

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, January 26, 2018

The House met at 1.30 p.m.

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

**PAPERS LAID**

1. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the Financial Statements of the Point Fortin Civic Centre for the year ended September 30, 2007. [*The Minister of Finance (Hon. Colm Imbert)*]
2. Quarterly Investment Report of the Trinidad and Tobago Heritage and Stabilisation Fund for the period July to September, 2017. [*Hon. C. Imbert*]
Papers 1 and 2 to be referred to the Public Accounts Committee.
3. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the Financial Statements of the National Agricultural Marketing and Development Corporation for the year ended September 30, 2008. [*Hon. C. Imbert*]
4. Unconsolidated Audited Financial Statements of Lake Asphalt of Trinidad and Tobago (1978) Limited for the financial year ended September 30, 2011. [*Hon. C. Imbert*]
5. Unconsolidated Audited Financial Statements of Lake Asphalt of Trinidad and Tobago (1978) Limited for the financial year ended September 30, 2012. [*Hon. C. Imbert*]
6. Unconsolidated Audited Financial Statements of Lake Asphalt of Trinidad and Tobago (1978) Limited for the financial year ended September 30, 2013. [*Hon. C. Imbert*]

7. Audited Financial Statements of Education Facilities Company Limited for the financial year ended September 30, 2015. [*Hon. C. Imbert*]
8. Consolidated Audited Financial Statements of First Citizens Holdings Limited and its Subsidiaries for the financial year ended September 30, 2016. [*Hon. C. Imbert*]
Papers 3 to 8 to be referred to the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee.
9. Annual Report of the Public Service Commission for the year 2016. [*The Minister of Planning and Development (Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis)*]
10. Annual Report of the Trinidad and Tobago Civil Aviation Authority for the year ended September 30, 2017. [*Hon. C. Robinson-Regis*]
11. Ministerial Response of the Ministry of Education to the Fourth Report of the Joint Select Committee on Social Services and Public Administration on an Inquiry into the Prevalence of Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) amongst school students and into the general services administered to treat STDs in Trinidad and Tobago. [*Hon. C. Robinson-Regis*]
12. Ministerial Response of the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries to the Second Report of the Joint Select Committee on Land and Physical Infrastructure on an Inquiry into the Allocation and Utilisation of State Lands for Food Production. [*Hon. C. Robinson-Regis*]

PRIME MINISTER'S QUESTIONS

Caribbean Nitrogen Company (Continued shutdown)

Dr. Roodal Moonilal (*Oropouche East*): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Could the Prime Minister indicate the steps taken by the Government to prevent the continued shutdown of Caribbean Nitrogen Company?

The Prime Minister (**Hon. Dr. Keith Rowley**): [*Desk thumping*] Madam

Speaker, the question of the operations of CNC3 and NGC—

Hon. Member: CNC.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: CNC, sorry. Let me start over this. [*Laughter*]

The issues surrounding the business operations between CNC and NGC is business in the commercial realm, and insofar as the Government owns NGC, that is so far as it goes for the moment. The NGC and CNC are engaged in commercial contractual negotiations, and we trust that those negotiations will continue in the appropriate quarters between the companies. [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. Moonilal: Thank you. To the Prime Minister: Given the amount of workers involved and the seriousness of this matter, could I ask when did the Prime Minister first get knowledge of the impending crisis there?

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Madam Speaker, I am not aware that the issue is one of workers and time of knowledge. This is a commercial contract to be negotiated, and the issue of workers arise with respect to the operations of CNC, and they are not directly linked. Because whether there are workers or no workers, whether it be contract or no contract, these operations remain negotiations between two commercial entities. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Speaker. To the Prime Minister: Could the Prime Minister advise this House whether the shutting off of the gas was sanctioned by the Cabinet of Trinidad and Tobago? [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Madam Speaker, I made it abundantly clear that the operations are between NGC, the supplier, an aggregator of gas, and NGC's client, and does not require Cabinet's sanction.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Could the Prime Minister indicate, if possible, what impact this will have on the economic aspect for Trinidad and Tobago?

Madam Speaker: I would not allow that as a supplemental question. Member for

Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: Prime Minister, given the nightmarish eventuality of 400 jobs lost, could you see the need for the Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development to intervene along with the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries in this matter to bring some resolution? [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Madam Speaker, this matter is and remains a contract being negotiated between our state-owned gas supplier and a purchaser of that gas in the private sector. I do not at this point in time see a role for the Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development or the wider Government in this commercial negotiation. While we are concerned about any negative outcome, the fact of the matter is that there is a contract to be negotiated, and the crisis and whatever he is pointing to, these are matters that we have to pay attention to. But the foundation is a commercial contract to be negotiated between the 100 per cent state-owned NGC, in the commercial realm, with a buyer and user of gas. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Speaker. So, Prime Minister, basically you are telling us, the Government is taking a hands-off approach [*Desk thumping*] to this foreign direct investment of over \$2 billion?

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Certainly not. Madam Speaker, there is a Minister responsible for the NGC, NGC is a major player in the gas supply business in the commercial sector, and the fact that we are not jumping into a contract to interfere in the negotiations, as we are being encouraged to do, does not mean that we are taking a hands-off position. We are hands-on through the NGC. [*Desk thumping*]

Oncology Centre Project (Collapse of)

Dr. Roodal Moonilal (*Oropouche East*): Could the Prime Minister state the reasons for the collapse of the Oncology Centre Project?

The Prime Minister (Hon. Dr. Keith Rowley): Madam Speaker, the reasons are the very same reasons that existed between 2010 and 2015. It has not changed at all, and coming into office, this Government reviewed that situation and sought to determine whether we could restart that project which had been resting for the five-year period. We got as far as having the cost reviewed to see whether it was feasible. We have received proposals. The Cabinet looked at them and determined that the elements of cost proposed for continuation were inordinately high, and we have rejected those proposals, and we are still reviewing it with a hope that if we come to a position where we can get value for money, we may consider going forward. But at this time we do not have that decision.

Dr. Moonilal: Could the Prime Minister indicate whether or not the contractors have been paid any money outstanding to them between 2015 and 2018?

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Madam Speaker, I find it quite interesting that any payment owed to the contractor would have been owed between 2010 and 2015 and would not have been paid by my friend, the Member for Oropouche East, but he is coming now to ask me about payments that he had not made. I am in no position to answer you on that.

Dr. Moonilal: Could the Prime Minister indicate to us whether the priority of the Government is the highway to Manzanilla, the Kay Donna Interchange or an oncology centre? [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Madam Speaker, the priorities for this Government are the best interest of the people of Trinidad and Tobago who always—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Gopeesingh: Could the Prime Minister indicate if there were any discussions with the contractor B. Batiment, or however it is pronounced, in relation to this cessation of the contract?

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Madam Speaker, as far as I am aware, the answer is yes,

there were considerations in reviewing the start up, and the proposals I mentioned would have been in the context of those conversations.

Dr. Moonilal: Thank you. Bearing in mind that there were no legal action against the Government in 2010 to '15, is the Prime Minister aware that contractors and subcontractors in this project are taking your Government to court in the United States?

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Madam Speaker, I am not aware of that and if it does happen, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago will defend the interest of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Implementation Committee (Details of)

Dr. Roodal Moonilal (*Oropouche East*): Could the Prime Minister indicate whether the newly appointed Implementation Committee which will liaise with the private sector to facilitate Government assistance has replaced InvestTT?

The Prime Minister (Hon. Dr. Keith Rowley): No. [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. Moonilal: Is the Prime Minister telling the House that InvestTT will play the same role as a private sector group of person to attract, facilitate and offer Government assistance for investment projects?

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Madam Speaker, neither myself nor any Member of my Government has made any statement about InvestTT in the context of this Implementation Committee.

Implementation Committee (Conflict of Interest)

Dr. Roodal Moonilal (*Oropouche East*): Thank you very much. Could the Prime Minister indicate whether there is a conflict of interest in the setting up an Implementation Committee of business persons to assist other business persons?

The Prime Minister (Hon. Dr. Keith Rowley): I am not sure what he is referring

to, Madam Speaker, but if it is the Implementation Committee set up by this Cabinet, I do not see any conflict because that is not what the terms of reference are.

Dr. Moonilal: Just for the record, the question states Implementation Committee. Prime Minister, given that there are five members of this committee, including the father of a Government Minister, that these business persons will themselves be conflicted when they deal with other members of the business community to facilitate and provide government assistance, do you see this as a conflict? In that committee, one man is—

Madam Speaker: Member! Member!

Dr. Moonilal:—selling chicken and another one is frying chicken.

Madam Speaker: Member for Oropouche East, the supplemental is allowed 15 seconds. Okay? And it is a question. So have you asked a question?

Dr. Moonilal: [*Inaudible*]

Madam Speaker: Ask a question 15 seconds, please.

Dr. Moonilal: Sure. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. To the Prime Minister: Could the Prime Minister indicate whether the business committee—Implementation Committee of five persons, including the father of a Government Minister, poses a conflict of interest working with other private sector businesses where they themselves are not public officers?

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Madam Speaker, no member of that committee is there based on his or her genealogy, and that committee is to advise the Government with respect to its own information gleaned from the private sector, and therefore the terms of reference as we know it, is not as my colleague is describing it.

Dr. Tewarie: Is this committee to replace the role of the Economic Development Board?

