



REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Debates of the House of Representatives

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**OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)**

THE HONOURABLE BRIGID ANNISETTE-GEORGE
SPEAKER

THE HONOURABLE ESMOND FORDE
DEPUTY SPEAKER

Friday 30th June, 2017

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES*Friday, June 30, 2017*

The House met at 1.30 p.m.

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

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, Mrs. Glenda Jennings-Smith, MP, Member for Toco/Sangre Grande has requested leave of absence from today's sitting of the House. The leave which the Member seeks is granted.

PAPERS LAID

1. Ministerial Response of the Ministry of Finance to the Third Report of the Public Administration and Appropriations Committee, Second Session, Eleventh Parliament on the Examination of the System of Inventory Control within the Public Service. [*The Minister of Finance (Hon. Colm Imbert)*]
2. Response of the Office of the Parliament to the Third Report of the Public Administration and Appropriations Committee, Second Session, Eleventh Parliament on the Examination of the System of Inventory Control within the Public Service. [*The Deputy Speaker (Hon. Esmond Forde)*]
3. Response of the Registration, Recognition and Certification Board to the Third Report of the Public Administration and Appropriations Committee, Second Session, Eleventh Parliament on the Examination of the System of Inventory Control within the Public Service. [*Hon. E. Forde*]

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE REPORTS**(Presentation)**

Dr. Bhoendradatt Tewarie (*Caroni Central*): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I have the honour to present the following reports:

Special Audit—Public Transport Service Corporation

Eighth Report of the Public Accounts Committee for the Second Session, Eleventh Parliament on the Examination of the Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on a Special Audit of the Public Transport Service Corporation.

Ministry of Health

Ninth Report of the Public Accounts Committee for the Second Session, Eleventh Parliament on the Examination of the Report of the Auditor General on the Public Accounts of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago for the financial years 2014 and 2015 with specific reference to the Ministry of Health.

JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE REPORTS**(Presentation)**

The Minister of Finance (Hon. Colm Imbert): Madam Speaker, I have the honour to present the following reports:

Insurance Bill, 2016

Fourth Interim Report of the Joint Select Committee appointed to consider and report on the Insurance Bill, 2016.

Gambling (Gaming and Betting) Control Bill, 2016

Third Interim Report of the Joint Select Committee appointed to consider and report on the Gambling (Gaming and Betting) Control Bill, 2016.

Cybercrime Bill, 2017

The Attorney General (Hon. Faris Al-Rawi): Madam Speaker, I have the honour to present the following report:

Interim Report of the Joint Select Committee appointed to consider and report on the Cybercrime Bill, 2017.

**National Security
(Port of Spain Prison Break)**

The Minister in the Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs (Hon. Fitzgerald Hinds): Thank you very warmly, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I have distinct honour to present the following report:

Fourth Report of the Joint Select Committee on National Security, Second Session (2016/2017), Eleventh Parliament on an Inquiry into Prison Security and the Status of the Investigation into the Port of Spain Prison Break of July 24, 2015.

State Enterprises
(Vehicle Management Corporation of Trinidad and Tobago)

The Minister of Social Development and Family Services (Hon. Cherrie-Ann Crichlow-Cockburn): Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I have the honour to present the following report:

Fourth Report of the Joint Select Committee on State Enterprises, Second Session (2016/2017), Eleventh Parliament on an Inquiry into the Operations and Administration of the Vehicle Management Corporation of Trinidad and Tobago with specific focus on the repair and acquisition of vehicles for State Bodies.

URGENT QUESTIONS

Insufficient Funding for Storm Victims
(Penal/Debe Regional Corporation)

Mrs. Vidia Gayadeen-Gopeesingh (Oropouche West): Thank you, Madam Speaker. To the Minister of Finance: In light of claims made by the Chairman of the Penal/Debe Regional Corporation that the finances allocated to treat with victims of Tropical Storm Bret is insufficient, could the Minister please indicate if additional funding will be provided?

The Minister of Finance (Hon. Colm Imbert): Firstly, Madam Speaker, the Ministry of Finance is not aware of any requests from the Penal/Debe Corporation for finances to treat with issues associated with Tropical Storm Bret. So it might be a good idea to ask them to do so.

But in addition, Madam Speaker, the Government had initially allocated the sum of \$25 million to deal with the aftermath of Tropical Storm Bret and yesterday, Cabinet decided to increase that amount to \$30 million. Some of that \$30 million will be given to the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government for redistribution to the affected corporations.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Bearing in mind, Hon. Minister, that the chairman of the corporation indicated that just for farmers alone it might amount to \$25 million. If that is submitted to you, would you undertake to give some serious consideration to that issue that farmers alone in that area have lost over \$25 million?

Hon. C. Imbert: Madam Speaker, in the first instance, it is my understanding, at least since I have been a Member of this House, which is 25 years, the farmers make representation to the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries, not the regional corporation. That is the established procedure as far as I am aware. So I would suggest you direct that question to the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries.

Mr. Charles: Minister, tell us on what basis and on what empirical data were the additional funds allocated?

Hon. C. Imbert: Madam Speaker, it is based on the capacity of the Government to provide relief at this point in time.

Trinidad and Tobago Sea Bridge (Replacement Vessels)

Miss Ramona Ramdial (*Couva North*): Thank you, Madam Speaker. To the Minister of Works and Transport: Could the Minister indicate whether an agreement has been finalized for the replacement cargo and passenger vessels for transportation system between Trinidad and Tobago?

The Minister of Works and Transport (Sen. The Hon. Rohan Sinanan): Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, at a press conference this morning, the Port Authority of Trinidad and Tobago announced the following. A cargo vessel, the *Cabo Star*, is expected to arrive in Trinidad between the second and third week of July 2017. The vessel can accommodate 120 passengers and cargo to suit the needs of the citizens of Tobago and Trinidad. It has been chartered for one year at a cost of US \$22,500 per day.

A passenger vessel, the *Ocean Flower*, is expected to arrive in Trinidad on the 17th of July, 2017. This vessel has been chartered for one year at a cost of US \$26,500 per day. Thank you.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Would the Hon. Minister indicate whether there had been any tendering process for the acquisition of these vessels on a lease basis, and if so, could you indicate who tendered—

Madam Speaker: Member.

Dr. Gopeesingh:—and what were the tender prices?

Madam Speaker: Member, one question please.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Was there any tendering process?

Sen. The Hon. R. Sinanan: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, on several occasions I have indicated that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago found itself in a situation where the cargo vessel was pulled from service and the Port Authority of Trinidad and Tobago had to utilize all the vessels that were available at that point in time. There was a tender issued. That tender, however,

was not subscribed to; we got one tenderer and the Port Authority again utilized the services of local agents. They looked at what was submitted to the port, hence why a charter was signed for one year with the expectation that a new tender will be going out very shortly. Thank you.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So are you saying, Hon. Minister, that for the acquisition of these two vessels, there has been no tender and it was sent directly to a local agent without any tendering process by the local agent?

Dr. Moonilal: Say yes.

Sen. The Hon. R. Sinanan: Madam Speaker, I think I was very clear as to the process used and any further information, I am sure the port can submit in writing to you. Thank you.

Tropical Storm Bret (Commencement Date for Spraying)

Miss Ramona Ramdial (*Couva North*): Thank you. To the Minister of Health: Could the Minister indicate the expected commencement date for the spraying of areas negatively affected by floods in the aftermath of Tropical Storm Bret?

The Minister of Health (Hon. Terrence Deyalsingh): Thank you, Madam Speaker, and good afternoon to all and I thank the Member for the question. Tropical Storm Bret made its passage in Trinidad and Tobago over the 18th and 19th of June. By Thursday 22nd June, 90 per cent of the flooded areas were already assessed. By Friday 23rd June, the following actions commenced:

St. George East: St. Helena and Madras: ULV spraying. Over about 1,000 homes; perifocal work started; biocidal spraying was done.

Caroni: The area of Madras Settlement was addressed via perifocal work.

Victoria West: Woodland and environs were treated by both perifocal work and residual spraying. The corporations, after washing down, they had to do their bit first, then insect vector came afterwards and did biocide spraying.

We are also doing residual spraying to tackle the adults which will keep mosquitoes at bay for at least about three weeks.

Victoria East: Khanai Road and Oropouche River Road in the Barrackpore community were visited by nine perifocal workers. Work was done.

St. Patrick East: Clarke Road, Penal Rock Road in the Penal community were visited.

St. Patrick West: Icacos, Fullerton and Bonasse were visited. Nariva/Mayaro, same thing. Vector control activities over the next week which has already commenced; we are working on weekends. County Caroni and flood-affected areas in the Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation, Caparo, Oropune, La Horquetta, perifocal work is also continuing. We are also doing work with schools and we are also collaborating with the regional corporations. That is a synopsis of work already done starting two to three days after the passage of Tropical Storm Bret. I thank you, Madam Speaker.

Miss Ramdial: Minister, you identified areas that were harshly affected but there were other areas also that have been left out from your list. Can you give a timeline as to when these other areas would be assessed and sprayed?

Hon. T. Deyalsingh: Sure. But as I said, 90 per cent of the areas were already assessed. So if you have a particular concern, please let me know and I will make sure your particular concern is addressed, but we are working on weekends to make sure all affected areas are addressed. And I give you the assurance if you have any particular concern, please speak with me, as we communicate very often and your concerns will be addressed. I thank you, Madam Speaker.

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

The Minister of Planning and Development (Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis): Thank you very kindly, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, there are six questions for oral answer. We will be answering all six. There are no written questions.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Venezuela Trade Agreement (Details of Payment)

170. Mr. David Lee (Pointe-a-Pierre) asked the Hon. Minister of Trade and Industry:

In relation to the Venezuela Trade Agreement by virtue of which Trinidad and Tobago sends food and other goods to Venezuela, could the Minister state whether:

- a) payments are being received in a timely manner as well as in the agreed stipulated amounts from Venezuela; and
- b) if the answer to part (a) is in the affirmative, have the local suppliers involved in the agreement received compensation?

The Minister of Planning and Development (Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. The Venezuela Trade Agreement is between local manufacturers and the Venezuelan Foreign Trade Corporation, CORPOVEX. The Ministry of Trade and Industry has been advised that for the initial three months, of the period June 2016 to August 2016, payments were made in a full and timely manner. For the second three months of the agreement, for the period September 2016 to November 2016, trade was extended outside of the three-month period since the total order of goods has not yet been fulfilled. Payments are therefore still being received with the last being recorded in April 2017. There are currently outstanding payments which are the subject of discussion between the local manufacturers and CORPOVEX. Thank you very kindly, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Could the Minister state what is the outstanding balance?

Hon. C. Robinson-Regis: Madam Speaker, that figure is not readily available, but I can provide it.

Sea Lots Walkover (Details of)

171. Mr. David Lee (Pointe-a-Pierre) asked the Hon. Minister of Works and Transport:

With respect to the Sea Lots Walkover project which has reportedly commenced, could the Minister state:

- a) the name of the contractor selected for this project;
- b) the total project cost; and
- c) the scheduled completion date?

The Minister of Works and Transport (Hon. Rohan Sinanan): Thank you, Madam Speaker. [*Desk thumping*] Madam Speaker, the contract for the Sea Lots overpass, nine contractors were invited for the tender. The prices ranged between \$17 million. The contractor that was successful is Structural & Mechanical Agencies Limited who came it at \$10,474,000 which was under the engineers' estimate and the completion date is at the end of September 2017. Thank you.

Demolition of Squatter Homes in Valencia

172. Mr. David Lee (Pointe-a-Pierre) asked the Hon. Minister of Housing and Urban Development:

With respect to the reported demolition of over fifteen (15) squatter homes in Valencia on May 15, 2017, could the Minister state:

- a) the state agency that was responsible for this act; and
- b) the policy of the Ministry with respect to the demolition of the homes of squatters in the future?

The Minister of Housing and Urban Development (Hon. Randall Mitchell):

[*Desk thumping*] Thank you, Madam Speaker. With respect to part (a) of the question, the demolition of squatter homes in Valencia on May 15, 2017 was initiated by the Commissioner of State Lands. The Commissioner of State Lands is appointed under section 5 of the State Lands Act, Chap. 57:01. The duties and powers of the Commissioner are outlined, et al, in section 6(1) of the Act which reads as follows:

“The Commissioner shall have the management of all lands of the State, and shall be charged with the prevention of squatting and encroachment upon the same and of spoil and injury to the woods and forests on such lands, and shall superintend the settlement and allotment of State Lands and the laying out of village lots in such districts as the President from time to time directs.”

Madam Speaker, with respect to part (b), the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development is not involved in the demolition of squatter homes and therefore part (b) of this question does not apply.

**Brian Lara Cricket Academy
(Details of Sewer System)**

176. Mrs. Vidia Gayadeen-Gopeesingh (*Oropouche West*) asked the Hon. Minister of Housing and Urban Development:

Having regard to reports pertaining to the sewer system at the Brian Lara Cricket Academy, could the Minister provide:

- a) the extent of the damages to the sewage system;
- b) the measures that were implemented to treat with accusations of deliberate misuse; and
- c) the estimated total cost of repairs to be conducted?

The Minister of Housing and Urban Development (Hon. Randall Mitchell):

Thank you again, Madam Speaker. With respect to part (a) of the question, there were significant blockages to the sewer system at the stadium caused by the indiscriminate disposal of unauthorized objects and materials. The system was not designed to cope with such abuse.

With respect to part (b) of the question. To avoid a recurrence of the problem a scheduled programme of monitoring and inspection of the sewer system will be implemented. Before and after each event the sewer network will be checked for any blockages. Janitorial staff will also be posted near the washrooms during events to encourage proper use and to assist patrons where necessary. Sewer system misuse will also be mitigated through education and public awareness with the installation of additional signage to advise users of the proper practices for use of the toilet facilities. Additional sanitary and garbage bins will also be strategically placed.

With respect to part (c) of the question, remedial works have been conducted and all blockages have been cleared. There was no cost to UDeCOTT as the contractors performed the works free of charge as the problems occurred within the defects liability period. [*Desk thumping*]

**Solar Lighting Project
(Implementation Date)**

180. Mr. Rushton Paray (*Mayaro*) asked the Hon. Minister of Public Utilities:

Could the Minister provide the implementation date for the Solar Lighting Project along the Manzanilla-Mayaro Road?

The Minister of Planning and Development (Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis): Thank you very kindly, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, the Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission, T&TEC, consistent with this Government's policy on renewable energy and energy conservation, is committed to exploring the option of implementing new and existing technologies that can provide energy efficiency, reduction in energy consumption, reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and consequent cost savings.

In this regard, T&TEC has embarked on several pilot projects utilizing light-emitting diode technology, inclusive of solar-powered LED lights. The solar street-lighting project involving the installation of 100 solar-powered LED street lights along the Manzanilla-Mayaro Road is one such initiative. T&TEC is currently in the final stage of evaluating the bids for the supply of the LED solar lights for this project. The evaluation process once completed, and barring unforeseen circumstances, a contract award will be made within the next month. The installation work should commence shortly thereafter. The project is scheduled for completion by the end of 2017. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

**Global Medical Response
(Mayaro Constituency)**

181. Mr. Rushton Paray (*Mayaro*) asked the Hon. Minister of Health:

In view of the inability of the Fire Services Ambulance at the Mayaro Fire Station to be utilized due to non-training of officers and the inability of the Mayaro Hospital Ambulance to attend to road traffic accidents and other emergency calls, could the Minister advise what is the deployment contingency of the Global Medical Response (GMR) Ambulances to the Mayaro constituency?

The Minister of Health (Hon. Terrence Deyalsingh): Thank you, Madam Speaker, and good afternoon again to all. [*Desk thumping*] The Global Medical Response of Trinidad and Tobago, GMRTT, provides a national ambulance emergency service for Trinidad, with an ambulance deployment strategy to ensure that all citizens, regardless of location, receive an equitable quality and efficient service. GMRTT has indicated that for the Mayaro constituency most of the responses fall within the eight-kilometre response band with an average response time of 25 minutes.

Notably, during the period January 01 to June 13, 2007 GMRTT recorded 35 ambulance patient transports in Mayaro and 105 in Rio Claro for a total of 140 ambulance patient transport. This equates to approximately one ambulance transport per day for the area. It should be noted that the ambulance deployment plan is adjusted on an hourly basis to cater for the demand and to improve the patient experience. I thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Paray: Hon. Minister could you give me an idea of how many ambulances are actually deployed within the constituency—that is, assigned to the constituency?

Hon. T. Deyalsingh: Madam Speaker, the ambulance fleet for the whole of Trinidad currently stands at 43, of which 34 are on the road at any particular time. Plans are under way to boost that by 25 to bring the complement up to 68. Ambulances are not deployed by constituency. They are deployed based on historical data, historical load, but also the algorithm changes every hour to cater for any shift in demand. So resources can either be sent to one area if there is increased demand or taken away from another area if there is decreased demand. So there is no deployment by constituency. It is deployment by load and this is changed every hour depending on the particular needs for any area.

Statement by Minister

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STATEMENT BY MINISTER

**Port of Spain General Hospital
(Unsafe Condition of Central Block)**

The Minister of Health (Hon. Terrence Deyalsingh): Thank you, Madam Speaker. I have been authorized by the Cabinet to read the following statement. Madam Speaker, I wish to advise this honourable House that the Cabinet took a decision on Thursday 22nd June with respect to the way forward in treating with the issue of the unsafe condition of the Central Block of the Port of Spain General Hospital, a matter of grave concern which was referred to recently by the hon. Prime Minister.

The Central Block of the Port of Spain General Hospital is a six-storey building constructed in 1952 which houses in-patient and clinical services with a total of 400 beds. Over the past few years, there have been several studies done which cast serious doubt as to the structural integrity of the building. Among the studies was a 2009 PAHO Report in which an assessment was made on the structural integrity of the building and several major deficiencies were determined. PAHO advised that the Central Block was vulnerable to serious distress and possibly catastrophic collapse in the event of an earthquake.

Subsequently in 2013, the North-West Regional Health Authority commissioned another structural report from Arun Buch Associates Limited, a civil and infrastructural engineering consulting firm which offered two options: structural retrofitting works or demolition. The report from Arun Buch dated February 17, 2014 was provided to the then Ministry of Works and Infrastructure for evaluation. The Ministry of Works and Infrastructure, via letter dated April 29, 2014, recommended the demolition and reconstruction of the Central Block. Yet another report in April 2016 from the engineering firm Lee Young and Partners noted their observations of the deteriorating state of the building's structure. A further report from Arun Buch Associates Limited in March 31, 2017, recommended the replacement of the Central Block. Given the condition of the Central Block, the Government took steps over the last several months to lessen the load on the building by the partial decanting of some beds, and this process will continue as alternative space is identified.

Further, last week, on June 22, 2017, Cabinet took a decision that, one, the Central Block of Port of Spain General Hospital be demolished and two, a new Central Block will be constructed as a matter of urgency and this will be undertaken in a manner that would minimize the negative impact on the delivery of health care at the Port of Spain General Hospital. The proposed scope of works

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[HON. T. DEYALSINGH]

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for the new Central Block will include the design, construction, equipping and commissioning of the new facility with the actual number of beds to be determined by the Ministry of Health and the North-West Regional Health Authority (NWRHA), but with a minimum of 500 beds to cater for a growing population and the equally growing demand for inpatient services.

The block will include accident and emergency services, diagnostic imaging services, operating theatre and recovery room services, an Intensive Care Unit, a High Dependency Unit and a mortuary along with ancillary support services. A detailed and individual skills and human resource needs assessment of the hospital staff, both clinical and non-clinical, is to be undertaken during development of the project.

