\$7,200,000.00
7.	Field 17, Lot RST Garden Road, Aranguéz	Mohican Limited	\$595,000.00	\$7,140,000.00
8.	Nos. 59-61 Cipriani Boulevard, Port of	Land Securities Limited	\$518,000.00	\$6,216,000.00

*Written Answers to Questions*

*Friday, February 19, 2016*

Spain				
9.	Nos. 44-46 South Quay, Port of Spain	TATIL Insurance	\$448,000.00	\$5,376,000.00
10.	Nos. 50-54 Duke Street, Port of Spain	Platinum Property Limited	\$365,000.00	\$4,380,000.00

Please note that all figures are VAT inclusive:

- d). Cabinet by Minute No. 84 (2nd Session) dated October 8, 2015, agreed to the establishment of an Inter-Ministerial Committee to develop an accommodation policy for both State-owned and leased properties, together with its associated strategies and plans, with a view to rationalizing the accommodation required and owned by the State and addressing all matters related thereto. One of the Terms of Reference of this committee is:

“To develop comprehensive solutions to reduce the accommodation demands, whilst promoting consistency, equity, cost-efficiency, functionality, sustainability and accountability in all phases of accommodation management by evaluating the merits and demerits of co-location, collective accommodation, procurement, centralization versus decentralization, the business practices of the Ministries and the effective use of information and communication technology.”

*The following question was asked by Mrs Vidia Gayadeen-Gopeesingh (Oropouche West):*

### **ISIS Recruitment Details of**

**18.** Could the Minister of National Security indicate:

- a) The number of citizens in Syria or Iraq engaging in ISIS activities
- b) What efforts are being made to prevent young persons from joining such terrorist groups;
- c) What efforts are being made to counter ISIS recruitment of citizens and the total funds allocated to these efforts; and



d) The number of staff recruited for this project and the criteria for such recruitment?’

*The following response was circulated to Members of the House:*

**The Minister of National Security (Hon. Maj. Gen. Edmond Dillion):**

(a) The National Security Intelligence Agencies have indicated that approximately ninety-two (92) Trinidad and Tobago nationals have departed for Syria to join the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). The composition is:

- Thirty (30) males
- Twenty-one (21) females and
- Forty-one (41) children

(b) The Ministry of National Security has sought to strengthen and expand several preventative programmes in an effort to respond to youth deviance and to channel at risk youth into programmes which will support their development in a positive manner. The social programmes which are designed to incorporate ages from seven (7) to twenty-five (25) years include but are not limited to the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), the Police Youth Clubs, Citizen Security Programme (CSP), Military Led Academic Training (MILAT) and the National Mentorship Programme. It is envisaged that these programmes will act as a deterrent to the country’s youth being lured in joining radical organizations such as ISIS, but instead channel their energies to positive nation-building activities.

(c) Since the 1990 attempted coup, Trinidad and Tobago undertook a number of initiatives to enhance its legislative, security and intelligence architecture. These include the Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA) of 2005, establishment of additional agencies with enhanced intelligence capacities to deal with threats of terrorism.

The remit of the Strategic Services Agency will be strengthened and expanded to incorporate the National Intelligence Agency (NIA) which will house a Counter Terrorism Division (CTD) which will specifically focus on threats of terrorism. Until the CTD is established and operational, there is currently no specific monetary allocation for this entity.

In addition, the Ministry of National Security in collaboration with the National Security Council has prepared a Draft Counter Terrorism Strategy in accordance with the United Nations Security Council

Resolution 2178, of which Trinidad & Tobago is a signatory. This Draft Strategy document which outlines means by which information and intelligence can be more effectively managed is currently being reviewed by the Minister of National Security.

- (d) Until the Counter Terrorism Division is established and operational, there is currently no specific staff recruited for this project. The proposed criteria for such recruitment will be formulated once the entity becomes legalised and operational. Should there arise any threats of terrorism in the interim, the existing National Security Agencies are in a position to deal with such threats as part of their overall responsibilities.