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: No.

**National Gas Company
(Independent Audit)**

Mr. Ganga Singh (*Chaguanas West*): Question No. 5 to the hon. Prime Minister. Could the Prime Minister state whether Government is supportive of an independent audit of the National Gas Company gas supply value chain?

The Prime Minister (Hon. Dr. Keith Rowley): Madam Speaker, this question reflects very closely a position that the NGC is grappling with at this time, which is, in its business negotiations the client of the NGC is demanding to have the NGC open its books to determine all of its inputs so as to determine whether the NGC is having too much or too little profit in its operations. Against that background, I see no purpose being served by the interest of the people of Trinidad and Tobago to have this direction being followed, for who I do not know. An independent audit into the NGC gas value chain is of interest to all of us in Trinidad and Tobago because we must understand the NGC is a pipeline company, a gas aggregator, which buys gas from those who produce the gas at the well head, and those who use the gas at the other end of the pipeline. And insofar as we are looking at the gas value chain with a view to determine whether NGC should be in the business at all, should be of interest to the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Dr. Moonilal: Thank you very much. Prime Minister, with regard to the clear difference of opinion between the CNC and the National Gas Company, and indeed a conflict over the role of one Jerry Brooks, does the Prime Minister believe there needs to be a political intervention to bring a resolution that can save 400 jobs?

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Madam Speaker, this matter is not simply one of saving 400 jobs. It is one that is much larger than that. There are points of views in the

business today which believes that the NGC is extracting—[*Interruption*] Madam Speaker!

Madam Speaker: Could all Members please observe the provisions of Standing Order 53! Prime Minister.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Madam Speaker, the role and purpose of the NGC is of great interest to the people of Trinidad and Tobago, well beyond 400 jobs. The situation is that the NGC's role and its extraction of benefit for the people of Trinidad and Tobago, being deemed to be a non-investor, is being severely challenged, and I trust that my colleagues in this House will understand where the interest of the people of Trinidad and Tobago lie, and it is not simply a question of being in conflict with. Of course, it may very well be that the interest of the people of Trinidad and Tobago is in conflict with the interest of others. And finally, Madam Speaker, I want to tell my colleague, the Member for Oropouche East, in the conduct of the business of the people of Trinidad and Tobago, we do not engage in personalities, we engage in issues. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Speaker. In the context of NGC being a company and in the negotiating process with respect to the gas value chain, Prime Minister, what is the role you envisage for the Ministry and Minister of Energy and Energy Industries having regard to this impasse?

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: There is a role for the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries as regulator. There is a role for the Minister with respect to directing the interest of the people of Trinidad and Tobago, and there is a role for the Government and possibly the Parliament, depending on the issue and the nature of the issue. At this point in time, the role of the NGC is to negotiate fair and appropriate contracts to ensure, two things: One, that we get a fair benefit and a reasonable benefit for the gas extracted from our fields; and secondly, to ensure

that Trinidad and Tobago remains a place in which investment can be made and being made for reasonable profit. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Charles: Prime Minister, in the context of the importance of NGC for our national economy, should the Government not be in possession of information regarding who benefits, who does not, and the quantum of the benefit from the gas supply chain?

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: And that is precisely what the NGC has at its disposal why it is negotiating and attempting to protect the interest of the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Speaker. To the hon. Prime Minister: Taking into consideration that 400 plus jobs are being lost as a result of the shutting off of gas at Caribbean Nitrogen Company, could the Prime Minister tell this House and the country who gave the instructions at NGC to shut off the gas supply?

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Madam Speaker, it should be very clear. I thought I answered that question. The NGC is a pipeline company, buying gas from the well head and transmitting it to Point Lisas where the gas is purchased at that end in Point Lisas. So, it should be obvious, that if the gas is shut off, it would be by the National Gas Company. There is no other authority to turn off gas at NGC other than the National Gas Company. And there is no contract in place, in case they have forgotten that. There is no contract in place, so the NGC would have conducted its business as it is reasonably required to do in the commercial arena.

URGENT QUESTIONS

Naparima Mayaro Road (Traffic Disruption)

Mr. Rushton Paray (*Mayaro*): Given the massive traffic disruption on the Naparima Mayaro Road in the vicinity of the Agostini landslip this week, could the

Minister give an update on the status of the remedial strategy going forward to deal with this?

The Minister of Works and Transport (Sen. The Hon. Rohan Sinanan): Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, the PURE Unit of the Ministry of Works and Transport would have completed all the designs and technical specifications for the landslip. Nipdec, the procurement agency for the Ministry of Works and Transport, would have invited tenders, and I am happy to announce that as we speak, I understand that there are 16 contractors on the site carrying out the inspection, the site visit. We expect that at least by the end of February the contract would have been awarded and started. In the interim, the Highways Division and the technical team would maintain the roadway to ensure that the road remains passable. Thank you.

**Port of Spain Prison
(Lock Down of)**

Mr. David Lee (Pointe-a-Pierre): Thank you, Madam Speaker. To the Minister of National Security: Based on recent reports which stated that heavily armed members of the protective services locked down the Port of Spain prison to conduct search activity, could the Minister state the reason for such an exercise?

The Minister of National Security (Hon. Maj. Gen. Edmund Dillon): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Given the nature of the prison environment, there are always random and, to some extent, deliberate searches conducted. Within recent time the Commissioner of Prisons has had certain information that allowed him to incorporate assistance from the protective services to conduct searches within the prison.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Madam Speaker. To the Minister, supplemental. Could the Minister state, after that search and seizure—after that search, was anything illegal

found?

Hon. Maj. Gen. E. Dillon: Madam Speaker, there were in fact illegal items found within the prison system during that search.

Mr. Lee: Could the Minister state what were those illegal items?

Hon. Maj. Gen. E. Dillon: Madam Speaker, during the search the prison officers did discover illegal contents, illegal marijuana, contraband marijuana within the prison system.

**Princes Town East Secondary School
(Commencement of Repair Works)**

Mr. Barry Padarath (*Princes Town*): Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, question No. 3, through you, to the hon. Minister of Education. In light of the much publicized electrical, air conditioning and structural issues affecting the Princes Town East Secondary School, could the Minister indicate when repair work on the school would commence?

The Minister of Education (Hon. Anthony Garcia): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. The first phase of the repair work on the Princes Town East Secondary School has already commenced. The school hall has been adapted for use of classrooms and students of Forms 1 to 3 have resumed classes on a rotation basis. Another phase of the works will continue shortly, and this will allow the resumption of full classes for all forms. Thank you.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, similarly to the hon. Minister. Hon. Minister, in light of the answer that you have just provided, could you indicate whether similar approach will be taken with respect to the Princes Town Presbyterian Primary No. 1 School, which has been shut down for the past two years?

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

Dr. Moonilal: To the Member for Arima: In light of protest activity a few minutes ago outside the Parliament, could you also indicate when the San Juan Government Boys and Girls Primary Schools will be completed?

Madam Speaker: I would not allow that as a supplemental question.

**Caribbean Nitrogen Company Shutdown
(Loss of Revenue to Government)**

Mr. Ganga Singh (*Chaguanas West*): To the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries: In light of the recent shutdown of the Caribbean Nitrogen Company, could the Minister indicate the loss to the Government of Trinidad and Tobago in revenue via taxation and foreign exchange?

The Minister of Energy and Energy Industries (Sen. The Hon. Franklin Khan): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. This question seems to suppose or prejudge—

Mr. Mitchell: Presuppose.

Sen. The Hon. F. Khan: Presuppose probably is the better word, that this is a permanent shutdown of CNC. It is not. This has resulted in the breakdown of a commercial negotiation for a gas sales contract, most matters of which have already been settled. The last matter to be settled is the actual price of gas. As we know, this is a very sensitive negotiation. It is a commercial negotiation, and I am of the firm view that the parties will return to the table next week, and hopefully there will be compromise on both sides, and we will have a settlement of this matter.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, every day that a plant is shut down, as the hon. Minister knows better than most of us, there is money lost. [*Desk thumping*] That money could never be regained, and that therefore, you have—

Madam Speaker: Member, it is a question which you have 15 seconds to pose?

Mr. Singh: Yes. The question which I pose which you need to answer is, since the shutdown, how much has been lost? And are you projected for that— revenue upstream, revenue downstream, revenue for the NGC in terms of taxation?

Sen. The Hon. F. Khan: Madam Speaker, in this Parliament we must not come across as if we are purporting for some side or another side. These are commercial negotiations. [*Crosstalk*] These are commercial negotiations that are at a very sensitive position. [*Crosstalk*]

[*Madam Speaker stands*]

Sen. The Hon. F. Khan: Our involvement in the very questioning on this matter is ill-advised. [*Continuous crosstalk*]

Madam Speaker: Minister! [*Crosstalk*] I would expect that we will all display some level of tolerance in this House. [*Interruption*] I will expect that we will all behave in a parliamentary manner. Minister of Energy and Energy Industries.

Sen. The Hon. F. Khan: The actual—all I can say, I do not have exact figures, but for a two-day shutdown, the actual figure will be very small. In any event, NGC is selling the gas somewhere else. This contract expired since the 18 October, 2017. They were given three extensions. The last extension finished on the 24th of January, so NGC has been making its best effort to come to a conclusion, and to bring this matter to an amicable solution. But for heaven's sake, please let the commercial situation unravel, and let good sense prevail, and let a commercial negotiation remain in the realm of commercial negotiations. Do not bring it in the Parliament. [*Desk thumping*]

2.00 p.m.