Officials from the Ministry of Health and the NWRHA have been mandated to proceed as a matter of urgency with the development of the User Brief which will be utilized for tendering purposes. The Ministry of Finance will explore the funding arrangements for this critical project which must be implemented without delay. The decisive action taken by this Government towards treating with this long-standing issue demonstrates, in no uncertain way, this Government's concern for the safety of patients, staff and visitors and our commitment towards the delivery of quality health-care services in a safe and conducive environment.

The Port of Spain General Hospital serves a catchment population of approximately 300,000, which includes Chaguaramas, Carenage and Diego Martin in the West, to Maracas, Las Cuevas and Blanchisseuse in the North and St. Joseph in the East with many communities in between, such as Belmont, Laventille, Morvant and Barataria/San Juan, the South-East Port of Spain community, including Beetham Gardens.

Madam Speaker, Members of this honourable House will appreciate the importance of having a modern hospital in the capital city, to serve not only residents in the catchment area and the transient working population, but also serve as an impetus for achieving Government's 2030 Vision of developed country status.

Consistent with this developed country status, we hope to encourage re-migration of both resident and business nationals to this new sustainable city centre. With this initiative, this Government hopes to reinvigorate and engender a sense of national pride in our capital city and central business district as we seek to position Port of Spain as a major hub for business and conference tourism in the region. The upgrade of the Port of Spain General Hospital is also being

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implemented in the context of Government's thrust towards city renewal consistent with other sustainable developmental initiatives, such as the recently opened Government Campus Plaza and public offices.

Madam Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to inform this honourable House of some of the other health infrastructure initiatives that this Government is currently embarking upon. Specifically, I would like to highlight our decision to purchase, install and commission a dual high-energy linear accelerator for the National Radiotherapy Centre in St. James, [*Desk thumping*] which will treat cancer patients on-site and contribute to significant savings to the taxpayer as we currently spend in excess of \$26 million per annum on external beam radiation treatment in the private health sector.

Additionally, this Government is in the process of building two new hospitals in Arima and Point Fortin. [*Desk thumping*] The Couva Hospital which was completed in August 2016 is currently being positioned to be incorporated into the health infrastructure of the country.

2.00 p.m.

In closing, I wish to reiterate the decisive action taken by this Government with respect to the Central Block at the Port of Spain General Hospital. Madam Speaker, Members of this honourable House, the Port of Spain General Hospital will be returned to its original condition, and the high quality of patient-centric care that it was once so famously known for.

Madam Speaker, I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

JOINT SELECT COMMITTEES

(Extension of Time)

Insurance Bill, 2016

The Minister of Planning and Development (Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis): Thank you very kindly, Madam Speaker. Having regard to the Fourth Interim Report of the Joint Select Committee appointed to consider and report on the Insurance Bill, 2016, I beg to move that the committee be allowed an extension of 11 weeks in order to complete its work and submit a final report by September 15, 2017.

Thank you very kindly, Madam Speaker.

Question put and agreed to.

Gambling (Gaming and Betting) Control Bill, 2016

The Minister of Planning and Development (Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis): Thank you very kindly, Madam Speaker. Having regard to the Third Interim Report of the Joint Select Committee appointed to consider and report on the Gambling (Gaming and Betting) Control Bill, 2016, I beg to move that the committee be allowed an extension of 11 weeks in order to complete its work and submit a final report by September 15, 2017.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Question put and agreed to.

Cybercrime Bill, 2017

The Minister of Planning and Development (Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis): Thank you again, Madam Speaker. Having regard to the Interim Report of the Joint Select Committee appointed to consider and report on the Cybercrime Bill, 2017, I beg to move that the committee be allowed an extension of 11 weeks in order to complete its work and submit a final report by September 15, 2017.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Question put and agreed to.

RISING CRIME EPIDEMIC

[Second Day]

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on question [May 26, 2017]:

Be it resolved that this House take note and express its horror at the exponential growth in the crime rate manifested by historic murder rates, violence against the person and property and the inexplicable disappearance of citizens;

Be it further resolved that this House condemn the Prime Minister and the Government for:

- (a) failure to address the rising crime epidemic; and
- (b) inability to present a credible Anti-Crime Plan aimed at preventing, detecting, prosecuting and rehabilitating the criminal elements.

Question again proposed.

Madam Speaker: The Member for Chaguanas East, you have 18 minutes of original speaking time left. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. F. Karim: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, it is with a sense of deep sadness that I continue my contribution to this private Motion on crime brought by my colleague, the Member of Parliament for Naparima. Within the last 48 hours, our country has witnessed two additional most unfortunate events affecting the lives of our citizens. On Wednesday, we saw the tragic and brutal murder of 13-year-old Videsh Subar and his 57-year-old caretaker, Rose Mohammed, who, it was reported today, was not only murdered but was also sexually assaulted. This brings me to the question that many of us are asking in this country: What kind of children, and now adults, have we brought up in Trinidad and Tobago? And then, Madam Speaker, yesterday morning, we were awakened to the news of the kidnapping of south businessman, Mr. Gregory Laing, for ransom.

[MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is clear from all—and I will present the data during the rest of my contribution. It is clear that our country has sunken to an all-time low. Young Videsh was in the prime of his youth, preparing to collect his SEA results next Tuesday and looking forward to entering the next phase of his life, of his education in a secondary school, which is going to be no more. He is the only child for his parents. Mr. Deputy Speaker, could we imagine the pain, the anguish, and the suffering of those parents. It is very difficult when parents have to bury their children. It is also difficult when children have to bury their parents, but in a situation like this, it is most tragic.

Young Videsh will never be able to accomplish his dream of working at Petrotrin, of retiring at age 45 and buying a maxi-taxi. He did have his goals, he had dreams, and looked forward to enjoying life, but never thought that this would have befallen him. I extend my heartfelt sympathies to both families on these two most tragic events. We are reminded of the scourge of kidnappings which was so prevalent previously, and I am going to give the information and the data because we have always to listen to Members of the Government who will say that crime increases when the Opposition is present, and that is the UNC Opposition. I do not want to politicize murders, and crimes, and kidnappings, but I want to tell the facts as they are.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have seen numerous kidnappings for ransom, and in some cases where the ransom has been paid persons are still murdered. Kidnapping, murders and all crimes affect not only the immediate families, they affect every member of our society. People are asking the question: is kidnapping what we have to face in this country for working hard, for being successful? And

Rising Crime Epidemic
[MR. KARIM]

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now that you are perceived to have some assets, you are perceived to be wealthy, that you are now going to be the victim of those who prefer not to work like you for what they have, but to take from what you have gotten.

One of the things that bothers me tremendously is that we have people in our society who are being punished for their ambitions and, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what is going to happen in a situation like this? We are seeing now—and that is my fear—the return of kidnappings. When we were in Government we had reduced this significantly, and even down to zero. I will tell you the information, and I am quoting here from tcrime.com. The statistic is frightening. In 2007, the highest ever, there were 155 kidnappings for ransom; in 2008, there were 550 murders and we had brought that down, kidnappings for ransom in 2014, to as low as two. Not that two is any figure that we must be boastful of. It would always have been better if we had zero. What does this mean for us?

It will mean that people will now have to be looking carefully at what they do, always looking over their shoulders; it will mean that there will be an increase in cost, the cost of crime and, therefore, the impact cost on ourselves to protect ourselves, our property and our family, cost of surveillance cameras, the cost of guard dogs, of burglar proofing and sometimes we would have seen where people, who would have put up these burglar proofings to protect themselves from the criminals so that they will not lose their lives, sometimes ended up losing their lives if there is a fire and they are unable to exit their property; reinforce fencing and gating; even some people have electrified fences, additional lighting. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is also very scary for our children because parents now have to look out for their children. They might have to employ bodyguards as was the case in previous years for the children who are venturing outside of their homes, going to the malls, or going to school.

This would further encourage them to send their children away to study as we had experienced in the years gone by under the PNM, and I quoted the years 2008, 2009, 2005. Or, some might be pushed to migrate, either to close their businesses, or to manage their businesses from abroad like people do now. They have their surveillance cameras and they could sit in their homes or their apartments abroad and manage their businesses. This will cause unemployment to further increase because people may be scared to continue, especially if they have threats on their lives, and it will also increase capital flight and the difficulty of reinvesting in Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it seems very evident from what I am saying, that more of us in Trinidad and Tobago are living in jails in our homes than those who are incarcerated. [*Desk thumping*] I remember when I was going to school—and I just

asked for the copy of this and I want to quote from it—it was a calypso by Penguin entitled, “We living in jail”. In 1984—note the year, 1984—he says and I quote with your permission, Mr. Deputy Speaker:

“Everybody talking ‘bout freedom, but is like everybody blind
 If you think we living in freedom, the freedom only in your mind
 Everywhere I look”—he says—“criminals and crook terrorise as they run
 amok
 While poor you and me behind lock and key, moving ‘round like if we in
 shock.”

He continues, and all he said and he sang at that time is very appropriate now again. He says:

“While criminals out on bail, honest men catching dey tail in their homemade
 jail
 You can’t walk the streets no more, you ‘fraid to open your door like we
 fighting war
 Burglar proof, iron doors and peephole and a high, high concrete wall still
 Your nerves in a mess, you have to eat less...
 But you have to spend to feed about ten Doberman that guarding your yard.”

He says:

“We living in jail...”

Mr. Deputy Speaker, on the last occasion when I spoke in this House, 35 days ago, on the 26th of May at 6.00 p.m. I concluded, the murder toll in Trinidad and Tobago was 212. As of today, the 30th of June, the murder toll has risen to 248. It is becoming almost like one a day, and it is not a vitamin. It “eh” building up nobody. It breaking down the society. [*Desk thumping*] It is destroying everything that we have fought for. Thirty-five days, 36 murders. Whoever wins this debate, the people of Trinidad and Tobago are the ultimate losers. They would have lost their lives, they would have lost their loved ones. Our country has lost its sons and daughters.

You know I remember my wife reminded me of a pastor by the name of Myles Monroe, who used the statement that one of the richest places you can find is the cemetery, where there are many inventions not yet brought out, many books

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still to be written, many scholars who would have been, many innovations that could have come, but because of crime, criminality, and the situation where we experience the snuffing out of lives unexpectedly, some of those will never be realized.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, our future scholars, entrepreneurs, professionals and even politicians, it appears clearly no one is immune. People in this country are overridden with fear and stress, and they ask who will be next. It seems as though we are sitting ducks, that if you retaliate as you would have seen recently, they come prepared to kill you. The statistics for the period from May the 26th to the present shows that there were 36 murders—that is from the 26th of May, one month, and a few days, there were 36 murders—missing persons, two; assault, robbery, 11; kidnapping, one. But do you know what is very sad? What is very sad is the detection rate, and also it is abysmally low, and also the conviction rate.

You know people like to talk about other countries, and one of my colleagues on the other side talked about Singapore. I had the privilege to study in Singapore, but I could tell you about Singapore in terms of crime. Crime, if you do the crime your punishment is sure, it is swift. You do not have to wait long in the judicial system. Even if I could remind you, when President Bill Clinton was in office, a young man went to Singapore and graffitied their train. You remember that?

Mr. Hinds: Yes.

Mr. F. Karim: The Member for Laventille West saying, yes. And, even though he begged for him to be spared, the Singapore Government said no to that request. That is the level of discipline a society exhibits.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have the full list of all the crimes and all those who lost their lives for the last month. It includes men, women, the young, the old, children, nationals and foreigners. In 2016, 462 persons lost their lives. That is the highest in six years. That was an increase by 42, and that is obtained from the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service website. In 2017, 228 as of June, 2017. That was the increase by 20 and that is substantiated by articles from the daily newspapers, the *Daily Express* and the *Guardian*.

It is clear—and we are hearing this from all quarters—that Trinidad and Tobago has become a very violent and lawless society, that crime-fighting is the police work, that police officers must do their job and respond to criminals, and we have also heard allegations that the police service is corrupt and the whole question of trust which I will come to shortly. What we are also hearing is that the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service is responsible for securing the nation, to

protect and to serve. I just want to give you an idea in terms of the capability, or the lack thereof of crime-fighting initiatives. For the period 2002-2009, there were 1,569 kidnappings reported, of which 787 were detected.

The debate continues and the discussion continues about our dependence substantially on the police service to protect all of us as citizens in the main. But you know people continue to ask the question, even this morning on one of the television shows, as to what is the real problem. Why is it so difficult to get a handle on crime? Why is it so difficult for us—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member for Chaguanas East, your initial 30 minutes has expired. You have an additional 15.

Mr. F. Karim: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Avail yourself. Proceed.

Mr. F. Karim: Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Now I will have to move with a little more speed. And therefore the questions I want to ask is: you have been getting large allocations every year from the national budget, is it that? Is it a lack of resources? Is it money? Is it that you do not get your back pay—you just got your back pay? Is it higher salaries? Is it that you have to do a manpower audit? But in spite of the audit not being completed, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago announced yesterday that they have increased the manpower by 60 CSI officers. So what is the value of this manpower audit—[*Interruption*]

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: 60 or 16?

Mr. F. Karim: Six zero—or is it competence, or is it expertise? And then we talked about trust—six zero.

This morning we are hearing from the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service Association that one of the things that they want to do is to build competence, to build capacity, and where they are going to look at building that capacity as well, in addition to other places, Walden University. For what programme? Improving customer service. You know, I am amazed that—Walden is a US university in Minnesota, that substantially delivers online training programmes. We have the University of the West Indies, we have the University of Trinidad and Tobago, we have the Department of Criminology, we have COSTAATT—I mean, what it is that is really happening?—we have the Arthur Lok Jack Graduate School of Business. And therefore, what we can do is to look at home because very often when we are looking at universities abroad, the question always is: will that institution be able to respond and fit to our culture?

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Some of the things that have been said this morning too, is that there was an admission that the police is not delivering, that there is the aspect of accountability and transparency, and that before the PCA—the Police Complaints Authority—believe it or not, they have 2,193 complaints from the public over a five-year period. These are people who have been violated, affected and aggrieved, and now we are hearing that there is a feud, or we read that there was a feud between the Police Complaints Authority Director and the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service association. This is in the public domain, but you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to get into some other matters. While we talk about the ineptitude, the incompetence, the lack of care, the inefficiency of those who are responsible for all our citizens, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, I want to remind you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and the national community, as to what this country was asked to do in September of 2015.

In the manifesto of the People’s National Movement, page 23, the following were written under “National Security”.

The—“Police Service suffers from a lack of secure leadership.”

That was in 2015. What have you done since?

“The PNM will simultaneously reform, upgrade, modernise and transform our Police Service...”

Where? How? Have we seen that? What we have seen is a deterioration of the management in terms of crime, criminality and the safety and security of our citizens. [*Desk thumping*] That is what we have seen. It further stated in the manifesto:

The new approach to crime fighting will form the basis of regional and municipal corporations—and municipalities.

Not one police officer appointed in any of the 14 regional corporations.

“This will facilitate the establishment and”—big word—“operationalisation of Community Safety Partnerships...”

Where is that? You think people believing anything in here? Is this the contract that you formed with the people of this country, that you promised them, vote for me and I will do all these things for you? What have you done? [*Desk thumping*] And listen, if you think that is all, I just have a little few more to give you.

But you know, when people become interested is when crime comes home to you.

“For maximum efficiency”—I am reading from the manifesto—“the Police Service will be strengthened at all levels by the establishment of”—what?—“the establishment...of a Police Management Agency which will:

√ Develop the necessary leadership expertise;

√ Uphold accountability;”

Listen, it is there for us to read.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Which one is it?

Mr. F. Karim: The PNM manifesto of 2015.

“√ Ensure that service delivery is optimized...”

Listen, I could go on and on, but you know—[*Interruption*] I have some time. I want to tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, “that you could fool some people sometime, but you cyah fool them all the time”. [*Desk thumping*] The time will come, and the old people have a saying, “that time longer than twine”. [*Desk thumping*] You know one of the strategies I looked at and it really amazed me, “Taking Early Action to Prevent Crime”. That was the title in the manifesto you know. The PNM manifesto.

“The PNM will tackle Youth Criminality head-on through the implementation of preventative actions”—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Members, silence. Silence.

Mr. F. Karim:—“that take into account the broad range of underlying personal (low attainment, problematic behaviour, bullying), parenting, (inconsistent parenting)”—and so on, and so on. But you know what, you cut drastically programmes for the youth in this country. Five hundred and sixty-nine million dollars cut from the tertiary sector and you are talking about youth? [*Desk thumping*]

2.30 p.m.

Poor security at entry points.

“Yuh know, this might also startle a lot of us, eh.” Despite the seizure of 765 firearms in 2016, almost 81 per cent of the murders were committed by firearms, continuing to highlight the problem of imported and often illegal weapons and firearm smuggling. But you know what is most bothersome?—when we find that crimes are committed in our country by persons in the protective services who

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have loaned their weapons to criminals. That is something that we have to look at and I am sure the Minister of National Security will be taking serious note of that. So there has been a breakdown really in the police service substantially.

And, it is very clear, as my colleague from Naparima keeps saying, that the PNM has no plan for crime, no clue, no idea, no accountability, no responsibility, and yes, no governance. That is what we are seeing. We hear about a 10-point plan. Well—“ah doh know how many points that now reduce to”, including things like the DNA. We have been hearing from the Minister of National Security, the Member for Point Fortin, that the DNA custodian has now been in place. Well, I do not know how soon or how long we will have to wait to make sure that we look at the implementation of it.

But I want to also indicate that there are many types of crimes, whether they are murder, crimes against women, crimes against children, cybercrime, terrorism. And talking about cybercrime, I do not know if we are ready in Trinidad and Tobago or prepared to deal with a serious cybercrime attack that could cripple our entire country. We have seen what has happened to British Airways recently. We have seen increasingly what is happening to other countries in world, even Parliament in Britain.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wish to indicate from the records, and this is a report from the *Trinidad Express Newspapers* of December 24, 2016 that there were 200 reported cases of missing women in Trinidad and Tobago for 2016 between the ages of 12 and 40. There were 56,744 domestic violence cases filed from January 2015 to December 2016. And, of course, one of the ways in which we could deal with that problem, we were advised that women need to choose their companions wisely. And therefore, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I also want to indicate that in terms of the crimes against children, that since two years, 2015 to 2017—and I am looking at May 2015 to 2017, since the two years in operation of the Children’s Authority, they have received more than 40,000 calls from the public; of those, 10,000 have been identified as potential cases of child abuse. Mr. Deputy Speaker, for this year alone, 2017, so far, 10 persons under the age of 18 have been killed.

And therefore, while we talk about the causes of crime, we will talk about the cost of crime and the causes of crime will be also school dropouts. We heard recently that there were approximately 11,000 students over a period of time who are school dropouts. What is going to happen to these children? Who is looking after them? And we are looking anxiously to see the results of the Laventille School Improvement Project which could be replicated in other parts of the country based on its success.

Unemployment. We would have seen as well where people who are unemployed seeking out a living—there was a taxi driver in Claxton Bay who was murdered plying his trade. Breakdown in the judicial system. That is all pervasive. It is all around us, ubiquitous one may say. You read about it all the time. Poverty, and we know that poverty is hell but poverty also leads to crime. And witness protection. People are talking about the trust in the police service, whether they can give information and before you reach home from the police station, the person who you reported already know and you can lose your life. As a matter of fact, some people have said that when they go to police stations to make a report on some accident or somebody, it seems as though they are the criminal instead of the person who they are reporting the matter on. And therefore, we need to look at, if you are looking at customer service or you are looking at improving, even recidivism is very important.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I conclude, because of the time, I want to say at 21 months of PNM rule and crime is a runaway horse. Young women are disappearing each day. Armed robberies are on the rise. Murders are a daily norm. In fact, some people tell me that “dey eh hear no murder last night on the TV” as if people are looking forward to this thing. We have become so cold blooded as a society. Citizens are living in fear like never before.