Dr. Tewarie: Minister, [*Crosstalk*] could this whole situation have been—

Madam Speaker: Excuse me. Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Sit down. The Speaker is standing.

Dr. Tewarie: Sorry. Sorry, Ma'am.

Madam Speaker: I know some matters may create a lot of excitement, but I would ask us all to observe Standing Order 53. Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: Minister, could this whole situation have been compromised and perhaps complicated by direct negotiations between the Government and the EOG?

Sen. The Hon. F. Khan: Dr. Tewarie, a man of your standing should have never asked that question. [*Crosstalk*]

Madam Speaker: Member.

Sen. The Hon. F. Khan: The Member for Caroni Central. You are saying, and the Prime Minister implied a while ago, for direct sales from upstream to the downstreamers, you will be obliterating the role of the NGC as a gas aggregator, and the NGC was set up to extract economic rent on behalf of the State. Understand that. [*Desk thumping*]

Flu Vaccine Safety (Steps taken to Address Concerns)

Dr. Lackram Bodoie (Fyzabad): Thank you, Madam Speaker. Question No. 5 to the Minister of Health. In view of a recent report on the safety of the 'flu vaccine,' could the Minister indicate the steps being taken to address concerns regarding the safety of 'flu vaccine'?

The Minister of Health (Hon. Terrance Deyalsingh): Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you colleague for the question. The letter to the editor written was not even anecdotally heavy in substance, it was not data driven and it did not come from a respected member of the medical scientific community. It questioned the safety and effectiveness of the flu vaccine and vaccines in general. The Trinidad and Tobago Medical Association immediately put out a press release,

including the Ministry of Health, saying that vaccines, flu vaccines are safe, well tolerated and effective in the vast majority of people, even though they are like all drugs, there are rare side effects. The TTMA's response even went on to say that the article in question fails to quantify how improbable and infrequent these side effects are and it focused instead on a potential range of rare side effects.

Madam Speaker, we have had absolutely no warnings from any credible organizations, for example, the World Health Organization, the Pan American Health Organization, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, CARPHA, Trinidad and Tobago Medical Association, our own Chief Medical Officer nor our county medical officers of health. No one internationally, regionally, locally has raised any question about the safety and effectiveness of the flu vaccine and I encourage everyone who falls into the at-risk groups, for example, our pregnant population, our elderly population with metabolic diseases like diabetes and so on, our children between six months and five years, and those adults who may be taking drugs which suppress their immune systems, like steroids for asthma and arthritis, all these people with compromised immune systems should avail themselves to the free flu vaccines that this Government has brought in. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Supplemental, from the Member for Fyzabad.

Dr. Bodoë: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you for that response Minister. Minister, in certain countries there is something called a Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System. In the interest of allaying and giving assurance to the public, can you state whether that is currently available in Trinidad and if not, do you intend to implement such a system?

Hon. T. Deyalsingh: Thank you. Under the office of the Chief Medical Officer, we track all adverse events whether it is due to vaccine administration or not and

that comes from our sentinel physicians both in the private sector and the county medical officers of health plus in the public sector.

But, Madam Speaker, I just want to raise one issue again. The hysteria about vaccines needs to be understood because in England recently a Dr. Wakefield raised a whole furore about the link between MRR vaccines and autism; that MRR vaccines would cause autism. He was later struck off the register of medical practitioners in the United Kingdom. And what happened, when his work got into mainstream media, the rates of MRR vaccines in children, in the United Kingdom declined and the inverse relationship, the number of cases of children in the UK getting mumps, measles and rubella also increased. We have to be wary about persons spreading fearmongering thoughts like this, untruths, fake news, about vaccines.

I want to raise one more issue. In the Islamic world there was a plot to link polio vaccines with some plot by the West—thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Supplemental question to the Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Based on your answer, Minister, would you undertake to give some public explanations and knowledge or an advertisement to allay the anxiety of those affected?

Hon. T. Deyalsingh: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and we plan to do just that. The Minister of Health will once again be going out into the public domain leading the charge in the market. I will be doing just that.

And just to wrap up on the polio vaccine, when rates of polio vaccination declined in Muslim countries, children got polio. Let us not give in to fearmongering. [*Desk thumping*]

**Carapichaima East Secondary
(Pigeon Infestation)**

Miss Romona Ramdial (*Couva North*): Thank you, Madam Speaker. To the Minister of Education: Could the Minister state how soon classes will resume for the Carapichaima East Secondary School in light of the pigeon infestation and other related issues?

The Minister of Education (Hon. Anthony Garcia): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. The Ministry of Education has received prohibition notices prescribing the use of the hall and the two technical vocational blocks due to pigeon infestation. The agency has also issued improvement notices for the cafeteria and the library. The Ministry is working with stakeholders to allow partial occupation of the school while it has engaged the EFCL to remedy all the issues raised by the OSH agency. Thank you.

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

The Minister of Planning and Development (Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis): Thank you very kindly, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, we will be answering all the questions for oral answer. With regard to the questions for written answer, we have all the answers, save, the answer for Question No. 31 and we are asking for another two week deferral. Madam Speaker, I know we already asked for a deferral of Question 31, but we need a little more time, if it is the will of the House.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

**Sandals Tobago Project
(Details of MOU)**

31. Dr. Roodal Moonilal (*Oropouche East*) asked the hon. Minister of Tourism:

With regard to the Sandals Tobago Project, could the Minister state:

- a) the date the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed;
- b) the location that the MOU was signed; and
- c) the list of persons that signed the MOU on behalf of the parties to the agreement?

**Sandals Resorts International
(Terms of Agreement)**

- 32. Dr. Roodal Moonilal** (*Oropouche East*) asked the hon. Minister of Tourism:

Could the Minister provide the terms of the agreement signed between the Government and Sandals Resorts International?

**Sandals Resorts
(Incentives and/or Facilities Extended to)**

- 33. Dr. Roodal Moonilal** (*Oropouche East*) asked the hon. Minister of Tourism:

Could the Minister indicate the incentives and/or facilities that were extended to the Sandals Resorts inclusive of taxation, land, environment, labour and financing?

**Resort and Hotel Development Project
(Expressions of Interest)**

- 34. Dr. Roodal Moonilal** (*Oropouche East*) asked the hon. Prime Minister: Could the Prime Minister indicate whether expressions of interest were sought from any other resort developers or operators, apart from Sandals, for the resort and hotel development project in Tobago?

**Sandals Resorts International
(Procurement Process)**

- 35. Dr. Roodal Moonilal** (*Oropouche East*) asked the hon. Prime Minister: Could the Prime Minister outline the process by which Sandals Resorts

International was procured as the operator or developer for the resort and hotel development project in Tobago?

**“No Man’s Land” in Tobago
(Details of Holdings)**

36. Dr. Roodal Moonilal (*Oropouche East*) asked the hon. Minister of Tourism:

Could the Minister indicate the name and directors of the special purpose company used to hold the parcel of land known as “No Man’s Land” in Tobago?

**Bon Air North Housing Development
(Details of Successful Applicants)**

63. Dr. Roodal Moonilal (*Oropouche East*) asked the hon. Minister of Housing and Urban Development:

Could the Minister state:

- a) the names of the ninety-three (93) successful applicants of housing units at the Bon Air North Housing Development announced on December 02, 2017 at the Government Campus Plaza;
- b) when each applicant applied to the HDC; and
- c) who recommended each successful applicant?

Vide end of sitting for written answers.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

**Terminal Benefits to Former Diplomats
(Expected Date for Outstanding Payment)**

58. Mr. Rodney Charles (*Naparima*) asked the hon. Minister of Foreign and Caricom Affairs:

Could the Minister provide the expected date for outstanding payment of terminal benefits to former diplomats who demitted office after September

2015?

The Minister of Foreign and Caricom Affairs (Sen. The Hon. Dennis Moses):

Madam Speaker, for a number of reasons including missing information, it is not possible at this time to give an expected date of payment of terminal benefits to former diplomats. However, the Ministry of Foreign and Caricom Affairs is making every effort to ensure that these payments are made as soon as possible.

Madam Speaker, delays in the payment of terminal benefits are caused by incomplete employment and payroll records and, in particular, incomplete pension and leave records and incomplete details of loan repayments and/or overpayments.

In addition, with respect to this particular issue, a number of former diplomats have not responded to requests for information required to finalize and compute their actual termination benefits. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Charles: Is the Minister aware that the inaction of the Ministry is causing severe hardships for these former diplomats, and that for those who do not have the problems which you have identified, can the Ministry give us a date when those matters will be dealt with?

Madam Speaker: I take it that the latter question is the question? Minister of Foreign and Caricom Affairs, the latter question.

Sen. The Hon. D. Moses: Madam Speaker, I do not share in that characterization. I have ably and in an integral or rather, comprehensive manner, responded in my first submission. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker: Supplemental, Member for Chaguanas West. Supplemental, Member for Chaguanas West!

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Speaker. [*Crosstalk*] Hon. Minister, at the beginning of your answer that you read out, you indicated—

[*Madam Speaker stands*]

Hon. Members: The Speaker is standing.

Mr. Singh: Sorry.

Madam Speaker: Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Hon. Minister, in the face of the answer in which you read out, you stated the word “misinformation” and I garner at the—further down you answered, it was a lack of information. So perhaps you may want to correct that.

Sen. The Hon. D. Moses: Madam Speaker, I am moved by the eagerness, [*Laughter*] but the crosstalk would have resolved that minor problem.

Madam Speaker: Supplemental.

Mr. Charles: I am still asking the question for the date when ex-diplomats who do not have complicated issues and challenges, could you give us the date when their issues will be remedied? [*Crosstalk*]

Sen. The Hon. D. Moses: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I do not have a date to share with the hon. Member. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Supplemental.

Mr. Charles: Madam Speaker, given the—and I know the severe hardship, some of them without homes—[*Interruption*]

Madam Speaker: Question, Member.

Mr. Charles: Could the Minister give at least some comfort, six months, a year or two years? You must be in a position to give guidance in this matter.

Madam Speaker: Okay, I will not allow that, that question has already been answered. Member for Princes Town.

**Sports Company of Trinidad and Tobago
(Reasons for Dismissal of Employees)**

55. Mr. Barry Padarath (*Princes Town*) asked the hon. Minister of Sport and

Youth Affairs:

Could the Minister provide the reasons for the dismissal of eight (8) employees inclusive of the Chief Executive Officer from the Sports Company of Trinidad and Tobago on November 2, 2017?

The Minister in the Office of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs and Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister (Hon. Stuart Young): Thank you very much, Ma'am. In an effort to assist my friend, this having legal connotations, these eight employees were all dismissed with cause after proper industrial relations practices were followed and, in particular, after proper investigations into their conduct were completed.

Madam Speaker: Supplemental, Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam Speaker, to the hon. Minister. Hon. Minister, can you indicate whether any of these employees has brought legal action against the Sport Company of Trinidad and Tobago for wrongful dismissal?

Hon. S. Young: Yes.

Mr. Padarath: Can you indicate how many of these employees?

Hon. S. Young: No.

Prioritization of Rivers for Drainage Works

59. Mr. Rodney Charles (*Naparima*) asked the hon. Minister of Works and Transport:

Given recent extensive floods, could the Minister state whether the Guaracara River and affected rivers in Barrackpore are being prioritized for drainage works?

The Minister of Works and Transport (Sen. The Hon. Rohan Sinanan): Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, the Ministry of Works and Transport through the Drainage Division has developed a programme of work to be executed

in fiscal 2018, subject to the availability of funding. The programme consists mainly of desilting, de-grassing of water courses across Trinidad and includes the Guaracara River and rivers in Barrackpore. I thank you.

**Equitable System re Foreign Exchange
(Development of)**

60. Mr. Rodney Charles (*Naparima*) asked the hon. Minister of Finance:

Could the Minister state whether an equitable system has been developed to ensure that small businesses are not significantly disadvantaged by foreign exchange shortages?

The Minister of Finance (Hon. Colm Imbert): Thank you, Madam Speaker. Trinidad and Tobago liberalized its exchange rate regime in April 1993, thereby removing controls on foreign exchange transactions. However, since exchange on controls were removed 25 years ago, the Central Bank has intervened in the commercial banking sector from time to time to supplement the amount of foreign exchange that is available to the public from the commercial banks.

Over the last three years a total of almost US \$6 billion has been sold to the commercial banks from the Government's foreign exchange reserves at the Central Bank at an annual average of almost US \$2 billion. This foreign exchange is provided to the commercial banks on a fortnightly or monthly basis depending on supply and demand and is usually provided in increments of US \$50 million to US \$150 million at a time as the situation demands. It should be noted that every dollar of foreign exchange that is provided by the Central Bank to the commercial banks reduces the Government's foreign reserves by an equivalent amount.

Consistent with the Exchange Control Act, these interventions by the Central Bank only involve authorized dealers. It should be noted that these authorized dealers sell to the public foreign exchange purchase from both the

commercial market and from the Central Bank. Although this foreign exchange is provided from the Government's foreign reserves, the Central Bank does not give any specific directions to the banks on the distribution of the Government's foreign exchange to businesses and individuals. Instead, a general guideline is given by the Central Bank that preference should be given to trade and manufacturing in the sale by the banks to the public of the Government's foreign exchange.

It is noteworthy that no directions are given with respect to the foreign exchange that is acquired by the commercial banks in their own right, from the market, in the course of their normal business. If the Central Bank were to do so that would be tantamount to reintroduction of exchange controls. In distributing the Government's foreign exchange, the banks are expected to follow an honour system and to distribute this foreign exchange equitably and impartially to all businesses and individuals, whether large, medium size, or small. The Government is continuously monitoring the situation to determine whether any adjustments need to be made to the guidelines given to banks when distributing the Government's foreign exchange. However, no decision has been made—

Madam Speaker: Supplemental, Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Thank you very much. Madam Speaker, given the number of complaints by small businesses that they are in fact disadvantaged when they go to the commercial banks for foreign exchange, is the Minister satisfied that outsourcing the distribution of foreign exchange to the commercial banks is a fair and equitable policy, given that this foreign exchange is owned by all citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

Hon. C. Imbert: Thank you, Madam Speaker. There are a number of misconceptions and misunderstanding in that question. There is no outsourcing of foreign exchange. It is a function of law and in accordance with the Central Bank

Act, foreign exchange can only be distributed by the Central Bank to the commercial banks for onward distribution to their customers. It is not a question of any outsourcing or anything like that. And I wish to repeat that when the Government allows the Central Bank to intervene in the market and distribute its foreign exchange, the country's foreign exchange to these banks, the guidelines at present are to give preference to trade and manufacturing.

However, the Government is not unmindful of all of the issues surrounding the supply and distribution of foreign exchange, the Government continuously monitors the situation and will make appropriate adjustments if necessary.

Madam Speaker: Supplemental question, Member for Barataria/San Juan.

Mr. Khan: Hon. Minister, could you indicate from the quantum of money that is given from the Central Bank to the local banks, what quantum of that money is used for credit card payments rather than trade and manufacturing?

Hon. C. Imbert: Madam Speaker, when the Central Bank intervenes in the market and injects foreign exchange, as I said, at an average of US \$2 billion per year, that supplements the foreign exchange that is distributed by the banks using from their own supplies and therefore it is impossible to determine of all the credit card purchases, what component of that is utilized by the Government's foreign exchange given to the commercial banks.

However, I can say that the last time we checked, credit cards utilized US \$3 billion a year in foreign exchange; US \$3 billion per year of the total country's foreign exchange in credit cards, US \$3 billion.

Madam Speaker: Supplemental, Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Hon. Minister, the supply of Central Bank foreign exchange US dollars, what percentage would go to trade and manufacturing and are car purchases part of the trade and how much goes to the purchase of cars from the

Central Bank release?

Hon. C. Imbert: Madam Speaker, I cannot give specific percentages but what I can say is that imports are what is described as trade. Because remember this is purchase of forex to purchase items that require foreign currency. So importation of items is trade, specifically the importation of raw materials is manufacturing. I cannot give you specific numbers, but the guideline is to the banks that they must give preference to trade and manufacturing, as I have just described.

Madam Speaker: Supplemental, Member for Barataria/San Juan.

Mr. Khan: Hon. Minister of Finance, could you indicate if at all, right, what is the quantum of money that the Government puts into the exchange rate system to maintain the exchange rate as it is now? To maintain that exchange rate at six point whatever, what is the quantum that you put in?

Hon. C. Imbert: How many times you would ask me the same question in the same thing. Madam Speaker, as I indicated, over the last three years the Government through the Central Bank has injected \$6 billion of the Government's foreign exchange, approximately \$2 billion a year. So the answer to that question, is \$2 billion, approximately; US \$2 billion a year is put into the commercial banking system by the Central Bank thereby drawing down on the Government's foreign exchange. And to deal with a question asked by the previous person, cars make up one of the largest consumers—motor cars; one of the largest consumers of foreign exchange is the importation of motor cars.

**Estate Management Business Development Company
(Details of Board of Directors)**

67. Dr. Roodal Moonilal (*Oropouche East*) asked the hon. Minister of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries:

Could the Minister state the name and occupation of the current members of

the Board of Directors of the Estate Management Business Development Company?

The Minister of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries (Sen. The Hon. Clarence Rambharat): Madam Speaker, the name and occupation of the current members of the board of directors of the Estate Management and Business Company Limited are as follows: Shameer Ronnie Mohammed, Company Director; Camille Chatoor, Business Manager; Kaisha Ince, Attorney-at-Law; Althea Elizabeth Thompson, Attorney-at-Law; Fulton Oswald Joseph Wilson, Attorney-at-Law; Tricia Beckles, Business Development Officer; Adande Piggott, Civil Engineer and Prakash Kowlessar, Financial Officer. Thank you.

**National Lotteries Control Board
(Details of Board of Directors)**

68. Dr. Roodal Moonilal (*Oropouche East*) asked the hon. Minister of Finance: Could the Minister state the name and occupation of the current members of the Board of Directors of the National Lotteries Control Board?