And therefore, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to say as well that the National Security Council has to also step up to the plate. Either do your work or find somebody else to replace you [*Desk thumping*] who will do the work. The question is what inroads have the PNM made on the detection rate?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member, you have two minutes.

Mr. F. Karim: Thank you. But I want to say in that two minutes that Cabinet reshuffle “doh” solve and fix crime. [*Desk thumping*] It is a failure to address the crime. We have had Cabinet changes in 2015 and it seems as though the new fad in the Cabinet is to have three-in-one. So you had three Ministers in one Ministry in National Security, and now you have three in the Attorney General’s office. So there may be more three-in-one—well, it have two in a number of other areas. So we had Cabinet reshuffle in 2015, 2016 and 2017 and no difference. [*Desk thumping*] The Government is clearly incapable, unable, clueless and most of all, “doh have ah plan”, after 21 months.

And therefore, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I conclude, I want to say, on behalf of all of us and I, in particular, strongly commend and support the Motion by my colleague, the Member for Naparima, and I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister in the Ministry of the Attorney General (Hon. Fitzgerald Hinds): Thank you very warmly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I make my first contribution in my new post today. [*Desk thumping and crosstalk*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Silence.

Hon. F. Hinds: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the future is beautiful and bright the way I see it. The Member for Chaguanas East just completed his intervention in this Private Members' Motion and he began—well, he concluded by talking about reshuffle. I want simply to remind my friend that the biggest reshuffle that we can recall took place on September 07, 2015 [*Desk thumping*] and the people of Trinidad and Tobago reshuffled every one of them. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I, too, would like to—and differently from my friend from Chaguanas East. I hate to infer this implication but I feel obliged. I, too, would like to express deep and sincere condolences to the family, the parents, the friends and the schoolmates of Videsh Subar, that youngster, who like so many others in this country and in this world have lost their innocent little lives. I was telling Minister Maxie Cuffie and Mr. Leonce, over lunch earlier today, that when I was a boy, I never one day—we made mischief. We roamed the Queen's Park Savannah, the hills of Laventille, Gonzales, St. Ann's, for mango, for guava—everything, and I never one day in my childhood lived with the fear that I would be killed. I never one day feared that my father would be killed. Today, in Trinidad and Tobago and in this world, I am sure children carry the burden daily. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Again, Members, please, I would like to hear the discourse of the Member for Laventille West and the little, you know, remarks, please let us desist. Proceed.

Hon. F. Hinds: So I would like to express condolences to all the families over all the years, as far back as we could have recalled, who would have suffered similar loss. But frankly, the very plaintive, dramatic presentation with the gory details does not really directly help us. It requires far more than emotions in order to deal with this problem, and it is a moving target. It is not something static that you could deal with once and for all, it is a constant work in progress and you have got to continue.

My friend spoke of the detection rate, yes, it is abysmally low. That is not new in Trinidad and Tobago. That was a story we have been living with now for the past 15 years including their time in Government, but this is not about “who in Government and who not”, that is the story of Trinidad and Tobago, it is unfortunate. And, it can be improved because there are scientific methods that are applied in other parts of the

world. They say when you leave your home in London and you return at 6.30, 7.00 in the evening after a day's work, having gone into the City of London, you would have been photographed, on average, 54 times. [*Electronic device goes off*] Wherever you use your fast service card—I have seen the detection officers do it—they can trace your movements if you went to Manchester or Birmingham.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member, excuse. There is a mobile device. Come Members, remember silence or mute.

Hon. F. Hinds: I have seen them solve crimes. I have seen eight rape murders solved in London where the suspect left his leather coat, during the winter months, on the scene of one of the crimes and they were able to see from the laundry tag on the inside of that jacket where it was laundered and they contacted the laundry. And having so done, they were able to look on the laundry's in-house cameras to see who brought it and when, and within one and a half hours, they arrested the suspect in London, and that took place—the laundry was in Scotland. That happened, I witnessed that. Yeah? So that the scientific methods exist and we can do better and we must. And the same thing with the conviction rate, except I want to say to my friend that the question of conviction is now largely a matter for law, and law enforcement and the Judiciary. [*Crosstalk*] It largely is and we have to respect that simple truth.

Insofar as DNA, one of the scientific methods, one of the better methods that we know, to deal with solving crime, the Minister of National Security told us, and proudly and properly so, that it was since he came to office, he took a hold of this regime and ensured that a custodian and a deputy custodian have been on the job—put on the job. That did not happen within recent times, the Minister of National Security did that. And we are now implementing the law.

The Attorney General—and I will join him shortly in doing that for the benefit of the people of this country. [*Desk thumping*] We go through the law, the DNA law, which I piloted in the Lower House back in, I think it was 2003, and it lived through all the governments since then, and today we are going through line by line looking at what is authorized and what law enforcement could do, including being able to go into the prison and to take DNA samples from prisoners under the law, and matching it with samples you have. You may be surprised to know that you have a man inside of there for larceny but he could easily have been convicted of three, four rapes and probably murders too, using the scientific method and that is where we are today. Getting into that level of minutiae. That escaped them. The only law they focused on was a certain clause 34, a certain section 34. Okay?

Dr. Moonilal: You will be a Parliamentary Secretary next.

Hon. F. Hinds: That is all right. And my friend spoke of trust in the police, well yes, trust not only in the police—I was a former police officer and it pains me, everything in this society—“like de police is ah low fence”—“the first thing come out ah everybody mouth is police, police, police”. Oh yes, it is an important institution. [*Crosstalk*] Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker, can you protect me from these—my colleagues next door, please? [*Laughter*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member, you will be protected. Proceed.

Hon. F. Hinds: I thank you very kindly. Mr. Deputy Speaker, trust is important, not only for the police but for all of us. We had a former Attorney General, from their own bosom, who could not make five years as an Attorney General because he was alleged and accused of witness tampering; could not make the cut. And I promise you, for the time I spend there, I will never bring that office into disrepute like they did [*Desk thumping and crosstalk*] and that is the key. [*Crosstalk*] And that is the key. [*Crosstalk*] It matters not.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Members. [*Interruption*] Member for Siparia. Member for Siparia, I am on my legs. [*Interruption*] Thanks. Again, Member for Oropouche East, Member for Couva South, Member for Naparima, you all have been constantly making little snippets as we continue along in the debate. Please, try and desist. Proceed.

Hon. F. Hinds: Thank you. I have a vodka sweetie here, if they behave I will send it their way. [*Desk thumping and laughter*] Yeah.

Mr. Charles: Standing Order 48, threatening language. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member, Standing Order.

Mr. Indarsingh: Standing Order 48(6).

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Members, overruled. Proceed.

Hon. F. Hinds: And I have one made out “ah cacapoule” rum too. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Move on, Member.

Hon. F. Hinds: Thank you very warmly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for your protection. As regards—my friend from Chaguanas East raised the question of our sincere and professional promise to the country that we will increase the size of the municipal police organizations by 1,400. That is to say of the 14 corporations, we will put in 100 police officers. I am happy to report to you, for the benefit of

my friends, that applications were invited. There were thousands of responses. Exams were undertaken. Those who were successful at the exams, they are now being vetted to ensure that their character records are what we expect in an organization such as that. When that vetting process is complete, they will be physically and psychologically tested. Once they are found successful in those two tests, then we move on to interviews and training and shortly, they will be on the job. I want to congratulate Minister Kazim Hosein, the Minister of Local Government who has taken responsibility for this. I thank you very much and I really would like to congratulate the Minister. He, too, is on the job, getting the business done.

The Member for Chaguanas East told us that we cut youth programmes by so much. Well, I want to say to him, unfortunately, given the economic circumstances in which we are put, everything and everybody had to get what the Minister of Finance calls a haircut. Everybody had to get except, of course, me. [*Crosstalk*] Because these locks are with me till death do us part. [*Desk thumping and laughter*] Come rain or shine. [*Interruption*] Years, yes.

So that is the reality. The economic circumstances of Trinidad and Tobago—only yesterday, the Minister of National Security had, unfortunately, to tell the country that we are struggling to pay \$200 million to maintain four helicopters until we are able so to do and we are satisfied that they are making a direct contribution to the crime prevention efforts in Trinidad and Tobago, and they did not always do that. There was a time when this public perceived that the then Prime Minister was using those helicopters between Trinidad and Tobago “like ah pram and it had bar too”. Yes, “it had bar”, literally.

Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Deputy Speaker, 48(6).

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member, retract that statement.

Hon. F. Hinds: I meant safety bars. [*Desk thumping and laughter*] I meant safety bars. Should I retract that? [*Crosstalk*] Unless it did—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member, retract the last statement.

Hon. F. Hinds: Okay, it did not have any safety bars. [*Crosstalk*] That was a metaphor. It was a metaphor. Yes, I withdraw the statement about the bar just to press on. [*Continuous crosstalk*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Silence.

Hon. F. Hinds: So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this Motion filed by the Member for Naparima tells us, among other things, that we should condemn the Government. It tells us that we should condemn the Government for its failure to address the rising crime epidemic. It tells us that we should condemn the Government because of its inability to present a credible anti-crime plan aimed at preventing, detecting, prosecuting and rehabilitating the criminal elements. Imagine, imagine, this is what this Motion calls on us to do. As parliamentarians, we all here have a preferred and privileged view on this society by virtue of being here, perusing reports on a daily basis; as legislators, listening to each other in these debates and others; in our work in various committees and, of course—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Silence on the Government side.

Hon. F. Hinds: And of course, by virtue of our contact with our citizens in our own constituencies and otherwise. From the Parliament, you get a very privileged and preferred view.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member. Member for Diego Martin North/East, silence. I would like to hear the discourse of the Member.

Hon. F. Hinds: You get a very preferred view on the society. I consider—[*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Silence.

Hon. F. Hinds: I consider that I have had not only that view but I share, along with some of my colleagues, a more special and privileged view than that, because not only I am a parliamentarian but I am a very grass-roots man. I am on the ground in my constituency and around the country. [*Crosstalk*] Roots, roots, without apology. And I function comfortably everywhere in the society. As well, I happen to have been the beneficiary of years in the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service where I was engaged in actually dealing with crime and issues, and towards my later years, engaged in training police officers for those activities: in drill and in weapon training and in martial arts in those days. [*Crosstalk*]

I happened to have qualified myself as a lawyer and practised at the Criminal Bar for many years and interfaced with criminals and the evidence—or if I may use an old English term, proofs and evidences in many, many trials at the High Court level, in the Magistrates' Court, Court of Appeal and of course, yes, quite successfully too I might tell you. I happened to have been and I served as Minister in the Ministry of National Security back in some very heady years between 2002 and 2007, as well—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member. Member for Oropouche East, this is the second time verbally that I am announcing it even though you have done it more than twice. Chief Whip, let us have a side bar, please. Proceed.

Hon. F. Hinds: I thank you. As well, I have significant contact with young people all over this country and this region. All over, interface with large groups of young people, including tomorrow, at about 3.00 p.m., I will be with a group of about 50 young people in the Belmont area and their parents, and right after that, I go to another event where I will interface with another group, maybe about 100 of them, and we are be there. And of course, I represent a grass-roots constituency, the constituency of Laventille West.

A view from the Cabinet allows you as well to see all policy positions, all the issues of all the Ministries in the country. I chair the Joint Select Committee on National Security and, of course, I have had the experience of working with police organizations outside of Trinidad and Tobago in the so-called developed countries.

Mr. Lee: Mr. Deputy Speaker, 48(1). “We doh want to hear about the Minister’s experience.” [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Overruled, proceed.

Hon. F. Hinds: Thank you very much. All of that I have done with dignity and I have done soberly. Mr. Deputy Speaker, all of these I bring to discussing this Motion here today. Crime is a very—and what I did not add, in my post-graduate law degree I did criminology as well. [*Desk thumping and crosstalk*] And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I got a credit at the University of London and I was supervised—[*Desk thumping and crosstalk*] And when I got that, I was supervised, I did not get it for free, [*Desk thumping*] and I must add—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Deputy Speaker, 48(1) please. And Rowley knew that?

Hon. F. Hinds: And I must add again, I was sober. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member, overruled, proceed.

Hon. F. Hinds: Thank you very much. Crime is a very—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Imbert: And you were present.

Hon. F. Hinds: And present, [*Laughter*] and present.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Diego Martin North/East, please.

Hon. F. Hinds: Mr. Deputy Speaker, crime is a most complex thing. Crime is a very complex phenomenon and therefore, any simplistic offerings as to solutions are really nauseating and troubling to me. That is the reason why the records of this Parliament will tell you I have never accused a Government of being responsible for crime because I understand bigger and better than that. “It doh make sense.” And even when the Member for Naparima was presenting this Motion, I reflected in his *Hansard*, as soon as he talked about crime and statistics and how much murders take place under the PNM and under the UNC, I shouted “dotishness” and it is recorded in the *Hansard* because it is “dotishness”. I acknowledge the fact—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Charles: Standing Order 48(4), insulting language.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Overruled, overruled.

Hon. F. Hinds: I “doh” know why he has claimed the label “dotishness”. [*Laughter and crosstalk*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Members, I have ruled. Member for Laventille West, proceed.

Hon. F. Hinds: Thank you very kindly, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So serious discussions on crime has happened as ought to happen in our Parliament is not amenable to simplistic rationale and theory. It is not. [*Crosstalk*] By nature, human beings tend to be selfish, possessive, greedy, sometimes wicked, sometimes evil. One philosopher—I think was Locke or Hobbes—Thomas Hobbes told us that without restrictions, without a social contract, without the people adhering to law, life will be brutish, nasty and short.

Recently, the Member of Parliament for Tobago West, the Minister of Tourism, she shocked me. We were having a discussion along this line privately and she said to me: Mr. Hinds, could you imagine what this world would have been had there been no God? Now, I never thought about that before in all my 60 years. [*Crosstalk*] I never thought about that. But when I reflected on it, yes, this place was going to be brutal, and righteous people would have had to defend themselves against the wicked in ways that we did not like. It would not be easy but thank God there is a God. [*Desk thumping*] Because it is the knowledge of God and His power that restrains people—many people—causes us to behave in a certain way because of the fear of God, and I cannot leave God out of this discussion because if there was no God, there would be no such fear of God and therefore, life would have been brutish, nasty, drunken and short. [*Crosstalk*] So I thank God for God. All crimes are sins, we know. [*Interruption*] I am being disturbed by my friend.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Members. Member for Laventille West. Members, from the Speaker's point of view, this is a very serious debate and I am thinking that we are going down a road which I really do not appreciate. So let us get back to the business of the House and to remind you all that we have a particular topic to debate, and let us stay focused and let us look at it from a serious point of view. Member for Laventille West, go ahead.

3.00 p.m.

Hon. F. Hinds: Thank you. Just wanted to say on that point that had it not been for God, instead of “planass”, people might have been chopping people by the doubles stand. [*Crosstalk*] So let me continue. All crimes are sins. This is a fact. All crimes are sins but not all sins are crimes. Greed is a sin but it is not a crime. Adultery is a sin but it is not a crime. Fornication is a sin but it is not a crime. Drunkenness may be a sin but it is not a crime. All crimes are sins but not all sins are crimes.

And the book, I came with the book, but I would not waste time to quote it—that is never going to be a waste of time—but I came with the book of life. I read there—and in fact it was an officer in these precincts who brought my attention in a similar discussion with him one day on the margins. It was he who told me if I looked to Genesis, chapter six, verse six, I would see as early as in the book of Genesis: God repented that he made man; God felt sorry that he made man shortly after doing it. Man is not easy. And, therefore, if crime is a function of sin and the human nature of persons, then it is a very complex issue not easy to deal with because of the mind and the strength and the depth of man's mind and his heart in metaphor—not easy—and therefore, we have to think seriously about a whole lot of stuff.

Even in heaven, Michael the Archangel had to draw his sword and deal with Lucifer, the great and morning star. Do you know why? Because Lucifer in heaven challenged the authority of God, you know, and he was cast out, the *Bible* tells us, on earth. Apparently, he ended up in Rienzi, no sorry. “He end up somewhere, and if it was Rienzi, they geh cast out ah Rienzi too.”

Mr. Indarsingh: Mr. Deputy Speaker, 48(1).

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member? Member for Laventille West, again, certain leeway. Move on. Get back to the seriousness of the debate.

Hon. F. Hinds: I am grateful. I am obliged. Let me, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The Motion talks about to condemn the Government. I must ask—I would tell you this, Mr. Deputy Speaker: On the schedule of duties for the Minister of National Security, there exists the mandate, the observation or management of public order. So that we understand that. We understand that it is the responsibility of the Minister of

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National Security and, by extension, to maintain public order, which involves and includes managing crime. And the first duty of a police officer is to prevent crime and other infractions of the law in the Act. I remember those words well from my days in that organization. So nobody is saying the Government does not have a responsibility.

The citizens naturally look to the Government for leadership, for protection. That is normal, easy to understand. But the question must then be asked: Who or what is the Government? Does the Government involve the Parliament? Does the Government involve the Judiciary? There are three arms to the State: the Parliament, the Judiciary and the Executive. The police service is part of the Executive, interesting enough, because it is not part of the Judiciary and it is not part of the Parliament, and that is why the Minister of National Security has responsibility for it falling within his own jurisdiction. Yeah.

But who or what is the Government? Does Government involve teachers in state schools particularly? And since religion is established under the Constitution and it is supported by the State financially regularly on an annual and other bases, does the Government involve the churches and the mandirs and the mosques? Who or what therefore is Government? These are matters we have to contemplate and, therefore, when my friend, the Member for Chaguanas, raised the question of the appointment of a Commissioner of Police, I recall when I was a Senator, an Opposition Senator, we told the Government—I was part of that team, my good friend—let us applaud and congratulate the new Minister of Public Utilities [*Desk thumping*]. We were on the team. She was the leader of the team led by the Prime Minister and we went and we met with the then Government. We shared with them a 10-point plan. The first item on that 10-point plan, we told them categorically we will give our Parliamentary support to change the legislation to appoint a commissioner now. We promised that. [*Desk thumping*] We did not play with that. We told them, you bring it to Parliament, you have our parliamentary support. Did we not? [*Crosstalk*] They did nothing about it.

Today, the situation is, we are in the Government, yes, but we are now relying on the Office of the DPA to do what is necessary because the legislation is very complex and very costly to implement. We had told them to simplify it, but to simplify it requires—I remember when it was negotiated in the first place. The Member for Siparia was involved in that and saw it as an opportunity when we were trying to improve the police service and its management, and to amend the Constitution. The Member for Siparia extracted a price from the then Government and said that we are prepared to support it, but you have to remove your prime-ministerial veto. Mr. Manning did that.

It was the Opposition then, led by the Member of Siparia, who put in all kinds of things in the legislation and made it complex where you have to hire a firm to recruit the commissioner and all manners of things. They did that, tying up the country as usual.

So who is the Government? We are savvy enough to know, based on their utterances and their postures, if we bring any Bill in this House and we must, and probably will, because there are important measures that the Parliament has a role to play in to protect the citizens from the crimes that this Motion speaks about, but we need the support of the other side. We know from their utterances and their posture, if we come with such Bills we are not likely to get their support. So who is the Government? And the intellectual or pseudo-intellectual deceit and hypocrisy troubles me, troubles me deeply.

So we have a crime epidemic, so the Motion calls it. But I am saying what we see happening now is not new, Member for Chaguanas East. If you look at the headlines in this country for the last 20 years, screaming headlines about crime—who lost their head, which baby get killed. I mean, this is not new. Right? And not only to Trinidad and Tobago, you know. In Russia—they may not know—I read about a case in Russia where one man killed 54 people and ate their “entrails”.

Mr. Al-Rawi: Entrails.

Hon. F. Hinds: Entrails, sorry.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member, your 30 minutes have expired. You have an additional 15. Do you care to avail yourself? Proceed.

Hon. F. Hinds: Thank you very much. Entrails. I was so enthralled by what I was saying. [*Desk thumping*] So let me press on. Today, we have new phenomena on the horizon. Global drug trafficking is becoming more and more sophisticated. I have seen with these eyes the very sophisticated ways drug traffickers get their dirty stuff around the world—Maggi cubes, dinner mints—they do it in strange ways.

One woman appeared at Heathrow with a baby tied on her back in their cultural thing, from somewhere in Africa, and the customs officer realised that baby did not move for the last 30 minutes while they were talking, checked it out only to find that it was a dead baby stuffed with cocaine. That happened. The world has become a frightening place because, as I say, crime is a complex thing. It is as broad and it is as deep as the wickedness of the human spirit and mind.

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That is the reality and we come from behind making laws to deal with those evil spirits. This is the reality. Human slavery, slavery from where I have come, from where many of us in this country and this world have come, and we too say never again. That is taking place today as we speak in this world.

There are young men from Trinidad go to Venezuela on some drug deal and until the drugs are paid for and the people in South America get their money, they hold a human being in pawn, not P-O-R-N, P-A-W-N. They keep him as collateral. So mothers in this country not seeing their sons for five, six weeks, do not understand that the little boy hooked up in a coop somewhere in Venezuela, a human pawn. These things happening in this place and terrorism too.

Cybercrime: the use of computers to perpetrate crime, criminal activity. There is something known as the Darknet. You get on the Darknet—well once you do—I am warning Trinidad—immediately there are people in this world will know that you went on it and they will pay attention to you. That is the reality. But this Darknet you could order guns, you could order all manners of profanity and it is coming to your door. It is coming to your door. Let me take a little bit of what—and my friend—very quickly—the Member for Naparima, when he presented the Motion, he began hypocritically saying and I quote:

“I would like, on behalf of all of us on this side, to extend best wishes to the MP for Laventille East/Morvant”—my good friend, Mr. Leonce. That is my own quotation. And I quote again—“who was a recent victim of robbery.”

Well, it was insincere to start with, because I am sure he never went privately to Mr. Leonce and expressed sadness at what had happened. It was just grandstanding in the Parliament, one. Two, it was not a robbery. He does not even understand the law. A robbery is where you use force on a person in order to perpetrate the larceny. That is what robbery is—larceny from the person. [*Crosstalk*] No, it was larceny, Member for Naparima. And he called it as well—he went on to say, and we wish him well and expressed the hope that the “burglars”. You do not have burglar. It was no burglar, it was midday, MP Leonce.

And do you know what was hypocritical? Rather than condemn those criminals who broke the MP’s car—like Father Harvey, Mr. Leonce was in his office at midday that day serving the people—young, bright educated engineer from South Hampton University. He did not come to take anything from Laventille, he came to bring and while he was doing that, somebody, like they did to Father Harvey in similar circumstances, violated his vehicle and stole

therefrom. So it was not any robbery and it was not any burglary. The next time the Member for Naparima plans to speak here, he could come on the margins. I would give him a basic lecture in law, so he would not embarrass himself. [*Desk thumping and crosstalk*]

And then, the Member went on to tell us about—well, he said a whole lot of things. I saw a picture last week—quickly, Mr Deputy Speaker—with a young man who apparently from the report lost his life. He went to collect ransom money, the papers said, in the John John area. But they showed you a picture of him with two high-powered rifles on Facebook, I think I saw it, or on the papers. Guns. Guns out there. [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Member: What are you doing about it?

Hon. F. Hinds: Look, I am being disturbed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member, you proceed.

Hon. F. Hinds: Thank you very much. The Minister of National Security shared some statistics. Weapons used in the commission of murders: between the 1st of January and the 26th of June, unfortunately, in this bloodied place, 245 murders of which 192 involved the use of firearms either to demonstrate it or actually use it; 36 were done with sharp instruments like knives, cutting people's throats; blunt objects, nine; other, eight. And you could use your bare hands and kill somebody too. So even if you collect all the illegal firearms in the country, with the hearts of men you still have the problem with strangulation and all of that. They could use a piece of rope. There are many things that are not necessarily illegal objects that could be used to kill, including a simple plastic bag over somebody's head or an over consumption of alcohol if you laced the drink heavily enough. All of these things I would call poisoning. Yes. So gun retrieval is a critical thing.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, while we acknowledge that it is the Government's responsibility and the Minister of National Security is responsible for public law and order, the reality is also and equally to be known that the police service is the organization in Trinidad and Tobago that is tasked with the responsibility of carrying out that Executive function and, therefore, we have to focus on the police, but not just to condemn and criticize idly, but to support them—provide the resources and to provide the training opportunities and to deal with issues.

I for my part and the Government, we are trying to rid this place of illegal firearms. Mr. Deputy Speaker, 745 in a year seems to me like child's play because there appears from what I am hearing and seeing, to be far more illegal guns out there. I had the benefit, as I say, of working for three days with a police unit or two in Halifax County

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in the United States, and I would tell you this: I came back here and I told my Prime Minister—because it was he who sent me on that exercise—from what I have seen in terms of efficiency—and this is not to condemn the police service here, because I know they try their best, they work hard, but not enough, clearly not enough. When I saw how they behaved in Halifax, I told my Prime Minister it appears as though one police there is worth about 10 police here. I said that, because the way they use the technology and the way they do their thing.

So, let me just press on. So the key issues will have to be education, which will include civility, compassion and lawful means of earning livelihood. We think, and we are trying to create, notwithstanding the troubles of the Minister of Finance in today's day, opportunities for all in Trinidad and Tobago. No one could be heard to say that there are not legitimate, lawful opportunities for earning income in Trinidad and Tobago. Nobody must be able to say that.

We need laws and, therefore, we need the support of our friends. Parliaments have to play a role in dealing with this. But you cannot come hypocritically to condemn the Government. I ask again, who is Government? Does it include the Parliament? And the answer is yes, it does. But they will tell you when you go to them that is the Government business. Our job is to scrutinize and our job is to condemn. That is what they will tell you. They do not understand.

Enforcement is another key thing. You heard the Member for Chaguanas East talk about the graffiti issue in Singapore, yes. A police lieutenant in Miami saw the signs: "Do not feed the alligators, crocodiles" there on the Miami Everglades. This happened last year. I took good note of it. He went and broke the law and fed them. One of them took off his left hand clean, and while he was in the hospital—a police lieutenant—waiting for discharge, he found himself under police guard and as he walked out, he was charged for breaking that law and he lost his job. "In Trinidad if he lose he hand people go say, well he done lose he hand ah ready", the police might walk away. Law enforcement is critical, and that is one of the issues we have to work on. That is one of the issues that my new responsibility would permit me to pay some attention to. [*Desk thumping*] And then I intend to use—we, the Joint Select Committee on National Security, we have already begun and we intend to continue using that platform to demand from the law enforcement in this country and those concerned to give us some more effort, some more blood in dealing with this Executive function, on behalf of the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

As for the Judiciary, a couple weeks ago, I saw someone fined \$2,500 for possession of arms and ammunition. I almost cried. The street is that you pay about \$7,000, \$8,000 for one. That fine is less than even the cost of buying the

illegal gun. When the police spent hours doing surveillance work, intelligence work, nurturing it, watching it, all of that—court time and all of that—to fine somebody \$2,500. I am calling on the Judiciary, they have a role to play. You cannot be doing that. There has to be consistency in sentencing. You could sentence somebody for up to 25 years for illegal arms in the country if it is charged indictably. Give it to them and rehabilitate them inside too because it is too prevalent.

The four people who encountered Father Harvey, every one of them had a gun—three of them—and when they could not kill him, from the reports we got, they called for their boss who came on the scene. He is lucky to be alive. God bless his soul. God bless him. So, therefore, we all have a role to play and the citizens too.

Let me give you two quick examples before I close. Someone sent me a very horrible video on my Facebook or one of them, and I saw a young girl in school uniform having oral affairs with boys in the school. It was just a horrible thing. Mr. Deputy Speaker, Trinidad and Tobago. It pained my heart because I know that young lady has to live with that, once it was recorded, for the rest of her life. I had a case where a woman at the age of 35 killed a man who was tormenting her about something that happened when she was 14. I defended her in the court. She cut his hand clean off. He tormented her all through her life. Fortunately, she won the case. So I felt for that young lady and I felt for the young men too, because if they were conscious they would not engage themselves in that.

Anyway, do you know what I did? I did not just watch the video and leave it alone. I contacted the Children's Authority. I contacted Minister Ayanna Webster-Roy. She put me in touch with the Children's Authority and they acted promptly and professionally. They have identified the young girl; [*Desk thumping*] they have identified the boys; [*Desk thumping*] they have identified their parents and they are now the beneficiaries of counselling and training and treatment. I heard about another case in my own constituency where two children, 12 and 13, are virtually at large in the community and big men abusing them. The Children's Authority is onto that too. That is what I want the citizens to do, follow my example. Something comes to your attention, deal with it. [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Member: And you still got demoted.

Hon. F. Hinds: And I conclude—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Members.

Hon. F. Hinds: I hear my friend talking about demotion, “well leh meh me tell yuh”, in the words of Freddie McGregor: “When big ship sailing on the ocean we don’t need no promotion”. Rastafari! [*Desk thumping*] Rastafari! “We doh need no promotion.” Yeah. I—actually you know, they say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the story is never completely told. The story of a hunt is never completely told unless you hear the version of the hunted, but let me give you the version today.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Two more minutes.

Hon. F. Hinds: About two months ago I went to the Prime Minister and volunteered for this job, because I want to do something. [*Desk thumping*] He agreed with me. He told me we will do it at the end of June, and I am quite happy and willing to join the Attorney General and the Government of Trinidad and Tobago to deal with it. [*Desk thumping*] I wish my friend, the Member for Port of Spain South, very, very best in the thing, and I assure her she will get my full support because we work as team and on we go. [*Desk thumping*] God bless you. I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I recognize the Member for Siparia.

Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar SC (Siparia): Thank you very much, Madam— Sorry. Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for this opportunity to contribute on a Motion filed by my colleague, the Member for Naparima. I think it is important for us to get back to what this Motion is about because for the last 45 minutes, a matter of serious concern in our country, a matter in which everyone, I believe, woke up yesterday morning after 21 months of brutality—but I think every woman, every mother, every parent, you feel that pain in your belly, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

When you see the photographs that have been shared on the social media of the young Videsh and we see where our country has reached to the slaughter of the innocents, the slaughter of young children—how many children have been slaughtered in our country—women, the elderly? And, therefore, the entertainment show put on by my colleague, the Member for Laventille West, really fails to take—

Mr. Hinds: Standing Order 48(4), she is imputing improper motives.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Overruled. Proceed.

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you. It really shows the total lack of caring, compassion [*Desk thumping*] for the victims of crime in our country. [*Desk thumping*] This Motion was for us to be able to pay attention and recognize the horror and the fear that ordinary citizens in this country live in and undergo on a daily basis.

I do not think it is enough for any Member—shuffled or reshuffled or to be shuffled. That is not the issue. Whether you were shuffled and the “I man show” that you demonstrated was “I, I, I”. This was not a job interview. This was not to demonstrate, well, look, even though I have been shuffled or licked up, I am great. I am great and with the nasty half-truths and innuendos pelted across the floor. This was about the fear, the safety and security of citizens in Trinidad and Tobago [*Desk thumping*] and the Member failed to recognize that. It became a big joke and all his colleagues were so busy. That is why you see an analogy of entertainment, Sir, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because that is what it appeared to be.

So, first of all, we were subjected by the Hon. Member to the “I man show” and then we were subjected to anecdotal references of gruesome incidences around the world—in London, in Australia, everywhere and Russia. What about here? What about Trinidad and Tobago? And all these gruesome incidences. The Minister is very clear that he is aware of all these gruesome, heinous, criminal acts but gives us, first of all, no feelings because it was a joke but, second, no plan, not an idea, nothing [*Desk thumping*] of how we deal with this problem.

And so he proceeded to blame, of course, always, blame us, blame the Partnership. He talked about the Commissioner of Police and the committees and how we were working together. I was way back in Opposition then, led by then Opposition Leader, Basdeo Panday, and so on. Yes, we were there. I think the Member for Arouca/Maloney was on that committee; the Member for Port of Spain South, my colleague, we welcome you to higher up on the benches, Madam [*Desk thumping*] and I wish you good luck in your ventures because, as you know, this job is not easy. So good luck as you go ahead. I doubt the Member for Port of Spain South will have to spend an “I man show” for 45 minutes to show her qualifications because the woman is qualified and I wish her good luck. [*Desk thumping*]

So blame game: blame the Partnership, blame the police. It almost came close to blaming God. The Member almost came close to blaming God, but we must always remember that God helps those who help themselves. [*Desk thumping*] And, therefore, I think the Member totally failed to keep within the confines of this Motion before this honourable Chamber and to afford any hope or comfort to citizens.

You know today, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have to stop this, you know. We really have to stop this blame game. The hon. Prime Minister tells us: “Well look, what can a Government do in raising citizens and so on? We cannot ban knives and cutlasses. Well, that is so totally true. Let us remember the Member for

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Laventille West, he has spent time trying to ask us: who is the Government? The man is in Government. The Member is in Government but he is asking this whole Parliament who is in Government. [*Desk thumping*] And if you do not understand that you are in Government and you are in charge, well, Lord, we are in a really, really, deadly place. So we have to stop this blame game. I take all the blame in the world. The Partnership, we take your blame, but what is happening now from September 2015 to now is in your hands. [*Desk thumping*] The blood is on your hands. I cannot come now to do your work. We had our chance, and I would talk about what we were able to do and what we were able to achieve. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Members, Members, please. I need to hear the discourse of the Member for Siparia and I would like you all to listen in silence.

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: And this is what the Motion says:

“Be it resolved that this House take note and express its horror at the exponential growth in the crime rate manifested by historic murder rates, violence against the person and property and the inexplicable disappearance of citizens;”

This is one of the resolutions in the Motion that is before the House, but did we hear any horror? Did we hear of any plan? The Motion goes on further to say:

“Be it further resolved that this House condemn the Prime Minister and the Government for:

- a) failure to address the rising crime epidemic; and
- b) inability to present a credible Anti-Crime Plan aimed at preventing, detecting, prosecuting and rehabilitating the criminal elements.”

That is what we are here to try to do today, hon. Deputy Speaker. I think anybody who was listening to the Member for Laventille West would have been so very disappointed. Someone sent me a text and they said they wondered if the Member was suffering from Stockholm syndrome. You know, where you get such a battering but you still come and sing the praises of your captors; you know—shuffle once, twice, three times—and then coming here to throw these remarks across the floor and give us no plan.

You know, I wondered, after the Member gave all those anecdotes and so on, why is it he was not put in the Ministry of National Security? Because he gave his qualifications—a policeman, he knows about fighting crime, he knows about—but nothing. Why not the Ministry of National Security then? Because surely with

the kinds of qualifications he boasted off about himself, perhaps we would have had some more help in dealing with our crime situation, but instead his contribution today I think will confirm in the minds of many, the reasons why he has been shuffled not once, but twice and will be shuffled again. [*Desk thumping*]

He accuses the former Attorney General of not lasting a five-year term, but this Hon. Minister could not last months in one Ministry or the other Ministry. Now, I do not know the internal workings. That is the remit of the Prime Minister to give or to take when it comes to Ministries. But, you see, I think it may confirm, as I say, why the Minister has been moved about like a political—sorry I would not say football—in that regard.

Then we go on to his words—and Members got up, whether it was threats or whatever, whatever it is, it was really just being nasty, in my respectful view. But I want to tell you I have been in politics and I come an “I lady” right now, in defence. I have been in politics for a large number of my very senior years, maybe 28 to 30 years, and you see if words and lies and half-truths and innuendoes could knock me down, I would be dead and buried at this point. I am not at all frightened by the kinds of allegations that the Member continues to make.

3.30 p.m.

So let us get to where we are. Those are just some rebuttals on what the Hon. Member said. The Member talked about scientific mechanisms and tools for dealing with crime, and talked about London; again, well, what is happening here? What is that, to say that it is happening in London? The Minister spoke about law. He talked about law enforcement. He talked about the Judiciary, about the DNA, the Member talked about education and laws and enforcements, all of these. These are just the buzzwords. There is nothing specific to say, look, this is what we will do; this is how we will fight the crime; this is how we could try to prevent the slaughter of young children in this country, the slaughter of women, the brutality that we are facing at this point in time.

And, you see, the Member then tells us the only law that the Partnership did was concentrated on something called section 34. Not for the first time, again, that is another one of their buzz mantras, section 34. Well let me repeat again today, not one person has been freed or taken out of the justice system because of that section 34. [*Desk thumping*] When it was brought to our attention we came here and we repealed it. We sat over an extended period of time and repealed this that the Member is talking about. But that is not strictly true too, because there were many laws, and I did not intend to go there, and, you know, if there is one person I think who has been trying, but only with restriction in the remit that that Minister has would be the Hon. Attorney General.

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I watched the Parliament channel last night, and, I mean, they were there in the Senate, and you thought you would never hear me say this but I will say it with a pinch of salt, because whilst you have done well, there is much to be done. I watched that Senate proceeding last night and you all were there from 2.30 p.m. until about—after about 10.30 p.m. I just took off the volume but I kept the screen on, and they were there, and from every Senator a barrage coming on amendments in the committee stage but I saw the Hon. Attorney General batting in his crease. So I do not think you need any help from the Member for Laventille West. [*Desk thumping*] I say you can bat for yourself. Sometimes you will score a six, and so on. But in one arena—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member—again, the Member for Siparia is capable, she needs no assistant. Proceed.

Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you very much. I am still responding, Sir, to comments raised by the Member for Laventille West, that we only concentrated on the section 34 and did nothing else, and that is what took me into the legislative agenda. Whilst the Government has done very well, and that is why I mentioned the work being done by the Hon. Attorney General, with respect to the legislative aspects, and, as I said, there is still much more to be done, because whilst it is with the laws if we look at the parliamentary records we would see that the agenda put out by the Government contained about 49 pieces of legislation to be done between 2015 and 2017. We are nearing the end, I think, by next week the Parliament will be shut down. We come back in September, maybe for a week, and so the Second Session of the Eleventh Parliament will be completed.

So whilst the Government had given its target of about 46 pieces of legislation, give or take 46 pieces of legislation, the Government has not been able to meet that target, thus far, despite, I mean, a lot of work having been done. Those were the main Bills coming, that legislative suite that the Hon. Attorney General speaks about. So we would see at the end of the Second Session, or nearing the end of the Second Session the Government would have done, out of those 46 pieces, or targeted, would have, thus far, as of date, actually passed, have assented to, or have proclaimed—I think it is about 15. Maybe by September, I know the AG is working very hard, more will be done. In the two sessions we were—and I make this comment in relation to the Member for Laventille West saying we did no law only section 34—by the end of our Second Session we had completed, passed, assented and/or proclaimed 32 pieces of legislation. [*Desk thumping*] And out of those, a large number had to do with the criminal justice

system, and so on. So I wish the AG good luck, because I think that is the one arena in which I can see some attempts being made in the fight against crime and criminals. [*Desk thumping*] However, in the other areas, we are not seeing a similar kind of exercise.