The Minister of Finance (Hon. Colm Imbert): Thank you, Madam Speaker. The names and occupations of the current members of the board of the National Lotteries Control Board are as follows: Mr. Eustace Nansis, businessman; Mr. Selby Brown, businessman; Ms. Cindy Manson, Accountant; Mr. Dwight Andrews, Security Consultant and Ms. Sunita Harrikissoon, Attorney-at-Law.

Resumption of Hangings

70. Mr. Fazal Karim (*Chaguanas East*) asked the hon. Attorney General: Could the Attorney General inform this House when the Government plans to resume hanging in Trinidad and Tobago?

The Attorney General (Hon. Faris Al-Rawi): Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am advised by the Commissioner of Prisons that there are 42 persons, all of whom are

men by the way, on death row, 30 of whom can in fact face the hangman after completion of their appeals. All persons currently on death row have pending appeals. Hanging such persons cannot be done until all appeal procedures have been exhausted and provided that the Pratt and Morgan five-year limitation does not apply.

According to the Privy Council decision in Pratt and Morgan where the death sentence is to take place more than five years after sentence, this delay constitutes inhumane and degrading punishment or other treatment and the death sentence is of course commuted to life imprisonment. Most convicted persons choose to exhaust all appeals procedures against the death sentence. There is a right of appeal to the Court of Appeal, the Privy Council, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.

The Government does not have control over the time it takes to deal with an appeal before these courts and often by the time all appeals have been exhausted the Pratt and Morgan five-year limitation takes effect which prevents hanging from being carried out. The Government sought to implement measures to circumvent this five-year limitation and also to address issues surrounding the death penalty by, one, implementing a tracking system to monitor the movement of cases from the High Court through the appellate courts to ascertain the status of those cases, and two, engaging Senior Counsel to provide legal advice on the constitutionality of a draft Bill to address the implementation of the death penalty.

Despite these efforts the fact remains that the Government has no control of judicial bodies charged with determining appeals and the legal opinion sought on a pro bono basis remains outstanding to date. A time line therefore cannot be provided for the resumption of hangings in Trinidad and Tobago since due process and appeal mechanisms must be adhered to and all persons currently on death row

all have pending appeals.

Madam Speaker: Supplemental, Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam Speaker. To the hon. Attorney General: Hon. Attorney General, if the requirements are satisfied with respect to enforcement, does the Government anticipate that enforcing the death penalty would assist in bringing down the murder rate?

Madam Speaker: I would not allow that as a supplemental question. Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Hon. Attorney General, are you satisfied with the efficiency and the effectiveness of the tracking system?

Hon. F. Al-Rawi: As a matter of fact, yes, Madam Speaker. We have a full listed details of every person that is committed to hang. They are tracked by date, potential expiry, date of appeal and we physically track the files across the state. That has never happened before. In fact, under the past Government no one, of course, met the hangman and no steps and no tracking mechanisms were put into place. Not a single one.

We can tell you as a matter of fact that of the 12 people of the 42, 42 are on death row, 12 of them cannot meet the hangman because of Pratt and Morgan, almost all of them were for the period expiring prior to September 2015, because there was nothing done to implement the law. I can tell you this, the law will be upheld and the mechanism of tracking is afoot and we literally have it on a case by case basis at the desk of the tracking mechanism in the office of the Attorney General. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker: Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Supplement. Is the Minister saying that during the time of the People's Partnership Government no attempt was made to finalize the hanging of

those who were accused of murder via the courts and therefore to say that we did nothing is wrong?

Hon. F. Al-Rawi: Madam Speaker, I certainly did not say what the hon. Member just put. What I said was the problem in not applying the law to hang people involves the appellate process that if you cross five years, Pratt and Morgan applies, and therefore the only mechanism that the State can be involved in is to make sure that you quicken the appellate process from the states end, to make sure the State is not in arrears.

In the period 2010 to 2015, not a single case was tracked by the previous Government, as a result of which all matters fell to Pratt and Morgan and the law could not be applied. That is what I am saying with clarity.

Madam Speaker: Member, supplemental question. Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Is this what is called the Ramesh effect, the former Attorney General, Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj, had that tracking mechanism in place and that is why during the period '95 to 2000 hanging was so effective?

Hon. F. Al-Rawi: Madam Speaker, perhaps in part, that is true, but the material difference and the ability of past Attorney General, Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj to actually carry out the sentence of death was simply because the appellate function of the Privy Council used to take maximum two years. Since then, the Privy Council as our final Court of Appeal has not concluded a single matter within the Pratt and Morgan time frame. So whilst the culture and ethos and one could even say the approach of the Privy Council is different today—what applied then in a much shorter time frame, it is certainly different today. The key function in carrying out the law right now is to make sure that the State in its responsibility is not in delay. And most regrettably, the last Government sat on its hands in relation

to putting in place mechanisms to treat with the State's responsibility.

**School Feeding Caterers
(Payment of Outstanding Monies)**

71. Mr. Fazal Karim (*Chaguanas East*) asked the hon. Minister of Education: Given that only 10 to 20 per cent of the debts owed to school feeding caterers have been satisfied, could the Minister state when will the caterers be paid the remaining balance of outstanding monies?

The Minister of Education (Hon. Anthony Garcia): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, the Ministry of Education has remitted cheques to the National Schools Dietary Services Limited in the amount of \$84 million or 60 per cent of the budgetary allocation for fiscal year 2017/2018. Contained within this amount is the sum of \$50million that was paid to the NSDSL on January 16, 2018, to meet current and outstanding sums owed to the school feeding caterers.

2.30 p.m.

This amount would have liquidated approximately 50 per cent of the debt owed to caterers as at December 31, 2017. Further payments towards the arrears will be paid as and when funds become available.

Thank you very much.

Madam Speaker: Supplemental question. Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, to the hon. Minister of Education. Could the hon. Minister indicate what is the outstanding balance after this payment has been made?

Madam Speaker: Minister of Education.

Hon. A. Garcia: Madam Speaker, \$84 million has been paid and that represents 60 per cent, and therefore the 40 per cent will tell you what the outstanding balance is. Thank you very much.

Madam Speaker: Supplemental question. Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Hon. Minister, is there any plan to rationalize further the School Feeding Programme and therefore the possibility of contractors being reduced?

Madam Speaker: Minister of Education.

Hon. A. Garcia: Madam Speaker, the Ministry of Education is at present engaging the cooperation of all our stakeholders in an effort to reduce the waste that has been reported to us by our principals, and towards this end we will be meeting as early as next week in an effort to ensure that the School Feeding Programme is run efficiently and effectively.

Thank you.

Cataract Surgery Patients (Post-Operative Service Systems)

72. Mr. Fazal Karim (*Chaguanas East*) asked the hon. Minister of Health:

Given the increase in the performance of cataract surgeries, could the Minister inform this House whether there are systems in place to treat with the patients requiring consequential post-operative services?

The Minister of Health (Hon. Terrence Deyalsingh): Thank you, Madam Speaker and thank you, Member, for the question. During the period September 2015 to September 2017, over 14,000 cataract surgeries were performed at public health institutions. All routine and post-operative services and possible complications are managed by utilizing local and international protocols with supporting institutional and staffing arrangements.

I thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Supplemental question. Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Could the Minister indicate

whether there is a backlog? If so, how much and how long will it take to get cataract operations?

Hon. T. Deyalsingh: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The current backlog is about 4,200, and that is why in October of last year I announced that we will be doing a cataract month sometime between the end of the first quarter and beginning of the second quarter in 2018. We are currently compiling throughout all the public health institutions, their need in terms of disposables, lenses, jellies and all of that. We set up a steering team under the directorship of the Chief Medical Officer to come up with the plan utilizing the public health services to clear up this backlog.

I must say that we inherited a pretty good plan. The former Minister of Health did, in fact—[*Desk thumping*] I do not play politics with health. He started the programme to bring down cataract surgeries from a waiting time of two years to one year. I continue with the programme and we have now brought it down to six months. But I still find six months is too long, especially for people who depend on the public health system, and that is why now we are going one step further to try to eradicate this.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker: Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: Ma'am, I want to invoke Standing Order 29(13).

Madam Speaker: One minute. All the supplemental—no supplemental questions under—yes.

Dr. Moonilal: Thank you. Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 29(13), I hereby call upon you to use your considerable authority to cause to be written a stern letter to the relevant Minister to explain in writing the reasons for their delinquency [*Desk thumping*] in failing to answer Number 31 on the Order Paper for Written Answer.

Thank you.

Dr. Gopeesingh: This has been outstanding for a month.

Dr. Moonilal: That is the easiest one. All I want to know is the date.

Dr. Gopeesingh: They only have to give a date.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Member, I think we have got a request for a deferral of this question, so it may not be that I will have to write such a stern letter. But I shall invoke Standing Order 29(13). [*Desk thumping*]

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

Government Scholarship Programme

The Minister of Education (Hon. Anthony Garcia): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I take this opportunity to share the following information on the Government's administration of the National Scholarship Programme with the national community. In October 2017, the Ministry of Education announced that Cabinet had approved the award of 377 scholarships to persons who had performed with excellence at the Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examinations in 2017. These awards were presented in 10 cognate groups, namely Business Studies, Creative and the Performing Arts, Environmental Studies, Humanities, Information and Communication Technologies, Language Studies, Mathematics, Natural Sciences, and Technical Studies.

Madam Speaker, it must be understood that some groups are so competitive that the most stringent of criteria and benchmarks need to be applied if the total scholarships awarded are to be kept at a sustainable level. In the Natural Sciences group, for example, candidates for awards had to attain eight Grade I's with all A's in the various concepts and skills tested to be awarded an Open Scholarship. It should be noted that an Open Scholarship affords the awardee the comfort of having all tuition and compulsory fees paid to the institution for the programme of

Statements by Ministers (cont'd)
Hon. A. Garcia (cont'd)

2018.01.26

study of his or her choice wherever he or she chooses to go in the world. This benefit is in addition to allowances such as an annual allowance towards acquiring books, warm clothing allowance, a one-time special equipment allowance and a monthly allowance that is to be used to meet personal needs as determined by the scholar. The total expenditure on national scholars exceeds TT \$200 million annually.

Even under this rigorous demand for excellence in academic performance, 377 of our graduates from the postsecondary sector were able to meet the criteria approved by Cabinet. Of these persons, 153 persons were awarded Open Scholarships and 224 earned additional scholarships using the initial results supplied to the Ministry of Education by CXC, the body with responsibility for setting and marking the CAPE subjects. As part of their process, the CXC allows the requests for review of results at various levels. Over 45 persons submitted requests for review of their results to the Ministry of Education in the hope of meeting the set criteria and benchmarks.

Today, Madam Speaker, I am happy to announce that Cabinet has approved the award of National Additional Scholarships in the Natural Sciences grouping to two persons: J. Mahabir, formerly of Presentation College, Chaguanas and D'Nae Bartholomew, formerly of Bishop Anstey High School and Trinity East College, who have presented reviewed results which have met the benchmarks for this award.

Furthermore, based on the positive review of results by CXC, four persons: V. Surujbally, formerly of Presentation College, Chaguanas; Kristal Manboadh, formerly of Holy Faith Convent, Couva; Jeremy Ramjohn, formerly of Naparima College, have been upgraded by Cabinet to Open National Scholarships in the

Statements by Ministers (cont'd)
Hon. A. Garcia (cont'd)

2018.01.26

subject grouping of Natural Science, and Karishma Balsingh, formerly of Lakshmi Girls' Hindu College, has been upgraded to Open National Scholarship in the subject grouping of Humanities.

The Ministry of Education offers hearty congratulations to these sons and daughters of our soil as they join the over 2,000 persons awarded scholarships on the basis of excellent results at the CAPE over the last five years. Indeed, the National Scholarship Programme of Trinidad and Tobago, funded by its taxpayers, has been a shining jewel of our education system since the first years of our Independence and has been supported and strengthened by each succeeding government despite any challenges faced by our economic circumstances. This Government, Madam Speaker, will do no less than its best to keep rewarding our students who demonstrate the potential and discipline with prudence and who produce such commendable results.

We, in the national community, expect that our scholarship awardees will, in time, enter the productive sector of Trinidad and Tobago with the knowledge, skills and the competencies that will secure our future as a nation. In this regard, contractual arrangements are signed that oblige scholars to provide varying periods of service to the national community usually through employment in public sector entities.

I wish to take this opportunity to urge our students and parents to consider tertiary programmes in areas such as the Humanities, the Creative and Performing Arts, Technical and Vocational Studies, and Information and Communication Technologies. And as we continue the thrust towards diversifying our economy, we are in need of social sector specialists, research specialists, creatives, crafts-

Statements by Ministers (cont'd)
Hon. A. Garcia (cont'd)

2018.01.26

persons, technicians, entrepreneurs, all willing to think out of the box and take risks.

The Ministry of Education and, by extension, the Cabinet and Government of Trinidad and Tobago, believes that if our best and brightest understand the depth and value of the contributions made in these areas by the few who take up the challenge, Trinidad and Tobago will demonstrate the human resource capability and capacity critical to the development of our beloved country. This, after all, is the main purpose of the National Scholarship Programme.

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

Madam Speaker: The Attorney General.

The Attorney General (Hon. Faris Al-Rawi): Thank you, Madam Speaker—

Dr. Gopeesingh: Madam Speaker, I wanted to raise Standing Order 24(4) to be permitted to ask one question.

Madam Speaker: I am sorry. Please do. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Hon. Minister, would you be kind enough to indicate how many students would have qualified for the Open Scholarships based on the criteria, and how much were granted, based on the criteria for the Open Scholarships which you mentioned, and how many would have probably not received Open Scholarships based on your statement?

Hon. A. Garcia: Madam Speaker, the question is a bit confusing because I stated in my contribution that 224 students earned—sorry. One hundred and fifty-three persons were awarded Open Scholarships and this was done solely on the benchmarks and the criteria that have been set. And therefore, it is 153 persons who qualified for Open Scholarships. I do not follow the rest of the question.

Dr. Gopeesingh: The rest of the question: Were there any other students who qualified?

Madam Speaker: Okay, Member, I think the question has been answered. It is one question you are allowed for elucidation.

Anti-Terrorism (Amdt.) Bill, 2018

The Attorney General (Hon. Faris Al-Rawi): Thank you, Madam Speaker. [*Desk thumping*] Madam Speaker, I have been authorized by the Cabinet to make the following statement:

I am pleased to inform this honourable House that the Anti-Terrorism (Amdt.) Bill, 2018, has been duly approved by the Cabinet to be laid in Parliament. The Bill seeks to provide for amendments to the Anti-Terrorism Act, Chap. 12:07 which:

- (i) specifically and significantly strengthen the preventative mechanisms within the Act;
- (ii) target terrorist financing and terrorist activities;
- (iii) clearly set out legislative mechanisms to meet our international obligations; and
- (iv) constitute an improved platform for Trinidad and Tobago's contribution to the fight against global terror.

The major initiatives of the Bill seek to plug gaps in the existing law identified through this Government's domestic experience in operationalizing and enforcing the existing Anti-Terrorism Act, as well as gaps and obligations identified by our international partners, reviewers and assessors.

The amendments to the Anti-Terrorism Act specifically address observed deficiencies by the Caribbean Financial Action Task Force as it relates to Trinidad and Tobago's compliance with Financial Action Task Force's Recommendations 5

and 6, sanctions related to terrorism and terrorist financing and terrorist financing offences as it relates to 5 and 6, and Immediate Outcomes 10, which relates to terrorists and terrorist organisations, et cetera.

The proposed amendments also enable Trinidad and Tobago to uphold its international obligations with respect of UNSCR Resolutions 1267, 1373 and 1988 which require countries to freeze without delay the funds or other assets of terrorist entities and individuals, and to ensure that no funds or other assets are made available, directly or indirectly, to the benefit of, or for any person or entity designated by the UNSCR or its relevant subsidiary body. The fight against terrorism has been a high priority for this Government since taking office. This involved a two-pronged approach of achieving legislative technical compliance to satisfy international obligations as well as achieving operational efficiency with respect to the application of anti-terrorism laws.

Gaps in legislative technical compliance were revealed after careful assessment was conducted by the Government in conjunction with Trinidad and Tobago's trusted international partners who stand shoulder-to-shoulder with us in the fight against global terrorism and transnational organized crime. Gaps in efficiency of the application of the Act were revealed by adopting an aggressive application of the existing law which, prior to September 2015, was left entirely untouched by the last Government.

The Office of the Attorney General and the Ministry of National Security have been at the tip of the spear in taking action against the global issue of terrorism from the start of this Government's tenure in office in September 2015. The establishment of an anti-terrorism desk within the Office of the Attorney

General has provided a hitherto absent mechanism to operationalize the targeted financial sanctions regime under the existing law.

In December 2015, Trinidad and Tobago obtained its first of the High Court designations in relation to a national, in accordance with the UNSC Resolution 1373, and freezing his assets. And since then we have obtained Orders in respect of a total of 353 entities and individuals, including all 347 designated by the United Nations' 1267 Sanctions Committee and six individuals with a local Trinidad and Tobago nexus.

We have gone further to submit three jurisdictions' requests for two regional and one international designation for entities and individuals in accordance with UNSCR 1373 and the FATF Recommendations. The Office of the Attorney General has also successfully pursued and obtained the first listing of a suspected terrorist fighter and ISIL spokesman and recruiter being added to the UN 1267 list, another first for Trinidad and Tobago.

The establishment of the anti-terrorism desk to operationalize the obligations of the Attorney General under the Anti-Terrorism Act has provided a platform for the establishment of a multi-disciplinary task force to ensure collaboration and coordination of intelligence and evidence-gathering in support of targeted financial sanctions. The mechanism now also feeds into the work of the Law Enforcement Working Group, which focuses on criminal prosecutions of suspected terrorists. The fruit of this process has led to the first use of other law enforcement mechanisms such as INTERPOL Blue Notices, which in itself is a strong mechanism for international investigative cooperation in the fight against terrorism. This task force has been fruitful both in identifying targets and gaps in the present legal and administrative framework.