So let us see what the Government had planned to do. The Government had planned to do, as my colleague from Chaguanas East shared with this Parliament, what did the Government come to the population with? The Government came with its manifesto plans, and some of those were shared by the Member for Chaguanas East. However, before the manifesto even came, the Government, then in Opposition, gave us what they called a 10-point crime plan. Then some of that was translated into their 2015 manifesto, and then some of that was translated into budget 2015 and their budget 2016. But, regrettably today, apart from, as I say, some in the legislative arena those other initiatives in the fight against crime have not materialized, and if we were to take a scorecard and look at it the Government has not met or has not kept its own promises, but broken those promises when it comes in terms of the fight against crime.

So let us see what some of those were. One, the Member for Laventille West spoke about the Commissioner of Police and what happened with that, so let us see, 10-point crime plan: Commissioner of Police to be appointed. Well, that has not happened. We are 21 months into the administration. For whatever reason, it has not happened. Two, in the 10-point crime plan: manpower audit for the police service. I am informed that this is in progress. So there has been some progress on that aspect. Activate laws to establish municipal police in 14 local government bodies; this was in the crime plan, 10-point—my colleague said also in the manifesto, and also in the budget speeches, but this has not happened, failed. On the scorecard the Government has failed and broken that promise made in the 10-point and in the manifesto. Amend laws to give greater powers to the Police Complaints Authority, 10-point crime plan, and, thereafter, manifesto and budget statements, thus far, failed. This is another broken promise on the part of the Government in the fight against crime. Five: establish a Joint Select Committee, to review, oversee, and monitor police programmes and effectiveness of security systems for crime-fighting. Now the Government has been using the existing JSC on National Security, and when we went to the crime talks with the Government, the Government agreed that it would take away the Chair of this National Security, Joint Select Committee. [*Crosstalk*] Yes, the Government gave the undertaking because it was felt that you cannot have a Member of the Executive in charge of the parliamentary committee on such a sensitive matter. Well, that

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was since some time last year, to date that is another broken promise, because the Member for Laventille West, as a Member of the Executive, continues to chair that Committee on National Security. Another broken promise.

In the 10-point crime plan—and, Hon. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I raise these because, thus far, the Government has not articulated any new plans to fight crime. It was the 10-point plan, the manifesto, and what was said in the budget, but, thus far, as I say, there is nothing else except what came out yesterday. Apart from legislation, I am still leaving the legislation aside, apart from what the Prime Minister said yesterday, which I would come to, which is the latest development. So let us see here now: create a witness tampering offence; broken promise again, has not happened and, in fact, no action appears to have been taken. Create the offence of unlawful eviction—you know, when I was Prime Minister the Hon. Opposition Leader, today's Prime Minister, asked to meet me very urgently and, you know, I think I met him within the day, the same day, or the next day for this urgent meeting. The Hon. Opposition Leader, Dr. Keith Rowley, he came to see me so urgently to say, listen, we have to do something about these home invasions, let us work together to create the offence of unlawful eviction—okay, I am gone. We did not do it, okay. The Government comes in, in their 10-point crime plan, in their manifesto; to date, another broken promise by that Government and from the Opposition.

Then, nine: sustain implementation of the Ryan Report for development of east Port of Spain; nothing, another broken promise—nothing. Acceptance of the CCJ as final Court of Appeal; nothing, another broken promise. So these were some of the—I think there was one more to make the 10-point crime plan: review anti-gang legislation and ensure it is effective; well the legislation was not reviewed, if you remember. When the anti-gang legislation came, it was not reviewed. You brought it back and said, listen, that is yours, so, you know what, you are handcuffed to it, pass it exactly as it was, no, so that as well was not done. That is the 10-point crime plan.

Then came the manifesto, which my colleague had shared: establish community safety partnerships; broken promise by the Government. Establish police management agency, broken promise by the Government. Establish a joint protection agency, broken promise. Establish a police service inspectorate, broken promise. Establish the office of the DNA custodian—I think, Minister of National Security, I think that may have been done—pursue ISO certification of Forensic Science Centre—after a walk out, we had the pathologist walking out, you had one of the pathologists talking about the madness about transporting dead bodies

across the water to Tobago to do post-mortems, and so on. Of course: pursue ISO certification of Forensic Science Centre, another broken promise. Develop a policy on prison management, to the best of my knowledge another broken promise. And, again, I will seek, through you, to remind the Hon. Attorney General, now you have a little help, extra help from the Member for Laventille West, can you kindly look at the prison rules—

Mr. Al-Rawi: I am.

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC:—because we have them sitting there. They were drafted, maybe you are reviewing them, but we really need these things, they are over 100 years old.

Mr. Al-Rawi: Correct.

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Okay. Well, AG, please, we need to get those prison rules in place.

So those are the manifesto promises. So, first, 10-point crime plan, then manifesto promise, then now we come to the budget statements. And after over \$10 billion in expenditure later, from September 2015 to date, again, the budget promises have not materialized, other broken promises coming out of the budget statement. So we would have seen, for example, budget promises, and then we will move on. Budget promises: establish a joint protection agency, promised in 2015/2016 budget, promised again in the 2017/2018 budget; again, another broken promise. Establish a police management agency to strengthen the many aspects of police service operations, again, in the 2016 budget, 2015/2016, again in the 2017/2018; again broken, not done. So even on their own targets in the fight against crime, Sir, we have seen a failure on the part of the Government to deal with the issue of crime.

Establish community safety partnerships, mentioned before, 10-point plan, manifesto, in the budget, 2016, again promised in 2017, up to date, nothing, nothing, broken. Establish a police service inspectorate, sounds familiar, because it was in the 10-point, it was in the manifesto, 2016 budget and in the 2017 budget, again, not there. Re-engineer the criminal justice system, and I believe this is where the hon. Attorney General, and now his additional help, has been working assiduously. I wish him good luck with that with the legislative aspect. Strengthen prison management—this is in the budget now, the budget promises—prison management focused on health services rehab, security management services, and prison officer security; best of my memory, and I stand to be corrected, it appears that there was one consultation held somewhere in April, 2016, on this whole issue of prisons. So that too has not happened in spite of the various promises.

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So it is clear that the Government attack on criminals and crime is concentrated on legislation. As I say, nothing is wrong with that, but then you come every budget with the same thing. There is a new measure which is not to be found in any of the previous plans of the 10-point and manifesto, and so on, something called decentralization of police forces. I do not know what it is but that mystery item was said to be in the planning or implementation phase when that budget was delivered.

So when we look at the billions being spent, and we talk about it all the time, we are not seeing any of these plans bearing any fruit, and I want to look at them. What are the statistics to bear out that whatever the Government has done or not done the impact on crime has been deadly? The impact on criminals has not been deadly. So that we saw the Hon. Member for Laventille West stood up at the very start of his contribution and said, the future is bright. The future is bright, and the question is maybe for him, for that Member, Sir, but can I ask, is that future bright for the 247 persons murdered this year and their families? Is that future bright for young Videsh and his family? Is that future bright for all these others, so many? The future is not bright because the fear is there.

My colleague from Chaguanas West has already shared a lot of statistics, I will not repeat, but where we are seeing the madness, as the *Newsday* editorial tells us, “Deadly state of madness”, *Newsday*, today’s date, Friday the 30th, 2017:

“NO NUMBER of Cabinet changes will make a difference to the population of Trinidad and Tobago unless they affect the ability of the State to effectively combat the crime situation. That situation is one which, judging from what unfolded in Malabar on Wednesday, continues to reach new lows.

We express our deepest sympathies to the families of all who have been affected...”

And the editorial talks about other cases of, you know, horrendous murders, and then we reach where the murder toll of this year is higher than it was at this time last year. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will go even further, it is not just higher than this time last year, but let us look at it, the murder toll in this country—I will take you back to 2013—in 2013, the murder toll estimated as at June, 2013, was 186—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Silence on the Government side.

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Estimated June, 2014, 216; estimated as at June—when I say estimated it is the numbers given from TTPS website—as at June, 2015, 196; as at June, 2016, entered the red and ready, 229—when we left office as at June it was 196, there were others from June to September—2016, as at June,

229—where are we today?—as at June, 2017, 248. We look at that then. Then we look at since 2015, September/December 141; 2016, 463; 2017, 248, a total of 852 murders in this country since September 2015, an average of over 40 persons murdered per month, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So, obviously, something is not working, and it cannot be that the Partnership is to blame or anybody here, because we are not in charge. The Member was asking who is in the Government does not seem to realize that he is the Government, and does not realize he is the Government and, therefore, the Government is in charge and needs to step up to the plate to deal with what the editorial of the *Newsday* says, it is a deadly state of madness in our country. So those are some of the statistics, and these stats recited many times before will show that whenever the PNM is in power the murder rate increases, the murder numbers increase. [*Desk thumping*] The highest ever was in 2009, I believe—well, 2008, 550; 2009, 508; fell in 2013; 2014 we have 203, and so on, 403, and back with the PNM in power, 2016, 463; today, 2017, 248 and climbing. Those are the numbers. So those are the hard facts, we cannot change that in any way.

So these were the promises, 10-point plan, manifesto, budget promises, and all those promises apart from, maybe as I say, the attempt for the DNA person, the curator to be appointed, and for the law tried to be changed and working with the Commissioner, really none of those matters have happened. The Government has totally failed to keep its own promises. So fast-forward now to today, what is the Government saying as to how they will deal with the crimes? Because the Member for Laventille West fully recognized when he talked about all these deadly incidents, and so on, he fully recognizes, look, things really bad, you know, crime is really bad. Without saying so he is admitting that it is really, really bad. And you talk to anybody, John Public out there, everybody in the country, it is really terrifying. It is not just with the murders, you see, the serious crimes have also increased, the home invasions. A colleague of mine, I will prefer not to name that colleague today because I would not want to jeopardize his own safety and security, but a home invasion took place last night at 8.00 p.m., Mr. Deputy Speaker, invaded the home, two homes away, invaded that home, tied up, guns, whatever happening at 8.00 p.m. in the night.

So it is no longer, we used to say, well, “look, doh worry, is dem gangsters, those wicked gangsters, you know, they are not normal people”, we moved it away. You know, I was very impressed by a young man. In that same Anthony Bourdain show where the comments were made, unfortunate comments some said, but I suppose in some ways the comments that were made were totally true. They were true. It was made in the Syrian-Lebanese community, those comments were true, that is fine, but I was very impressed by a young man from Freetown—

Dr. Tewarie: Freetown Collective.

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you, Sir, Freetown Collective. When he was interviewed and they asked him about crime, and he said, the crime is not just about poverty you know. He said, the crime rates, they are about exclusion. And we need to understand because people have been poor in this country, not today, not yesterday, people have been poor—“oh God”—talk about from independence, from before independence, not just poor, slavery, indentureship, we have been exceedingly poor, but the crime rates were not what they are today. What this guy was saying from the Freetown Collective, he said, it is not just about poverty you know, it is about exclusion, and, therefore, there is a serious issue in our country about equity, and equitable distribution of resources. [*Desk thumping*]

So while the comment made on the Bourdain show appeared to be something about ethnic, and whatever, it is not really about that. At the end of the day it is about class in equity and inequitable distribution of resources, the haves and the have-nots, but coming from the inequitable distribution of resources. Now, what is the role of a Government in a situation of the haves and have-nots, and so on, or the role of the 1 per cent? What is the role? The role of the Government is to act in such a manner that you try to give an equitable distribution of the resources of the country, insofar as the State has control of those. And you cannot have that happening, when you have squatters you are sending in people to break down their homes, that is not equitable. It cannot be. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member—

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Deputy Speaker:—your initial 30 minutes has expired, you have an additional 15, you care to use it?

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Proceed.

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: I thank you very much. I am talking about equitable distribution if we want to deal with crime and criminality. Yes, the legislation would help but we cannot have—recently in the floods when they said squatters cannot get nothing, but the squatters good enough to go by to look for votes, eh, and the squatters good enough to pay property tax, but when they were suffering in the time of greatest need, sorry, no squatters, we cannot help you. Masses of thousands of people, no help.

Once we continue with this focus that is not people-centred, people-driven, [*Desk thumping*] if you do not support these then we are going to end up with exclusion of persons and people, and then you are going to end up with people feeling excluded and not wanted, or they will not feel they have a part to play or they have a role to play, or any opportunities to benefit from, from the system, then what will they do? They will try to break down the system. Now, ethnic tensions are very dangerous, very divisive. We have had those tensions simmering for the longest while. I think this recent Bourdain story has brought it up again. So we have had ethnic tensions, and so on, for a while, but thank God we have been able to live harmoniously, would you say, in our own diversity, tensions simmering, but it has not yet exploded. What explodes here, and exploded, and not just here but in the rest of the world, Deputy Speaker, it is what? It is when there is economic inequity. That is where you get explosion, where there is economic, when it is based on class. It is not on race that the thing works on, it is economic inequity, and that is one of the things that the Freetown gentleman when he spoke. He did not put it in all those words, but in terms of how we are dealing with it.

Now, the Selwyn Ryan report had given us some things to deal with it and ways to go forward, maybe we failed and we did not do it, but this Government, before becoming Government, committed to seeing how to help young black youth, how can we help them to take them away from a life of criminality, because, you see, remember, I am saying, what does the Government fast-forward? The 10-point plan, manifesto, budget promises, 19.99 per cent broken, failed, fast-forward today, I was saying. We are talking again if the reports are correct, the hon. Prime Minister, first of all, continues to say that the Government is not into policing, that that is for the TTPS, and that every opportunity the Government gets what do they do? Blame the TTPS.

But today, the Member for Laventille West, who prides himself of being a very good lawyer, and I will not doubt him at this point in time, was very clear—
[*Interruption*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Address the Chair, Member.

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Yes, Sir. I do not believe, you know, the Hon. Member in talking on that issue gave us a certain take on it, and which I will come back to in a moment. I got slightly distracted here. So, how are we fighting the crime?—legislation, yes, but, again, all the legislation, thus far, has to do after you die already, “after yuh done dead”, as they say. As they say in Trinidad, “yuh done dead”, so all of it is in the justice system. It is not about the prevention. It is not about the prevention at all or helping to prevent.

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Hon. Prime Minister, as I say, on the case of the TTPS, but you are in charge, and today—that is the point I got slightly swayed from, that the Minister who spoke before me said that the TTPS is part of the Executive. Now, the TTPS has its own budget. The changes we made, the same law that the Hon. Member said that we in the Opposition convoluted and demanded all kinds of things and parts to be put in place, of course, they were passed by the entire Parliament of the then Government, Mr. Manning was the leader, and some of us who are here were in Opposition when we passed it. In that legislation as well, Sir, for how the TTPS is to operate and what is to be done, that is when we amended the Constitution, we amended the Police Service Act to give independence and autonomy to the Commissioner of Police to be able to manage the police service, to have a budget of their own, the TTPS, those changes were made. And they were very important changes, you know, because as long as you have to depend on five cents, 10 cents for everything, which is where this Parliament is, in a sorry state, that the Parliament does not have a budget of its own, the Parliament should be autonomous and have its own budget, it is supposed to be a democratic Parliament. [*Desk thumping*]

So the TTPS moved away based on recommendations and the discussions, the Members for Arouca/Maloney there, Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West and others, that we were able to give that kind of autonomy. And we remember why, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the famous expression where the Commissioner of Police previously would say, toothless bulldog, "I am a toothless bulldog, I cannot do anything", toothless bulldog, so we attempted to give teeth to the Commissioner of Police. Now, you will say it is the TTPS and the Commissioner of Police has failed, but it was that same Commissioner of Police, the same TTPS, in the time that when we were in office when we were able to bring the serious crimes down to the lowest ever in 31 years. [*Desk thumping*] So it cannot be that the TTPS is at fault or the Commissioner is at fault, same players. It cannot be, it has to do with your management of being in charge [*Desk thumping*] when being in Government.

So, blame the police, blame a partnership, I say, we get blamed for things that happened 20 years ago. The Agusta helicopters, and, "oh gosh", this thing about helicopter and, you know, if the Prime Minister, this Prime Minister, had used those helicopters when he said he could not get a flight from Tobago to reach Trinidad to help flood victims, he would have [*Desk thumping*] been in Trinidad on the ground. He used to talk about pram, using the helicopter as a pram, and all this nonsense, foolishness, you know. It served a purpose; that is the purpose. And

so now they are crying about how much the maintenance cost for their Agusta Westland choppers were. We inherited that contract [*Desk thumping*] from the previous Government. We inherited it, and I have the documents but time will not permit me, but I do have the documents to prove we inherited that.

Unlike the OPVs, we were able to get out of the OPV contract otherwise we would have been in a worse position with the OPVs as well. [*Desk thumping*] A five-year contract, five years later these maintenance costs of billions hitting you in the face. So I am saying we get blame down the road, five years, six years, seven years later, I guess they would be kicking and screaming right down to the next general election, blame them, blame Kamla, blame Moonilal, blame Tewarie, blame Suruj, blame the Partnership, and they will blame everybody except themselves. But the people of this country are not foolish, and the people [*Desk thumping*] of this country would give them their comeuppance and they know where to lay the blame; so there we are. The second measure I heard the Government announce was the establishment or the hiring of 16—one newspaper, somewhere it was carried—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: Sixty.

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Some said 60 and some said 16, so Minister Young has clarified, it is 60, six-zero—60 CSI, very laudable, and I hope it does not take forever, and the proper processes are put in place, but, again, who is a CSI, or what is CSI, Crime Scene Investigator. What does that mean?—you are dead already. You are dead.

4.00 p.m.

When you go to a crime scene it means the person is already dead. So laudable, but again where are the measures prior to being dead, or being robbed or being raped? Where are those measures? I would be very happy if Members from the other side, apart from the legislative, which I have acknowledged and the attempts being made in the legislative arena, but those are to deal with the criminal justice system. I have seen nothing else coming from the Government, and I have seen the broken promises from 10-point plan, manifesto and from everything else.

So you would ask me then: what did we do and what do I suggest we do? The numbers are there, the stats are there. We brought the serious crimes down to the lowest in 31 years—the lowest in 31 years. In some cases there was like an 85 per cent decrease. What did we do? Yes, we passed legislation. I think about 28

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pieces of law passed to deal with crime and, in addition, we had non-legislative measures that we put in place, and some of those, this Government, unfortunately has shut down. Some of those the Government has shut down. So while we were able to bring down the crime putting in some of these other measures, we have seen where the Government has shut down these things.

Let us take, for example, the community comfort patrol. You see, sometimes the deterrent is not *ex post facto*, after you are dead or robbed or raped as the case may be, the deterrent has to come before and even before that the social programmes, which I suppose someone else will speak about, because the time will not permit me. But, you know, the prevention programmes; sometimes a high visibility is very important. So we would have had the community comfort patrols—let me just get my paper with those issues that we were able to put in place. The community comfort patrols—the visibility in those areas was very important and remains important, but it has been scrapped.

What did we also do? We established a National Operations Centre as the backbone for intelligence gathering and information sharing, for collaboration within law enforcement agencies between the TTPS and the TTDF—the police and the defence force. That contributed to a notable reduction in crime in our time. What has this Government done? The Government has, through the SSA, taken away the National Operations Centre as to what it was to be, the main coordinating agency for law enforcement, and taken it and dropped it into something called the spying agency, the SSA, and we have not heard a word from it. In all the floods recently, no major coordinating agency was responsible when the disaster struck us.

Well, you had the ODPM, but the ODPM does not have the statutory authority to coordinate and collaborate between the various agencies that are necessary. I think if you ask the Hon. Member for San Fernando West—the real AG—perhaps he will give you something on the law with respect to that.

We established a national security specialized operations group. This group comprised members of various law enforcement agencies, again for the collaborative effort, to respond to events that would require higher levels of response. We established the Energy Sector Security Initiative which looked into the protection of critical energy infrastructure. That is very vital, that at a moment's notice or even with the surveillance, our energy infrastructure is kept safe, because you blow up one of those, Sir—already we have no revenues, no forex and so on, very little—we will have more, so that energy infrastructure is very critical. So we have set that up. I am told that this has also been scrapped.

We had the relaunch of the E99. The population of T&T had a tool then to report crimes, so it had E99. We did something which allowed for a heavy increase in law enforcement presence. The famous soldier Bill that we brought to the Parliament which the then Opposition, now in Government, rejected, was to give us the IATF, the Inter Agency Task Force, police and army together with the coast guard, for us to have a collaborative effort there and a greater number of law enforcement persons on the ground as a deterrent and even after the fact. [*Desk thumping*] I saw all the floods, a disaster—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: You have two more minutes.

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you, Sir. The floods—I did not see that there. Therefore, why do we not just bring out the IATF? Why do we not put out the army, Hon. Member for Point Fortin, through you, Sir? Why do we not get more boots on the ground so that we can have that as a deterrent as well?

The introduction of the Rapid Response Unit; the establishment of a Counter-Human Trafficking Unit, and we took all that money that was wasted in the illegal SAUTT and we said that we would give police officers or law enforcement. We would take that money we were saving, where we were paying these retired British officers—coming down here and paying them so much, \$120,000 a month and so on—we took that money and we gave every law enforcement officer what?—\$1,000, a special allowance. [*Desk thumping*]

We established the surveillance bays on the highways, I am not seeing any of that being done, and many others I will pass to my colleagues. So some of these measures, the former Minister of National Security passed it on when the elections were completed and the new Government came into office, gave a document which Captain Gary Griffith tells me, he sent me a copy, of all the initiatives that had been undertaken and the status of each and the way forward to the hon. new Minister of National Security, the Member for Point Fortin. So the Government is fully aware of all of these.

Today then, I say that the Government is not coming forward with what are their plans. It is not good enough to say you have the architecture and we are getting all of these. And, by the way, those boats that we bought, those 12 fast patrol boats, Sir, I am very disappointed. They have done well, but what I am very disappointed about is that I am told if you go down the islands, down at Staubles Bay, you would see them parked up most of the time. Why? Because the coast guard is not being properly resourced with the manpower needed for them. So that is another issue that could be looked at, talking about porous borders and so on.

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As I close, I commend the Members who spoke on this Motion on our side. I commend the Member for Naparima and I ask Members to support the Motion which is before the House today on the horrible, deadly issue of crime in Trinidad and Tobago. I thank you.

The Minister in the Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs and Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister (Hon. Stuart Young): Thank very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As usual, it is indeed a great privilege and an honour to be provided with the opportunity to contribute to this debate on behalf of Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West.

I have listened attentively to the contributions by those on the other side throughout the course of this debate. Hopefully, as is becoming usual, and my usual methodology, this afternoon, through you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to speak to all of the civic-minded citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, because we must be realistic, we must be pragmatic, we must be honest. The issue of crime is not a new issue. The issue of crime is one that plagues most societies in the world. The issue of crime is one that is currently a real challenge here to us in Trinidad and Tobago.

I will get into, during the course of my contribution, the initiatives and what the Government has done in the last 20 months and what the Government intends to do in the months coming with respect to the issue of crime. But you see, respectfully, it is important to put it into context and for the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago to be told the truth, and to be told the truth as to what was discovered by this Government when we came in on the 9th of September, 2015.

At the outset, I would like to call upon all citizens in Trinidad and Tobago and, again, all of the Members of this House, all 41 elected Members of the House of Representatives, to really look for solutions as to how we can address this crime issue. [*Desk thumping*] Because to come here and to make contributions and submissions as to trying to dismantle what is being done, as to trying to belittle the law enforcement officers who we as citizens must thank. I would like to thank the members of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, the members of the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force, the members of the Strategic Services Agency for, on a daily basis, putting their lives at risk for us the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago and living up to the motto to protect and serve.

There are elements that are bad apples in those barrels, and hopefully they will be rooted out over time. But what is important is that we the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, and it is not only a Government's issue as I will soon demonstrate,

because there are certain pieces of legislation that require the support of the Opposition. There are certain pieces of legislation that require the support of all 41 Members of this House for us to be effective and to carry the responsibility to protect the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago and to fight crime. [*Desk thumping*]

You will hear in the coming months this Government leading the charge with respect to a fight on corruption via the revenue service, via legislation which is follow the money legislation and more particularly, explain your wealth and the turnaround of the burden of proof with that type of legislation. But to get back to the point, it is important that we recognize as a nation the issues we are faced with. Trinidad and Tobago are very small islands so, by definition, our whole borders are surrounded by water. We are seven miles from mainland Venezuela, i.e. South America, and therefore it does not take a rocket scientist, it does not take a person with qualifications in fighting crime to know that the first thing you should do as a small island State is to protect your borders.

One of the best ways to protect your borders is to have proper maritime assets and also air assets, and to recognize that Trinidad and Tobago on the west coast, the Gulf of Paria, the waters are calm, but then there is a south and east coast where we face the Atlantic Ocean, and then to the top, the north, the Caribbean Sea. And those various oceans all carry different types of weather patterns, different water conditions. So it is extremely important when protecting your east coast, south coast and north coast borders to have a particular type of vessel. I heard the hon. Member, who is a former Chief of Defence Staff, my colleague, the Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara, and also we have been told by the hon. Member for Point Fortin, who was also a Chief of Defence Staff, tell us the importance of proper maritime assets to protect our borders.

The first thing that was done, post-May 2010, was the cancellation of the OPV vessels. Those cancellations did leave the borders open. Those borders were left open—and let the people of Trinidad and Tobago be reminded—until just before the elections of 2015. [*Desk thumping*] It is not about the politicization of crime; it is a fact. With our porous borders—and I think the Member for Point Fortin has told us there are over 90 entry points along our coastline, and for five years for those borders to be left porous—five years and five months for those borders to be left porous, without proper marine assets to secure our borders, I am about to tell the people of Trinidad and Tobago, or to remind them rather, what that left us with.

It allowed a host of illegal arms and ammunition to come into the country of Trinidad and Tobago. Now, after five years of a very porous nation, we are left now to work along with law enforcement to try and clean that up, and to work with the assets we have. In times of plenty, nothing was done. Now in times where it is

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more difficult, we the Government are taking our responsibility and our duty very, very seriously to provide the resources for law enforcement. Because it is not any Member of Parliament here, it is not the 41 of us who will go and put our lives on the line on a daily basis. Not one of us will go out on the streets and walk the beat to find the criminals, so let us put it in proper context.

I have heard those on the other side criticize the Hon. Prime Minister for saying continuously that it is the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service that is charged with the responsibility to fight crime. That is a fact. [*Desk thumping*] That is a fact. The Government's interaction comes from the level of the National Security Council and also from the Ministry of National Security. But the Minister of National Security is not the one who goes and seeks to detect crime and to prevent crime. [*Interruption*] We are at a policy level.

I hear my friend the spinner, who is spinning wheels, and what is it that he did to help in the contribution? Absolutely nothing.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Again, Members, when the Member is speaking, we listen in silence. Yes there could be discussion with your colleague next door, but not across the Chamber, please. Proceed, Member.

Hon. S. Young: Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service that is the first responder to protect and serve in the fight against crime, and this Government stands committed, and I will come to list the initiatives we are doing and working with them in the provision of resources for them, including yesterday at Cabinet taking a decision where we agreed with a request from the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service for an additional 60 crime scene investigators. We at the Cabinet level agreed to provide them with that resource. They have 15 permanent now, 31 on month-to-month contracts, but we took a decision, even in this time of little, to provide the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service with an additional 60. I hear them on the other side criticizing it. [*Interruption*]

As the Attorney General reminds me, the Hon. Member for Siparia was talking about some of the things that came out of our discussions from Opposition and Government when we met months ago to try and align ourselves in the fight against crime. The DNA—we are actively pursuing the construction of a new Forensic Science Centre that will include a DNA bank, and we have actually this week begun to receive the drawings for this initiative. The Minister of National Security, the Hon. Attorney General and myself have been having those discussions. They have been leading the charge on making this a reality. It has been sitting on the books for too long. This is one of the initiatives.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want the people of Trinidad and Tobago and the civic-minded citizens to know, another difficulty we faced when we came in—it was within the first month of us being in office—the intelligence services came to us and told us, “Can we turn the servers back on?” The intelligence services came to the Hon. Attorney General, the Minister of National Security and myself and said “Can we turn the servers back on?” We asked them, “What are you talking about?” We were told by the intelligence services of Trinidad and Tobago that those unfortunately on the other side, not in this House today, gave instructions to take the servers off of the machinery being used by the intelligence services. How do you fight crime if you are not able to detect it before it is happening? We were shocked about that.

They then told us that there was facial recognition software in Trinidad and Tobago and, again, in the period 2010 to 2015, it was dismantled and destroyed at the instructions—at the instructions—of a very high-ranking Member of the People’s Partnership Cabinet. Let the people of Trinidad and Tobago know these things, these are facts.

Another issue we faced is the prison system that the Hon. Member for Siparia spoke about, and hearing that there are conversations taking place between prisoners and those on the outside and hits being called from inside. It is not rocket science. Where are the grabbers and jammers? So we asked that question, and the Hon. Member for St. Augustine can tell the country that he was responsible for the procurement of grabbers and jammers to prevent this from taking place. And you know what we were told again? That instructions came—and I am sure the Hon. Member for St. Augustine did not even know this, that those who sat around a table with him were undermining what he was trying to do in the prison service.

So do not stand here today or on any other day—do not stand here today or any other day and tell the people of Trinidad and Tobago that crime goes up under a PNM Government. This is what we faced within the first couple of months of coming into government. Immediately we moved to get them out of the boxes and to get them operationalized to assist in the fight against crime.

Another thing we were told when we came in is the utilization of audio and visual recording equipment for the police service, in recording statements from persons who are accused of crime, and why that was not being used. Well, we did it. At the National Security Council level, we did it. These are just some of the first few elements we faced as a Government coming in. So for five years porous borders, for five years the dismantling of the intelligence equipment, the facial recognition equipment, the grabbers and jammers.

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Mr. Deputy Speaker, another important issue that the people of Trinidad and Tobago should know about is what they did. They bastardized and criticized SAUTT which was doing a very good job. But let me tell you what happened. We were told by the special forces of Trinidad and Tobago that certain Members of that Cabinet went up to their camp and told them, “Put all of your equipment into a warehouse”. Certain Members of the former Cabinet went and dismantled the equipment being used by the special forces of Trinidad and Tobago.

I look at the shocked faces of some of the Members opposite who were sitting at Cabinet, and their faces show to me here that they did not even know some of their colleagues were doing this. They took the equipment from the special forces of Trinidad and Tobago, put it in a warehouse, and it was only post-September 2015 they were allowed back in and it had rotted, tens of millions of dollars of equipment.

Let me tell you what else they did. Certain Members of that Cabinet went to get blue lights.

Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. S. Young: They took the vans and the vehicles from SAUTT.

Hon. Member: But we reduced crime.

Hon. S. Young: They took them and look—the Member for Naparima, I want the people of Trinidad and Tobago to listen to him. The Member for Naparima has just said yes, but we reduced crime. They produced porous borders, destroyed the equipment—[*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Member: They increased crime.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member, address the Chair; silence please.

Hon. S. Young: Thank you very much. Two years later I will tell you what we have done. The country of Trinidad and Tobago, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and every civic-minded citizen of Trinidad and Tobago would recall the state of emergency; a state of emergency was called. We, Trinidad and Tobago and every taxpaying member of Trinidad and Tobago, citizens are now faced with the tens of millions of dollars that may run up into hundreds of millions of dollars of claims by those who were held under a state of emergency called by the former administration. We wrote when we came in, because we are faced with these claims now. They called a state of emergency. To this day the country has not been provided with a satisfactory answer as to why there was a state of emergency. They say they reduced crime? We are now faced with hundreds of millions of dollars of claims.

When we wrote to the former Prime Minister and the former Attorney General, because under the Constitution those two posts constitute a Cabinet. A Prime Minister and an Attorney General are all that are necessary constitutionally in Trinidad and Tobago to compose a Cabinet. And when we wrote to them to say provide us with the reasons for the state of emergency, so we could defend the Treasury of Trinidad and Tobago against persons who are now claiming against Trinidad and Tobago, we have received no response. So we go to court on a weekly basis trying to defend claims and failing, and that lies on their lap.

So do not come here now and try and bring a Motion like this and talk about an anti-crime plan. That is an anti-crime plan? No OPVs, destroy intelligence equipment, unplug servers, get rid of facial recognition servers, bring the special forces equipment into a warehouse, take all the blue-light vehicles, grabbers and jammers left in a box, unfortunately, Member for St. Augustine, DNA was not operationalized. We sat here in this Parliament and supported it; that is another point, if you would permit me.

Again, people of Trinidad and Tobago, a PNM Opposition from 2010 to 2015 supported over 92 per cent of the legislation brought by those on the other side—92 per cent of the legislation. [*Desk thumping*] We come here every week. We have had walk-out after walk-out. All we can do as legislators is to pass legislation. All we can do is sit here and work together.

I was happy to hear the Member for Siparia and the Attorney General in their crosstalk today talk about what is hopefully now going to become the new norm. But I sat here along with the hon. leader, the Attorney General, Mr. Hinds and others, when I was given the opportunity in the Senate, in that other place. We sat there for over 14 hours, time after time. We supported the public procurement legislation. We supported the DNA. We supported 92 per cent of their legislation. Let them say what they do as an Opposition today.

They were reading out our manifesto promises, the appointment of a commissioner of police. Let the fact be stated here, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The last permanent Commissioner of Police in Trinidad and Tobago was fired by a UNC and PP Government, and from July 2012 until 2015 there was no move to appoint a new commissioner. So do not come here and talk about that. The first thing we did when we came in—you want to know what we did in 20 months—the first thing we did as a Government coming in was to look at the Order to try and simplify the Order and to get the process done. What did that Opposition do? Let them tell the population. They went and challenged it and dismantled it and now we are faced with a situation of difficulty in appointing a commissioner of police. [*Crosstalk*] We did what we can.

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Mr. Deputy Speaker: Silence. Members, we have four more minutes for the tea break. Let us please conform.

Hon. S. Young: We are still proceeding. The Police Service Commission is still proceeding, with the assistance of the Government from a financial point of view, in appointing a permanent commissioner of police, but we did what we could.

Again, tell the population what they did. The instability they tried to create after the election with the challenge of the election petitions. I practised law for 17 years and I never stood up after a case that I lost—the very few that they are—to say that I won. That is what happened, and it continues up to today. Losing cases and saying they “win”, trying to create instability.

The NOC—a lot is being said about the National Operations Centre. I want to tell the civic-minded citizens of Trinidad and Tobago here today that this Government has not dismantled the NOC. This Government finished the NOC. We came in and we found a billion dollar contract sole select—a billion dollar contract sole select—no Cabinet Minute for it, signed by the then Chairman of the National Security Council, spend \$1 billion, one fell swoop of the pen, no Cabinet ratification. But what did we do? We have paid for it; we have completed it; it is operational. [*Desk thumping*]

Anyone who knows anything about how a National Operations Centre and the type of equipment that that contains should be used, it is not for everybody to go inside. And this story that they continuously trying to sell the population is an untruth. In that National Operations Centre, you have the police, you have the Defence Force, you have the coast guard element and the air guard element of the Defence Force. Yes, you have the SSA. That is how it works.

Dr. Gopeesingh: To spy on the Opposition. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member for Caroni East, your turn will come. Proceed, member.

Hon. S. Young: Thank you very much. Mr. Deputy Speaker, let the population also look at those who talk and interrupt and the timing of their talking and interruption. When we come back I am going to refer to the reports that were laid in this House, the annual reports of interception of communication. You want to talk about interception of communication? I am going to tell the population what you all did in 2013 and 2014, when we return.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Members, at this time we will break for tea and we will resume at 5.00 p.m.

4.30 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

5.00 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Madam Speaker: Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Young: Thank you. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Just before the break I was speaking to the civic-minded citizens of Trinidad and Tobago and putting the crime debate Motion into context and just notifying them as to what transpired and what we came in and met as a Government just before I launched to then tell the people of Trinidad and Tobago what it is that we have done as a Government.

And, Madam Speaker, one of my colleagues told me during the break that I should take the time to explain to the population about the facial recognition system that existed, the facial recognition system. And as I say again, and as I stood here and I looked at the faces, and no pun intended, of my colleagues on the other side and I worked through those who would have been in that former Cabinet, I could see the genuine look of shock and the genuine look on quite a few faces, my friend the Member for Tabaquite and the Member for Chaguanas East amongst others, hearing these stories. And, Madam Speaker, every single fact that I have just stated is 100 per cent accurate. And I stand here without fear of contradiction.

So what I was saying is that certain ports of entry into Trinidad and Tobago, prior to May 2010, as part of the security apparatus of protecting the borders and shores of Trinidad and Tobago, there was facial recognition software. And what that means is as people are coming through, various cameras will pick up the faces of people coming through, feed into a database and then known criminals or persons who are suspects or wanted persons, it would pop up. So, you have a crowd of 20, 30 coming through an entry point and if their faces are picked up on this recognition system a warning will come up to the law enforcement authorities, Madam Speaker, telling them there is criminal X or criminal Y. Madam Speaker, that was dismantled. So prior to 2015, during the period 2010 to 2015, the facial recognition software was dismantled by the—not the law enforcement authorities, on the instructions of some of those who sat on the opposite side.

So if you have such porous borders and you have all of these internal attacks and destruction of the technology that is designed and designated to protect Trinidad and Tobago, what do you expect to happen?

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So a PNM administration coming in, and this is not an excuse, Madam Speaker, citizens of Trinidad and Tobago this is not an excuse, this is the reality of what we faced. So that at the National Security Council level chaired by the Prime Minister, we began to move immediately, and one of the first things we did was authorized the repair of the various systems, authorized the upgrading of the various systems to provide not only the intelligence services, but other law enforcement bodies with the capability of fighting crime.

So to sit here and listen to the Hon. Member for Siparia criticize this Government, if before the break at certain times my tone became a little angered and strained, that was genuine because as a citizen of Trinidad and Tobago and now someone who has been given the responsibility and has the knowledge of what it is we are faced with, it pains me. Because like everyone else in this House, I have family and every time any citizen of Trinidad and Tobago is affected by crime as we have seen over the last couple days, it does genuinely pain me as the representative for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West, but more importantly, as a citizen of Trinidad and Tobago. Because, Madam Speaker, any patriotic citizen of Trinidad and Tobago would want to be part of the solution, not part of the problem. [*Desk thumping*]

And just before I move on, let me close the point of legislation. Madam Speaker, when the PNM Government was in power during 2002 to 2007, there were certain Bills that were brought to Parliament to support the law enforcement agencies in their fight against crime. And I repeat, and let the citizens understand this, because it is not that the Government is passing the responsibility on to the law enforcement agencies, that is their statutory responsibility.