Madam Speaker, the Bill contains comprehensive measures for proposed changes, which include:

1. The expansion of the definition of property/funds to include oil and other natural resources in keeping with our international obligations;
2. Broadening the definition of ‘terrorist’ to include persons who contribute to terrorist activity;
3. A redefining of “terrorism” to broaden the scope of the Act;
4. Criminalisation of the threat to commit or taking preparatory steps;
5. Strengthening the law relating to the provision of services for the commissioning of financing of terrorism;
6. The criminalisation of joining or belonging to a terrorist organisation and/or receiving training from such an organisation;
7. The criminalisation of travel for the purpose of committing terrorist acts and deeming such individuals as Foreign Terrorist Fighters;
8. Provisions to allow the Minister of National Security to designate geographical areas, travel to which without providing requisite notices, leads to a rebuttable presumption that the travel is for a terrorist act;
9. The revision of the designation process of individuals and organisations to be characterized terrorist entities and the application of financial sanctions to said entities;
10. A clear mechanism for Trinidad and Tobago to propose names to the United Nations Security Council and subsidiary bodies;
11. An expansion in the power of law enforcement agencies to gather information to cover documents, computers and electronic devices;

12. The revision of the provisions for the investigation of suspected terrorists and the gathering of information by the FIU;
13. The revision of the mechanisms for seizure and forfeiture of assets belonging to suspected entities; and finally
14. Strong provisions to address specific risks posed to children including recruiting and taking them to conflict zones.

Madam Speaker, these amendments are aimed at addressing practical challenges we have identified by our operationalizing specific components of the Act, the existing law, which are absolutely necessary to protect our national security and to fulfil our international obligations. We are seeking to do our part as a country to address factors that contribute to increased radicalization domestically and internationally. Failure to address these deficiencies will also have far-reaching negative impact on Trinidad and Tobago's ability to participate in the global economy which in turn negatively impacts the economic and physical security of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

The on-going initiatives have resulted in greater local and international cooperation. We have had considerable stakeholder consultations over the period of the last two years. The Anti-Terrorism Bill (Amdt.) Bill which was first laid in Parliament in 2017 has been improved, and since that time we have strengthened and on the basis of further consultation, produced the current Bill. As drafted and out of an abundance of caution, we have inserted a three-fifths majority clause into this Bill and so the Government proposes to refer this Bill to a Joint Select Committee of the Parliament for consideration on a tripartite basis with specific view towards facilitating alacrity in the passage of the improvements to the anti-terrorism law.

In closing, Madam Speaker, I wish to underscore that even though Trinidad and Tobago, through vibrant leadership of CFATF in the period in which we held the Chair, has been selected as a model jurisdiction leading the fight against terrorism by the 25 other countries that comprise that body, this Government considers it cannot rest on its achievements and recognizes, it must, the threat of terrorism. Trinidad and Tobago intends to remain abreast of developments in respect of ISIL, Da'esh and Al-Qaida. We will stand up and be counted among the valiant and determined nations.

Madam Speaker, we believe this proposed Bill can benefit from a more detailed parliamentary consideration rather than regular debate and in this regard the Government proposes that pursuant to Standing Order 64(1)(c) that the Bill be referred to a Joint Select Committee of the Parliament.

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

ANTI-TERRORISM (AMDT.) BILL, 2018

Bill to amend the Anti-Terrorism Act, Chap. 12:07 [*The Attorney General*]; read the first time.

The Attorney General (Hon. Faris Al-Rawi): Madam Speaker, in accordance with Standing Order 64(c), I beg to move that the Anti-Terrorism (Amdt.) Bill, 2018 be referred to a Joint Select Committee to be established for its consideration and to report by March 31 2018.

Question put and agreed to.

JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE (APPOINTMENT OF)

Anti-Terrorism (Amdt.) Bill, 2018

The Minister of Planning and Development (Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis): Madam Speaker, subject to the concurrence of the Senate on the establishment of

JSC (Appointment of) (cont'd)
 Hon. C. Robinson-Regis (cont'd)

2018.01.26

the Joint Select Committee on the Anti-Terrorism (Amdt.) Bill, 2018, I beg to move that this House appoints four Members—apologies, Madam Speaker. I beg to move that this House appoints four Members to sit with an equal number from the Senate on the Joint Select Committee to consider and report on the Anti-Terrorism (Amdt.) Bill, 2018. Those Members will be: Mr. Faris Al-Rawi, Miss Marlene Mc Donald, Mrs. Camille Robinson-Regis— just one second, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, let me repeat the names, please: Mr. Faris Al-Rawi, Miss Marlene Mc Donald, Mrs. Camille Robinson-Regis and Mr. Prakash Ramadhar. Thank you very much.

Question put.

Hon. C. Robinson-Regis: Madam Speaker, may I interrupt you, please? Madam Speaker, it is supposed to be five Members from the House and three from the Senate. It is eight Members we want to sit on this Committee. So it is my mistake and I would like to be allowed the opportunity to repeat the Motion.

Madam Speaker: Might I suggest that this Motion be taken a little later in the day, if it meets the concurrence of the House?

Hon. C. Robinson-Regis: It is solved, so we can deal with it because I have all the names.

Madam Speaker: Members, I would again advise that this matter be taken later in today's sitting.

**DIVERSIFICATION OF THE ECONOMY
 (GOVERNMENT'S FAILURE RE VIABLE PLAN)**

Mr. Fazal Karim (*Chaguanas East*): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I beg to move the following Motion standing in my name:

Whereas there has been a noticeable decline in the level of investment in Trinidad and Tobago;

And whereas there has also been a failure by the Government to create job opportunities;

Be it resolved that this House take note of the failure of the Government to present a viable plan to diversify the economy and to place Trinidad and Tobago on the path of sustainable growth.

Madam Speaker, I want to thank you for the opportunity to start and to lead in this debate, but also too, for approving this Motion on the Order Paper. It is with a heavy heart I speak on matters which are ubiquitously affecting our beloved country, and which this PNM Government is clearly incapable, unable and incompetent to deal with. [*Desk thumping*]

I was born in Trinidad, went to school here, graduated here, worked here, started my family here, lived all my life here, but have never experienced anything like this at all. [*Desk thumping*] Trinidad and Tobago, Madam Speaker—and I share this view of very many others and maybe those on the opposite side would like to listen a bit and learn before you respond. Trinidad and Tobago has been plunged into a feeling—and this is not only I am saying this. There seems to be a consensus, a feeling of hopelessness, desperation, fear, gloom, depression and disappointment.

I say disappointed because this PNM Government promised to create jobs, education for all, better quality and more affordable health care, increase foreign direct investment, a safer country, reduce crime, reduce poverty, lower the cost of living and improve the quality of life.

Diversification of the Economy (cont'd)
Mr. Karim (cont'd)

2018.01.26

3.00 p.m.

Madam Speaker, I wish to present, in support of my Motion, the following statistics—these statistics I am presenting do not lie. Those on the other side may have read a book, *How to Lie with Statistics*, but I am presenting the facts.

Mr. Mitchell: Madam Speaker—[*Crosstalk*]

Madam Speaker: Member for San Fernando East, you want to stand on a point of order?

Mr. Mitchell: Madam Speaker, 46(4). [*Crosstalk*] 48(4), Madam Speaker. I clear it. [*Laughter*]

Madam Speaker: I overrule.

Mr. F. Karim: Madam Speaker, thank you very much. In my very first year of my undergraduate degree at the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine Campus—for those who may have gone to that institution, that book was available on the fourth floor of the JFK Library. [*Desk thumping*]

This economy and country has never been on a fast track to failure since this Rowley-led Government has taken control since the 7th of September, 2015. The Prime Minister of this nation—it is clear to all of us—and people in the country are saying that—that this Government has no plan [*Desk thumping*] and when my colleague, the Member for Naparima, said so and he continues to say so, he is vilified from those opposite, but then let me state the facts so that we will understand.

Madam Speaker, I wish to give some information: Trinidad and Tobago Selected Economic Indicators, and the source is the International Monetary Fund Country Report, October 2017, Trinidad and Tobago. Real GDP estimates was minus 6.0 in 2016, minus 3.2 in 2017, 1.9 in 2018. The energy revenue you will

Diversification of the Economy (cont'd)
Mr. Karim (cont'd)

2018.01.26

see has also declined. Non-energy revenue has also declined from minus 1.9, minus 3.1, in 2016 and 2017 respectively. Current account: minus 10.7 in 2016, minus 8.5 in 2017, and in 2018, minus 7.9. Exports: In 2016, 36.8 per cent; in 2017, 42.4 per cent; and in 2018, 42.2 per cent, a decline. Imports: 42.3 per cent in 2016, 45.8 per cent in 2017, and 45.4 per cent in 2018. The public sector debt rose from 58.3 per cent in 2016 to 61.2 per cent in 2017, and is expected in 2018 to 62.5 per cent. The current economic growth in 2016 was minus 6.0, and that was worse than that of 1984 when it was minus 5.7 per cent. These are indisputable facts. The current account values that are declining will continue to decline we were advised until 2022. Where did I get that information from? Source No. 2, the IMF World Economic Outlook Database, October 2017.

Madam Speaker, the quarterly index of Real Economic Activity indicated the beginning of 2016 manufacturing was minus 6.8 per cent. By the second quarter of 2017, manufacturing dropped to minus 7.6 per cent. That source is the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago Economic Bulletin, September 2017. While the IMF projects positive growth, it does not mean we are better off than where we were in 2016. If we do indeed grow by 1.9 per cent, GDP will increase to \$87.23 billion. The last time GDP fell below \$88 billion was in 2006. The current account deficit in 2016 stood at minus 11.335 per cent of GDP. The last time we sustained a deficit that crossed minus 10 per cent of GDP was in 1998. Madam Speaker, it is very clear our economy is regressing.