I have no power of search and arrest. I have a common law power as a citizen if I believe a crime is about to be committed. But I am not a police officer. I do not have the power and ability to investigate crime and prosecute crime. So why is it that those on the other side are criticizing us when we say it is the police service that must do that. That is what the laws of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago say.

So in 2002 to 2007, the Kidnapping Bill that was brought by a PNM Government in 2003 it was not supported by a UNC Government. The Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters, a Bill that allows persons to pursue criminality and try to bring it on its heels, again, in 2004 a PNM Government brought that to the Parliament, the Opposition did not support the Bill, that is those on the other side; the Administration of Justice (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill, 2004; the Criminal Procedure (Amdt.) Bill 2004; the Indictable Offences (Preliminary Enquiry) (Amdt.) Bill.

During our tenure as this new Government and administration, again, we are tackling preliminary enquiries. But in 2005 when a PNM Government tried to fix, tried to assist the criminal justice system and make it more efficient, unfortunately those on the other side did not support, and it is these types of measures that affect the lives of the citizens in Trinidad and Tobago.

In fact, I remember us being here in the first few months of forming this new Government and trying to continue legislation that they brought, the Bail Bill and the anti-gang legislation that we supported when we were in Opposition, they put a sunset clause, it expired under us as a Government. We told them support it with us.

I came here and stood here and read a sworn affidavit from the Commissioner of Police where he made the case for the continuation of the anti-gang legislation and the Bail (Amt.) Bill to allow the law enforcement agencies to fight crime. And I pleaded with those on the other side, the 41 of us here in the House, support legislation that a UNC Government brought.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West, your original speaking time is now expired. You are entitled to 15 more minutes if you intend to avail yourself of it.

Hon. S. Young: Thank you very much.

Madam Speaker: You may proceed. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Young: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. So again, you are asking what we did as a Government. We came to the House as is our duty and our responsibility and we asked for the support of the Opposition in continuing legislation that they brought to the House when they were Government and that we supported in Opposition, we said, let it continue.

And let me remind the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, that legislation would have allowed the law enforcement agencies, when they find people with illegal firearms, to detain them and they are not entitled to bail for an extended period of time to allow the law enforcement agencies to put their case together and to follow more leads. It is legislation that made sense. The Commissioner of Police, none other than the person who is charged with the responsibility of leading the police service, I read from his affidavit, this is making a positive effect on the fight against crime.

Dr. Tewarie: 48(3).

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Madam Speaker: Please, continue, Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West.

Hon. S. Young: Thank you very much. And again, I will tell the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago that the Member for Caroni Central is trying interrupt on a point of order saying that I am reconsidering legislation. I am not. I am dealing with the Motion that you are bringing trying to mislead the public and trying to put the blame of crime on this Government. [*Desk thumping*] I have spent the majority of my debate pointing out to the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago what it is that a former administration did that put us in this place. [*Desk thumping*]

Allow me now, Madam Speaker, to refer to two reports that were laid in the Parliament, the Interception of Communications Act, and I will go through it briefly because I want to speak about what we have done as a Government. When we studied this, under the former administration from 2010 to 2015, they did not lay in Parliament reports that are statutory reports that must be laid about the interception of communication.

So they sit here and they talk about spying, and I am not going to get into the Resmi Ramnarine saga. They talk about spying and part of the legislation, the protection of the Interception of Communications Act, is that every year those who have the authority and the power to intercept communications must lay in the Houses of Parliament a report saying how many people were intercepted, how many warrants were sought, what happened with it, et cetera, without getting into the specifics of who it was. That was not done under the tenure of 2010 to 2015 by a UNC People's Partnership Government.

What happens when we come into Government? It is Devant Maharaj, not so?—a former Member of the Cabinet brings legislation against the people of Trinidad and Tobago saying that those reports were not laid. They were not laid by his administration, again, he comes to tax the taxpayers of Trinidad and Tobago. But I am happy to say that what the judge told him, what the judge told him, Madam Speaker, is, “But hold on, you were part of the administration that was in charge and should have produced those reports and did not. I am not granting you the order”. [*Desk thumping*] And gave the Government the opportunity.

And the Hon. Minister of National Security went and he worked with those who are in charge of getting the report done and he got it done. And you know what is interesting? Let me tell the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago what happened in 2013 to 2014, because that Act provides for police to go to the courts

to get an evidential warrant to intercept communications, and they have to prove to the court why it is they want to do that, and it is the police who should do that. This was one of the most disturbing things that have come to us as a Cabinet in the last 20 months.

Madam Speaker, citizens of Trinidad and Tobago and all civic-minded citizens, in the year 2013 only nine warrants were sought by the Commissioner of Police. No warrants were sought by the body charged with the responsibility and who have the possession and the control of the equipment, the Strategic Services Agency. Remember the name I called a short while ago who was heading this and what happened after.

When you look: number of warrants applied for to intercept communications by the SSA under their period for 2013, none; number of warrants granted, none; number of warrants applied for and granted, none; average period for the warrants, none; number of warrants refused by court, none. So under them for a whole year they did not apply for a single warrant? But you know what is interesting? Let me tell the people of Trinidad and Tobago, they want to talk about talk on phone and who spying on who. In that year not a single application was made to court for a warrant, but they listened to 283,418 conversations—283,418 conversations—not a single one for evidential purposes. Is that why they did not want to put this in there at the time when they were in Government? We will not be so irresponsible.

We have been in Government from September 2015 and the first year we had to lay the report in Parliament, it was done by the Minister of National Security. [*Desk thumping*] We are an open and a transparent Government. And what have we done? Let me get very briefly, Madam Speaker, to what it is as a Government we have done. As I have said, we are not the ones who go out there to fight crime, our duty is to assist with policy, our duty is to ensure that proper resources are had for the law enforcement agencies.

One of the first things we met, and my hon. colleague, the Member for Point Fortin can attest to this. When we came into office, immediately our foreign partners came running to us. Our foreign allies, and when I say our, Trinidad and Tobago's, came running to us. I would not call the names of the First World countries, and they said "Listen, are you all prepared to re-establish relationships?" I said "Are what?" They said for the last five years it has been a one-way street.

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I personally have had to go along with Minister Dillon, the Prime Minister, the Attorney General, and lead the charge for Trinidad and Tobago in rebuilding our relationships with some of the most sophisticated law enforcement countries in the world. They said no information was flowing, it was a block. We were at risk, and again, I say this for the people of Trinidad and Tobago; we, Trinidad and Tobago, were at risk and we were threatened by the United Kingdom, between 2010 and 2015, that we will have to become, it would be necessary for us to travel to the UK, we would have to have visas. Do you know why?—because they wanted to dismantle the services that were working with the British to fight crime and stop drug running in the Caribbean. Immediately we moved and what did we do?—rebuilt the relationship and re-bolstered it, the same thing with some of our other partners.

So do not stand here and bring these types of Motions and try to fearmonger in Trinidad and Tobago and get our population worked up about crime. We are all concerned about crime. I hope there is not a single Member amongst the 41 of us who is not prepared to do what they can to fight crime, as we can here, which is passing legislation. The Attorney General for the past few months have been leading to charge and they have been mocking it, “Oh yuh come with a suite ah legislation, yuh crime-fighting, yuh improving the”—up to this week we were in here. Today is Friday, we were in here on Wednesday with one of the pieces of legislation and they were mocking it saying, “Oh, how you going to improve the criminal justice system”.

We will do what we can, Trinidad and Tobago, and I stand here as part of this Government, a proud part of the Government and I give the assurance to Trinidad and Tobago, and every civic-minded citizen of Trinidad and Tobago, that when we come to this House we will bring legislation we think is going to help Trinidad and Tobago. A lot of that legislation so far has been to the fight against crime, plea bargaining. Plea bargaining is an important tool in the fight against crime. And yes it is a suite, you join that with an election of a trial by a judge only and these other pieces. Those are what the Government has been doing from a legislative point of view.

We have rebuilt, thankfully we have now rebuilt the relationship with international agencies of foreign sovereign countries in assisting. How do you fight ISIS? How do you fight international criminals and terrorists? You have to share information. We have gone out there and personally rebuilt those relationships and the information is now flowing both ways once again.

And as I touch on that, Madam Speaker, allow me—LifeSport, LifeSport. It is a fact that LifeSport bred criminality in this country. LifeSport bred criminality in this country. Carapo and other gangs were born out of LifeSport, \$400 million worth. Right? So we have come in and we are fighting the crime as we can as a Government; part of that, there is a responsibility on each and every one of us, colleagues, when we come with legislation, do not oppose the legislation for opposition sake, do not be destructive.

I have heard it said time and time again by Members of the Opposition, and not necessarily my colleagues here now, that an opposition's duty is to oppose the Government. Yes. But not to oppose Trinidad and Tobago. So ultimately do what is right for Trinidad and Tobago, put aside the destructiveness; let us work together; let us find a way to bring the legislation to this House. That is all we can do in this House.

What else we have done as a Government? We have rebuilt the relationships with our international partners, we are providing as much resources as we possibly can to the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service; the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force and the SSA. They tried to bastardize the SSA in here. The SSA is a body born out of legislation and I think it is legislation passed under you all in 1995. You all created SSA. Do not destroy what is good and what can help in the fight against crime, colleagues, I am pleading with you. I am pleading with you on behalf of the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. Put it aside, let us do what is right. We have done a whole host of legislation.

The Attorney General wanted me to talk about what he is doing in the prisons. I am not going to have sufficient time, but there are committees working. We are also working with the Canadian prison system. We have people from the prison service and the Attorney General's office right now in Canada looking at how it can be bettered. We are looking at improving the prisons physically, but also other things. We are trying to get the video-conferencing facility going. These are the things your Government is doing for you; we are giving them better equipment; we are looking at the radar system; we are always looking at ways to improve. But the truth is colleagues, Madam Speaker, citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, we are in very difficult financial times, but we will do all that we can to assist in the fight against crime.

Yesterday, when the kidnapping took place the amount of us at the Cabinet level that was seeing how we could help, what we could do. It affects all of us, as the Member for Chaguanas East spoke about, at the beginning of his contribution, the heinous crime committed on that 13-year-old boy. I went home that night and looked at my son sleeping and the sense of despair I felt, Madam Speaker. These are citizens of

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Trinidad and Tobago and I keep saying in this House and I will say it again. For me and I am certain for my colleagues on this side, we do believe and we do live by part of our National Anthem that says, “Every creed and race find an equal place”, and I know my colleagues on the other side would subscribe to that as well.

So let us stop the politicization. Politics, I agree, I am new to this, I am learning, there will be politicization of issues, but ultimately when legislation comes to this House, and that is what this House is about, that can improve the lives of the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, make it safer, et cetera, do not oppose, do not be destructive just for opposition sake. If you come with good amendments and suggestions, we will listen to it.

Madam Speaker, as I said, and I would like to close by saying, we have walked that talk as a PNM. When we were in Opposition we supported, during 2010 to 2015, 92 per cent of the legislation brought to Parliament, and that is what a responsible Opposition does for the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

So, Madam Speaker, with those words I thank you very much for the opportunity to contribute, and hopefully going forward henceforth, we in this House, the 41 of us will put aside the pettiness and we will do what is right for Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. Surujrattan Rambachan (*Tabaquite*): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, sometimes the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West believes that the more dramatic he is in his contribution, the more the country will believe what he has to say especially when you try to peddle information that does not have all the truth attached to it. And some of the things that he has referred to in his contribution I will have to reply to in order to set the record straight.

But before I do that, Madam Speaker, I think it is incumbent upon me also to express the horror that is taking place at our very doorsteps in Trinidad and Tobago, but particularly in Trinidad and not to leave out Tobago. Tobago which has not had murders, has had five murders, I believe, for this year already which is in itself, you know, horrific and that has its own economic cost in terms of loss in tourism revenue in Tobago.

But, Madam Speaker, while we shudder and while we tremble at the horror of the murder of this 13-year-old boy and the very brutal manner in which it was done, Madam Speaker, as I drove in Port of Spain this morning, drove around Chaguanas, I went down to Fyzabad and was coming back, I just looked at people

going about their business as usual and I asked myself: is it as a country we have now become numb to the horrific murders and the crime situation around us? Is it that we tend to have such a short memory now about the last murder no matter how heinous that last murder is?

Madam Speaker, if I had my way and if I was the leader of this country, I would call on this country this Sunday coming not to do anything else, but in every village, in every town, in every home; in every temple, in every church, in every institution; call upon every NGO and every CBO and every citizen of this country to lift your voice somehow and to make a statement somehow that you do not like what is happening in Trinidad and Tobago and there must be an intervention that is for the sake of the future of the country and the protection of citizens. Something has to be done and we cannot continue to do so.

And this brings me directly to my good friend the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West and the Members of the Government who believe that 21 months of blaming the former administration and 21 months of harping on what they did pre-2010 is going to solve the problems of today and the problems of tomorrow. Madam Speaker, the country is fed up of listening to they who say that they are in charge continuing to blame the past administration. The past administration has paid the penalty of losing the last elections and we accepted that. If the country told us so we accepted that, but they came in the very first minute of this Parliament when they spoke, the Minister of Tourism followed by the Minister of Planning and Development saying, "We are in charge and you have to deal with that".

Well, we are saying you are in charge now and the country is saying you are not dealing with the crime situation in the country. [*Desk thumping*] And nothing, you cannot escape the responsibility that is upon you to act as any responsible Government will act, vested as you are with the authority and the power to act on behalf of the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago and you are failing miserably in that responsibility.

Madam Speaker, the hon. Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West, like so many of his colleagues, continues to talk about the OPVs and the fact that the OPVs were cancelled and what have you. You have heard this story over and over and over and it is part of a narrative that they have been developing since 2009 prior to the 2010 elections, a narrative that they have been developing in which they hope to sustain about the inefficiency of this Government and so on, but I will show you that we were not that inefficient as they say, but we were very efficient in terms of our management. Because we have not spoken as we should

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speak of what we also inherited when we came into the Government, the state of the economy that we were able to turn around, and with it not only increase the potential for people to get jobs and got jobs, but also brought down the crime rate, serious crimes in a very substantial way.

Madam Speaker, let us get to the truth about the OPVs. The OPVs were defective, let us face the truth, they were defective. And a major cost in that defect was a highly sophisticated weapon system that was not working. And yet the OPVs fanatics seem upset that taxpayers were not burdened with purchasing a lemon. We were going to purchase a lemon. Madam Speaker, would anyone purchase a new vehicle if the air-conditioning or the engine was defective? No. You would not.

The matter went to court, the matter went to court, if we were not sure that they were not lemons, why would we go to arbitration? Why would we go to court? We went to court, we went to court and in the arbitration, it was directed that all the initial payments be returned to the country of Trinidad and Tobago, and the court would not have done this if the items were not defective and if the supplier failed to deliver as required. Madam Speaker, it was defective, and what happened is that what was costing this country some \$2.4 billion, we got back \$1.4 billion in the arbitration. [*Desk thumping*] Madam Speaker, we saved the country \$1.2 billion and we have turned around and bought coast guard vessels, Damen vessels, patrol vessels, utility vessels, and these vessels are now patrolling, they are patrolling.

And the Hon. Minister of National Security came to this very Parliament and on several occasions praised the Damen vessels. [*Desk thumping*] What hypocrisy it is to come and say one thing and then have your other colleagues preaching another thing, Mr. Minister of National Security.

Madam Speaker, whether you paid for them or not, this fact is you paid with the \$1.4 billion that we also got back from a bad deal from BAE. [*Desk thumping*] So let us put the record straight and stop this nonsense about saying that we cancelled the OPVs. We are not going as a country to buy lemons, we are not going to do it. [*Desk thumping*]

You come and, the second point my good friend, the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West, made has to do with the helicopters, with the helicopters. Those helicopters were bought prior to 2010, and the helicopters, the Agusta choppers for the Air Guard, they cost \$2.2 billion. I want them to deny whether, in fact, the market price was \$80 million each for those helicopters. But

the contract was padded, the contract was rigged in maintenance and training that amounted to hundreds of billions of dollars. They got locked in, [*Crosstalk*] they got locked in into those contracts—[*Interruption*]

5.30 p.m.

Madam Speaker: Member.

Maj. Gen. Antoine: Yes, I am asking the Member for Tabaquite to give way.

Madam Speaker: And I am sure that he has heard you. It is his discretion. Please continue, Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. S. Rambachan: They locked into those contracts with maintenance on training contracts that amounted to hundreds of millions of dollars, and they could not get out of the contracts because they were locked into it.

We inherited that madness. That is part of the madness we inherited, and now we are hearing them complaining about what was done by us post 2010. We tried to correct these situations. So, to say now that they are shutting down the helicopters because it is costing \$200 million a year to maintain, they must go back and say what kind of contract they negotiated, and why it is that what was supposed to cost \$80 million each amounted to \$2.2 billion. They must go back and say that.

Madam Speaker, what is regrettable is what we are all hearing, is that if you go down to the islands you will see most of 12 coast guard vessels now moored at Staubles Bay. Why? The Government refusing what, manpower strength for the coast guard? Why are you not doing more recruitment for the coast guard so those vessels could be doing what they are supposed to be doing? Let them also deny the fact that if they had bought those OPV vessels, two of them would have been parked up because they did not have the manpower to run those vessels and they would have been parked up. Because they did not do enough manpower planning in order to ensure that those boats would be properly fitted with the human resources that they needed to have. So, those are two points.

Then, Madam Speaker, the matter of SAUTT, the agency that my friend spoke about. What is the truth? The fake news is that we shut down SAUTT. What is the true news? The true news, crime under SAUTT—during the period of SAUTT, crime was the highest ever in the country. It was the highest ever in the country. Homicides reaching 540 per annum in 2008, when SAUTT was supposed be at its finest, in 2008. Kidnapping then was totally out of control and was the highest ever; 22,000 serious crimes, highest ever under SAUTT. When SAUTT was closed down,

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serious crimes came down to about 11,000. Are they saying that the statistics provided by the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service which showed that serious crimes were reduced from between 25 to 83 per cent, that the police are lying about the crime statistics? Are you saying that you have no confidence in the police statistics? That is a terrible, terrible thing to say about the police, you know, when in fact the Acting Commissioner of Police has been repeating how much the serious crimes have come down under the period 2010 to 2015, and even recently in 2016, he indicated that it had come down further. So, it is very untrue some of the things you are saying. Very misleading, if you may have me say, some of the things you are saying, when in fact the statistics and the evidence bears out something very differently. So, some things we were doing were bringing results to the country, and you cannot deny that at all.

Madam Speaker, then the hon. Member spoke about gangs, and LifeSport was the cause of the explosion of gangs in Carapo and what have you. There was a very good person, a human being in the person of Mr. Martin Joseph. Mr. Martin Joseph, I had hired him to teach with me at ROYTEC when I was there at ROYTEC as the academic advisor, a very good person. Mr. Martin Joseph was the one who reported to this country on several occasions how many gangs existed while he was in fact the Minister of National Security, and where these gangs were located, and what have you. Gangs did not begin nor grow under the administration of the People's Partnership. The gang culture and the growth of gangs took place while the PNM was in its heyday in the country. What is important is not to blame what period of time the gangs grew or did not grow. What is to be dealt with is, what are we doing as a country and as a Government to dismantle the gangs in the country? That is what is important. What are we doing to deal with the situation? The country is fed up of hearing the crosstalk. The country wants to know what you are doing and, Madam Speaker, that is what I came to address here this evening, you know, some of the more fundamental causes of crime in the country.

Madam Speaker, you know, I came to this Parliament and I had one intention, if in five years I would have achieved it, which was to deal with that matter of ADD and ADHD. That was a very serious matter for me. Because I have seen what has happened to children who have ADHD, in particular in schools, and how they are shunted, and how they are left aside, and they fall through the cracks. And children like that have an ability to gravitate to people who show them some kind of love, but sometimes those are the wrong people, and then they end up in the wrong hands. I want to say today I am disappointed, disappointed when I hear the responses of the hon. Minister of Education, when asked the questions over and over, what has been done to train teachers in the schools about ADHD, and how to

deal with it? And I say, without fear of contradiction and without apology, that the Minister has not convinced me. And I went back after his last answer in Parliament, I went back to certain schools and asked, “Have you been trained specifically in dealing with ADHD children?” Madam Speaker, nothing like that has taken place, I tell you, in the country’s schools. It has not taken place, and today 8 per cent of the children in the school continue to suffer. Those are the statistics that I had researched—8 per cent of the children, which is very interesting. It is very much like the global figure with this ADHD, and that is part of your problem also. You have to deal with the crime situation from the kids coming right up.

So, I want to say to my worthy friend, the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West, it is not about the past; it is not about your laurels of the past. Those are gone. Yesterday has gone. The present is the reality that we are dealing with. Because if you do not deal with the reality of the present, you would not have a future, and people will not have a future in this country. So what are you doing as a Government in order to deal with the crime? We are going to do what we have to do on the side of the Opposition. The Opposition’s role is to constantly keep you on your feet, and keep your mind focused on the fact that you are doing nothing, and therefore, you must step out of those dark alleys and begin to do something. [*Desk thumping*] And no amount of blaming, no amount of castigating, no amount of shouting us down, would change us from our goal of reminding you that you have a responsibility to the citizens of this country to provide safety and security of the person.

Madam Speaker, you know this country is so tense, so tense, Madam Speaker, that a couple of hours ago on the *Trinidad Express* newspaper, the *Trinidad Express* is reporting about explosions that took place somewhere in the east, and scaring people in several communities, and they are wondering whether it is an exercise being done by the army. Now, the army generally will announce whether it has exercises like this. But, if the place is shaken up from Arouca to Sangre Grande, and people are worried about it, it is strange that no announcement has been made thus far by the Public Affairs Unit of the Defence Force as to what these explosions were. If it is National Quarries is dynamiting something, let us know that National Quarries is dynamiting something.

But, never in the past has the country ever come up to do this. People reported the sound in Arouca, Picton Road, Valencia, Guaico, Vega de Oropouche, Sangre Grande, Arima, Cumuto, Sangre Chiquito, Tunapuna and Coalmine. That is a vast area where you are hearing along the East-West Corridor, earth shaking

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explosions at around 11.00 a.m. today, and this is by Sandhya Santoo, Multimedia Desk of the South Bureau of the *Trinidad Express*. What is happening? What is happening? And people are tense about these things, because people want to know what is happening in their country. You know, for the *Express* to be reporting it—a very credible newspaper—it shows you how tense the country is, that people are just not settled.

Hon. Member: Jittery.

Dr. S. Rambachan: They are jittery. They are jittery.

Madam Speaker, it is very important for me to point out these matters with respect to what my friend on the other side has been saying.

Over the last few days, a couple of statements from senior Members of the Government have left me wondering as to whether really the Government Members have abandoned their responsibility for the state of crime in our country. And I refer to statements being made, for example, by the hon. Minister of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries in the country, who expressed his dissatisfaction with the state of the police service, and the way the police are operating. And then the hon. Prime Minister himself did not mince his words in terms of his criticism of the police, and I think it is important that we note this because when the senior Members of Government begin to express their dissatisfaction with the police, or their lack of confidence in the police, when they are in charge through the Minister of National Security and the National Security Council, for the defence force and the police in the country, then what is left for the citizen?

Government Minister Clarence Rambharat, in an *Anna Ramdass Express* article, said:

“I am on record, Madam President, that I am not a fan of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service; every time I pass police officers in the police canteen...”

—well, it looks like he lime in the police canteen [*Laughter*]

“...every time I pass by the barracks and I see the police vehicles parked up there, used, unused, savaged, destroyed, whatever, I know that the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service forms part of the critical failing of the criminal justice system...”

Madam Speaker, that is a real indictment upon the police service; a real, real indictment by a senior Minister of Government. And what it shows is that when you are not expressing confidence in an important institution like the police service, you are at the same time probably demotivating and demoralizing them further. But, what is even more

important to me is, are you admitting, or are you suggesting that the police service is a failed institution? Because, you see, I have a theory that there are so many failed institutions in the country, and that is why this country is in the state that it is. The health services a failed institution, you cannot get drugs in the health service. I have a situation now on my desk where for a year a man cannot get a barium, whatever it is, in San Fernando General Hospital.

You look at the Judiciary. One might say it is a failed institution. There are so many failed or failing institutions in the country. And is it now the Government themselves they are chastising the police service and saying this about the police service? This is frightening. And you know, it is not just the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries, the Prime Minister himself, you know, expressed his own concern—*[Madam Speaker stands]*—sorry, sorry.

Madam Speaker: Members, may I remind you all with respect to the Standing Orders concerning electronic devices. During the sitting today, this must have been about the fifth time a device has gone off. Please, turn off your devices!

Dr. S. Rambachan: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Hon. Prime Minister, he said crime woes troubling him. He said the Government is trying to build the capacity of the defence mechanisms of the police, the coast guard, the defence force, so they could appropriately respond to those persons who have chosen crime as a way of life, and to protect those who might become victims of crime.

But, then he goes on to say that it is the police themselves who have the responsibility to fight the crime and to deal with the crime. The Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West put it another way, he said he does not lock up people. He does not have that authority and so on. Madam Speaker, that brings me to an important—because he is reiterating something said by his Prime Minister on April 12, 2017, where crime-fighting is police work, not Government work. I take issue with that. Everything in this country is Government work. *[Desk thumping]*

If there are no drugs in the hospitals, it is the Minister's responsibility to make sure that he gets up on his Permanent Secretary and others to make sure there are drugs, Mr. Minister. If the Judiciary cannot find the resources, it is the Attorney General who must move in order to do that expeditiously to ensure that that happens. Ministers cannot escape their responsibilities. They cannot do that. *[Desk thumping]* And, Madam Speaker, that brings me to the point. As a manager, as a leader, as a Minister, as a Prime Minister, as a Cabinet, you cannot delegate responsibility. There is a difference between responsibility and authority. You can delegate authority and hold people responsible for their agreed performance goals, but when there are no performance goals at all, what are you going to hold people responsible for?

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Who has given the Acting Commissioner of Police performance goals to reach? Who has done that? The Police Service Commission? Have we ever heard in this country, what are the performance goals of the Police Service? By how much they are going to reduce crime over the next year? You know, everything in this country is after the fact; after the fact. This is why I say we are a great nation of analysts and talkers, but are we a nation of doers? Do we—

Hon. Member: No measurement.

Dr. S. Rambachan: That is right, there is no measurement. Therefore, how can you achieve anything if there is no measurement in the country? You see, you can delegate authority, but you cannot delegate responsibility. [*Desk thumping*] I want to make that point. And the Prime Minister in his statement seems to think that he has delegated responsibility and so on. I must admit that I have reached the point when I look at the Prime Minister and I look at how the Prime Minister is running the affairs of this country, and by what he says, that he is happy he has achieved the goal of Prime Minister; but he is very disinterested in the role of Prime Minister; very disinterested. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker, you are responsible for the performance of the people to whom you have delegated authority, and therefore we have to ask the question whether effective delegation is taking place in this country in terms of the police service. Yes, you would provide people with the authority to do the job. That authority would be in terms of the legislation, and the powers and so on. And we are willing to support the good legislation that will help the police to do their job. [*Desk thumping*] You say you have a suite of legislation, bring it, we are debating it, we are making changes to it, we are supporting it.

Secondly, you have to provide—when you delegate authority, you have to provide people with the resources, the human resources, the material resources, the physical resources and the financial resources. If you want the police to solve crime, you do not do that simply by increasing the number of crime investigators to 60, you know. You have to say what support do they need to really crack the crime? What tools they need? And the tools are not just skills and knowledge. There are other resources that they need.

You see, Madam Speaker, this is it, you know. Today when this debate started and the Member for Laventille West was speaking, he was making a virtual joke of this whole thing about crime in the country, a very serious matter. I sat here in disgust, I will be honest with you. Because I said a serious thing like the loss of a

life of a child, and we are talking about it here, and a joke is being made of this all. You do not joke with citizens' lives in this country. You do not do that. You do not joke with citizens' lives.

Madam Speaker, the third point is, you have to give people the required training. A lot of people have been trained in the police service in criminology, in what have you and so on. But, are they being trained in what it takes to solve crime and prevent crime? In this regard, let me mention the manpower audit that is taking place in the country. You have Prof. Ramesh Deosaran being appointed with others to undertake a manpower audit, and the first thing Prof. Deosaran seems to be doing with his team is going around the country to meet people. Well, they came to Port of Spain somewhere and one person attended. They came to Chaguanas, I went, because I have an interest in what is going on in my town in Chaguanas. I have said to the Member for Point Fortin several times, and I had put in his hand several times, and nothing has been done about it, about the chaos that is taking place on the streets of Chaguanas, and the number of times I have said publicly in this Parliament, that I have spoken to Superintendent Mc Intyre, but nothing has been done. And Mr. Minister, I am disappointed that even having spoken to you, even having texted the Commissioner of Police who promised to intervene, nothing has been done to alleviate the situation there in Chaguanas. We talked about the manpower audit. Madam Speaker, 20 people, maximum, attended in Chaguanas. Why are people not attending those meetings? Because people are fed up. They know nothing is going to happen, and they see all this as another public relation ruse to take people's minds away from the incompetence of the Government in dealing with the fundamental issue of crime. [*Desk thumping*]

And I said that to Prof. Deosaran. I said Prof. Deosaran, you are a man of international reputation. You are sought after to give lectures all over the world but how much of what you have in fact recommended to Government after Government has been implemented in your own country? And I told him and I warned him, I said, do not be part of being used in another public relations exercise on behalf of a failing Government. That is a very simple matter, that manpower audit. First thing you have to do, identify what are the critical issues that face the police service, and especially in the areas that will impact upon crime and solving crime. And then go back to your human resource base and say, "Do I have these resources and competences in the people? If I do not, how do I close that gap quickly?" The problems are known. You do not have to go through another exercise to go back and ask people about the problems again. Go there and look at your human resources.

I was shocked in that interaction I had with DCP Harold Phillip, that he said—this is on record—that only 1,000 policemen might really be truly on a shift in this country. One thousand policemen! That cannot in fact protect the people of this country. That was said by him. Yes, it was said by him, 1,000. So that you have to do all of these things when you delegate so that people can carry out their functions. So you are saying that the police service is inadequate in combating crime, but you must answer the questions and the reasons as to why therefore are they inadequate? Are they inadequate? I would ask a question.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Member for Tabaquite, your original 30 minutes are now spent. You are entitled to 15 more minutes of extended time, but of course you know the rule as of the format. You may proceed.

Dr. S. Rambachan: Madam Speaker, there are many sources of inadequacy. At one point in time they used to say it is vehicles, but we bought over 600 vehicles, when we were in office, for the police service. Right. They said it was equipment, I remember we bought new fire power, guns and so on for them. Is it fear of the criminal elements? Is it attitude? Remuneration? We tackled remuneration as you know. Is it hygiene factors? We built nine new police stations and repaired quite a number of others. Is it the level of motivation or the sense of belongingness that they feel to their job? It might be that. But the end result is it seems there is a level of frustration in the police service that is very high under this Government, and one has to ask: why is that level of frustration? And when people are frustrated in any kind of situation, they do two things, it is either they fight or there is flight. Fight or flight. Flight means that they are on the job but they are not on the job, and fight means that they are going to get into some kind of combat with you, and again it affects the productivity.

So, what is important in all that I have said so far, the common thread, is that leadership that develops strategy on the one hand, and management of people, systems, and processes on the other hand is desperately missing under this Government, and that has to come from the top. That has to come from the National Security Council, the Minister of National Security, and Minister that is something you have to look at. So it comes squarely back to what you are saying, the performance of the Police Commissioner. Well, you cannot say to me, and no one can say to me in this country that the absence of a Police Commissioner is in fact the problem underlying performance.

The Acting Police Commissioner in this country, as far as my understanding goes, has all powers which any Police Commissioner will have. His powers have not been diminished as an Acting Police Commissioner. He has all the powers. He

is in charge of the resources, financial and otherwise, of the police service. All right? So, he has all that. And given the number of times that his contract has been renewed by the Police Service Commission, it will seem to me that the Police Service Commission did not think that he was adequate—

Hon. Member: Inadequate.

Dr. S. Rambachan: Inadequate, sorry—when they did his assessment. Because if you read the regulations—sorry, the role of the Police Service Commission, you will see that the role of the Police Service Commission is in fact to deal with the Police Commissioner, and to appoint and reappoint the Police Commissioner, to do the assessments relating to his performance and what have you. That is the role of the Police Service Commission, and that is clear in what the role says here.

Under the Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago the Police Service Commission is an independent body—independent body—developed to manage the monitoring, appointment, disciplinary and appeal functions of the police service. And it says here one of the important things it has to do is with the review of the performance of the Commissioner.

So, if they were not happy with the performance of the acting commissioner, why have they been reappointing him over and over? They had the opportunity to—

Mr. Imbert: What we have to do with that? We have no say. We have no say!

Mr. Young: You all had a say? You breached the Constitution.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members.

Mr. Young: Sorry.

Madam Speaker: Member for Tabaquite, please continue.

Dr. S. Rambachan: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The point I am making is that the Police Service Commission seem to be very satisfied with the performance of the Acting Police Commissioner, they have been appointing the man, and if anybody has asked the Police Service Commission: Why did you reappoint him? And they have reappointed him based on their assessment. What would be vital for the public's interest is to know what criteria they have been using to assess the Acting Police Commissioner, what criteria they have been using to do that.

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Madam Speaker, the question in my mind when I think of the Police Service Commission and the reappointment of the Commissioner of Police, given the increase in murders, given the fact that the country is in a state where they are asking to be protected and so on, is, what kind of Police Commissioner, acting or otherwise, we need in this country at this point in time? And my view is that the Police Service Commission has not properly examined the kind of competencies of a police commissioner at this particular point in time.

Leadership—as my good friend, the Member for La Horquetta/Talparo, in charge of the public, will tell you—is situational. Leadership is situational, and every situation requires a different set of competencies and a different set of skills. Is it that what we are doing is making the mistake of having an administrative type of Police Commissioner at this point in time, when in fact we need an operational Police Commissioner at this point in time in the country? We need a Police Commissioner who in my view should have operational skills. And I am not saying whether Mr. Williams has operational skills or not have operational skills, but I do believe that we are failing, because we do not have a Police Commissioner with operational skills in the country. I think that, you know, effective management—if I may just sum it up, in my last few minutes here—is primarily in my view an intelligent set of responses, and strategic interventions, given the exigencies of a particular situation, and I think that that is what we are lacking.

I think that the Police Service Commission has a duty to tell the country what criteria it has been using in order to appoint the Police Commissioner, whether acting or otherwise, because I do not think that the issue in the country is whether the Police Commissioner is acting or the Police Commissioner is not acting because he has all the powers, and he has all the support. But I do believe that we are missing the boat because we are not looking at the operational side as the situation requires in the country at this point in time. Madam Speaker, I know I have time, maybe I would never get an opportunity—

Hon. Member: When we come back. When we come back.

Dr. S. Rambachan:—when we come back to deal with this, but the reality is that I was going to identify several other things in the country. But I want to tell you, Madam Speaker, that part of it would have had to do with the education system, and how the education system is failing our children, and marginalizing them, and making them feel that they do not have opportunities for the future, when in fact we should be revising the curriculum, and we should be tailoring it so that people really feel they have a chance and, like our Opposition Leader said, that they are not feeling excluded or left out. Thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

6.00 p.m.

ARRANGEMENT OF BUSINESS

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, I have been advised that it is the wish of the House to revert to the item of business, Statement by Minister. I now call upon the Minister of Finance. [*Desk thumping*]

STATEMENT BY MINISTER

**UNIMED Group Health Plan
(Injection of Funds)**

The Minister of Finance (Hon. Colm Imbert): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I have been authorized by the Cabinet to make this statement on the: Injection of funds into the UNIMED Group Health Plan for monthly-paid officers. By way of background, the UNIMED Group Health Plan for monthly-paid officers was introduced by the PNM Government after negotiations with the Public Services Association and the Trinidad and Tobago Unified Teachers' Association with effect from April 01, 2004 as a benefit for members of the Civil and Teaching Services and holders of certain offices within the purview of the Salaries Review Committee.

Currently, the plan has a membership of 30,231 persons, comprising 22,544 individuals and 7,687 family members. The plan provides coverage for major medical, up to \$1 million; surgical benefits; medical benefits; diagnostic services; prescribed drugs; hospital services; dental services; vision benefit; death and disability benefit.

Since its introduction, the plan has been heavily utilized by its members. Additionally, in 2012, the feature of family coverage which provided a similar level of benefits was included for its members. The current monthly contribution for individual coverage is \$129 per month and that for family coverage is \$287 a month, while the contribution ratio applicable to both individual and family coverage is 60:40 for the employer and employee, respectively. These rates of contribution have been in effect since 2012. It should be noted that these rates are among the lowest in the industry. Over time, the cost of medical services and procedures have continued to increase simultaneously with the usage of the plan by its members. There has also been increased usage of the plan, especially with the introduction of family coverage. Industry statistics indicate increases in cost over the last five years in the following areas:

Statement by Minister
[HON C. IMBERT]

Friday, June 30, 2017

- Diagnostics services, 15 per cent increase.
- Prescribed Services, 20 per cent increase.
- Hospital Services, 30 per cent increase.

The existing rates of contribution together with the increased costs in health care and the usage of the plan by its members have had a negative impact on the financial resources of the plan, and the plan is currently in deficit. To address this situation, the review of the rates of contribution has been engaging the attention of the Management Committee. However, while this is being finalized, the members of the plan have been experiencing difficulty in the settlement of their claims.

If the current financial situation, which makes it extremely difficult to treat with claims, persists without corrective action being taken by the State, the UNIMED Group Health Plan for monthly-paid officers would become insolvent. Such an occurrence would be a regressive step for public officers in terms of the benefits which they currently enjoy, and have enjoyed since 2004 because of the PNM, while its impact on the members of the plan will be quite deleterious. Further, should the operations of the plan cease, it is anticipated that there would be an increased demand on the existing public health-care system with significant negative consequences, including delays encountered at public health institutions and a resultant increase in lost man-hours.

Madam Speaker, the Government has reviewed the entire situation, including the impact on the health and well-being of the public officers, and recognizes the value of a healthy workforce in the delivery of its services. In this regard, in order to clear the current deficit in the plan, as we are a responsible, caring PNM Government, [*Desk thumping*] the Cabinet took a decision yesterday to inject \$21 million into the group health plan for monthly-paid officers to ensure its continued viability. PNM to the rescue, again! [*Desk thumping*]

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Planning and Development (Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis): Thank you very kindly, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I beg to move that this House do now adjourn sine die.

Question put and agreed to.

Madam Speaker: This House now stands adjourned, for those who do not know, without a date. [*Laughter and desk thumping*]

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 6.05 p.m.