In his three addresses to the nation, the hon. Prime Minister complained each time. In fact, his last address dubbed “a message of hope”, seemed more a message of hopelessness and despair. [*Desk thumping*] Even up to two days ago in an interview on a radio station he complained he does not know what is happening,

Diversification of the Economy (cont'd)
Mr. Karim (cont'd)

2018.01.26

but he is still in charge. Madam Speaker, I just want to give you some information with respect to the addresses to the nation by the hon. Prime Minister. In December 2015, it was a gloomy economy, managed foreign exchange and restrained Government spending. In September 2016, it was a gloomy economy again, boasted of budget cuts. In January 2018, it was escalating crime rate and how difficult it has been for the PNM to turn around the economy.

Madam Speaker, I think when we are presenting Motions like these and we have to substantiate the facts, we must always go back to the first principles, the basis of the presentation: how have we arrived at this position; what was the social contract that this Government made with the electorate? I want to quote, Madam Speaker, with your permission from the 2015 Manifesto, *Let's do this Together*, and in the Foreword written by the hon. Prime Minister, I quote:

“It gives me great pleasure on behalf of the”—PNM—“to present to you our comprehensive Manifesto for the upcoming General Election.

As is our practice when in Opposition, we have spent the last five years developing”—five years—“the necessary policies and programmes to rebuild our economy [sic] and our economy, restore confidence, equity and social justice, and enhance and improve every area of national life.”

Madam Speaker, the truth you will see as we go along. It is true that he said that it is right, but it is not right that you have accomplished that. You have turned back on your ideals, on your promises, and on your commitment. [*Desk thumping*]
You promised to reduce and rationalize taxes, but you implemented a draconian fiscal regime of tax, tax, and more tax. You promised job creation and the promotion of social injustice or justice, and what has happened? I want to quote again with your permission, Madam Speaker, the 2015 PNM Manifesto, the

section on labour, page 67, says:

“...there should be adequate means of livelihood for all, that labour should not be exploited for forced by economic necessity to operate in inhumane conditions...”

Yet, Madam Speaker, every day we are bombarded by headlines of job cuts, retrenchments and layoffs. They promised to extend the West Indian diaspora, intensify foreign relations, create partnerships and innovations in energy and hydrocarbon based industries, transform the agricultural sector into an economic growth sector. I ask the question: Where is the evidence of this? You would have had a lot of big talk in terms of the budget presentation of 2016/2017, Dragon Field, single electronic platforms, special economic zones—and I want to say that 2016/2017 budget presentation resembles very much what we had proposed in our manifesto and what we were preparing for that budget presentation had we won the election—incentives for the maritime industry, entrepreneurial talent growth. The 2017/2018 budget had a number of other things that they presented: business development incentives programme, agricultural training programmes, new incentive for farmers, yachting, the Juniper platform. And you know, Madam Speaker, the PNM is boastful about the Arima and Point Fortin hospitals, but these were started under the People’s Partnership administration. [*Desk thumping*] They boast about the central block coming on stream just now at the Port of Spain General Hospital, but just this week or last week the San Fernando General Hospital, we had a photograph of leaking roofs. We had a situation as well where a number of other projects were mentioned in terms of crime and security, various police stations, but I ask the question: What about the Enterprise Police Station that the Minister of National Security gave a commitment to on *Hansard* record of May

Diversification of the Economy (cont'd)
Mr. Karim (cont'd)

2018.01.26

31, 2017.

There were a number of other projects, some of which I will be able to just briefly indicate: a new international airport terminal in Crown Point, a Toco ferry port, Moruga fishing port, Valencia to Toco road, the Curepe interchange—all of these are projects which we have heard about—the Maracas Beach upgrade. Some of these are necessary and may have started, but I want to ask the question: So where is this money coming from? You do not have money to create jobs and you will want to tell me that some of these projects are the ones that will create jobs. How many people have gotten jobs under your administration since you took office over two years ago? I propose to show that what we have seen in this country under this PNM Government is that vast numbers of persons have lost their jobs compared to how many jobs have been created.

The 2015 manifesto and I quote again, it says:

“To rescue our country from the despotic anti-labour UNC-led regime...”
Madam Speaker, we on this side remember very well, instead of the creation of jobs, the closure of Caroni (1975) Limited where thousands of workers were laid off and over 35,000 persons were affected, their families. Madam Speaker, remember this, and I am sure my colleague who will follow me will make reference to this in terms of the consequences of the closure of Caroni (1975) Limited, but I think we need to also be reminded about the consequences of job losses. Some people cannot cope with it, families cannot cope with it, some people commit suicide, some people while they are trying to eke out a living they become a target of crime and criminality and, therefore, these are some of the things that we must consider. And when we are talking about jobs and job creation, recently we have seen a graduation that took place with the YTEPP programme—and when

Diversification of the Economy (cont'd)
Mr. Karim (cont'd)

2018.01.26

I talk about investment I will not only be speaking about investment in terms of local and direct foreign investment in business or in terms of manufacturing, or commercial entities, I will want to also make reference specifically to a very important aspect of investment, investing in human capital.

Madam Speaker, in the budget presentation of 2016/2017—I will just give one example—it was announced that there will be a graduate recruitment programme to employ at least 500 graduates in an opportunity to create jobs as well for our young people in all 23 Ministries, where a total of \$55 million would have been invested. I ask the question: What has happened to this programme? As we are talking about jobs, we have to also—I just want to make reference to a statement made by the hon. Minister of Education in terms of scholarships. If I had the opportunity and I wanted to ask him, can he tell us how much money has been invested in open scholarship winners over the past five years for example, or two years, particularly since he is raising it; and of these scholars who have graduated and returned over the last two years, can you tell us how many of them have found jobs, or how many of them continue to be unemployed? [*Desk thumping*] How many of them? Madam Speaker, I can you tell you that the norm is that, and the contractual agreement is, if after six months a returning scholar is unable to find a job in his or her home country, that person is no longer obligated to the contract and can seek a job anywhere else in the world. Is that what we want to do, how we are going to invest and create jobs?

Madam Speaker, let me just give you some unemployment statistics. In 2015 and 2016: Persons with jobs, 623,300; in 2016, it was reduced to 613,000. The labour force comprised 645,300 in 2015, and in 2016 it comprised 638,300.

Unemployment in 2015 was at 3.9 per cent; the unemployment rate was 3.4 per

Diversification of the Economy (cont'd)
Mr. Karim (cont'd)

2018.01.26

cent in 2015, and 3.9 per cent in 2016. The labour force participation rate was 59.7 per cent in 2015, and 60.6 per cent in 2016. These figures are sourced from the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago.

We have heard quite a lot about how the Government plans to create jobs in this country. Very early in the life of this Government, to be exact in July 2015, the hon. Prime Minister announced plans to construct a plywood factory in La Brea, and I could give you the source of it too, but I think that is factual. He said that over here. In August 2016, getting ready to start construction to cost US \$200 million, he said it will create 750 jobs during construction and 285 permanent jobs for the residents, and particularly he was making this statement about La Brea and the southern peninsula.

It is now January 2018, where is this factory; where is the plywood? What about the Mitsubishi plant, have we heard anything recently about its progress? What about the Dragon Field, what about the Teck Park's expansion and utilization? What has happened to these projects? What I could remember and the only thing I recall vividly from the Minister of Labour and Small Enterprise Development, who was here at some time before, in terms of the job strategy, was that they wanted to find 35,000 truck drivers for Canada. Is that the job strategy? Where have we found this? And you know, Madam Speaker, one of the things that is lacking sadly is we are not getting up to date relevant data on the job market.

I indicated before that we have not seen in this country as yet, and certainly I have not seen, any updated national needs list. The national needs list will tell the country what are the jobs that are available in the years to come and, therefore, that will impact upon those persons who want to study in the future. That will impact upon the quality of the career guidance in schools, at the secondary and

Diversification of the Economy (cont'd)
Mr. Karim (cont'd)

2018.01.26

postsecondary schools and, therefore, it is important for us to plan ahead, but how are we going to get these jobs? I will ask this Government to tell this country where are the jobs available in this country? Tell us. [*Desk thumping*] I saw in the newspapers recently they had interviews for these constables at the regional corporations and people with degrees, masters and beyond are applying. This is what we are facing in this country at this time. When you do that, you get into a phenomenon not only unemployment, but underemployment. [*Desk thumping*] This is where the country will lose quite a lot of its talent, its investment in the human capital.

But if my friends on the other side want to find out about what are the jobs of the future, while they might do so and do on their own reading, I will want to recommend them to read the book *What are the Jobs of the Future* by Roman Espejo—it is 2018—and one of the things that is being said there is that many jobs will be replaced by technological innovation. We know that, we read that, we hear that, the Government says that, but what is the infrastructure they are putting in place, and I will attempt to show that very shortly as well. But you know you want to have jobs of the future, technologically driven jobs, but what do you do to this country? You take away the laptops from the students in the secondary schools; [*Desk thumping*] you will not open under the Ministry of Education and work in collaboration with the University of the West Indies to open the CWRD—the Centre for Workforce Research and Development—that will give you up to date information about jobs and the economy. I have made reference to that before and, therefore, I will not repeat it.

Only this morning I was looking at the television and I was looking and listening to the Mayor of Point Fortin, Councillor Abdon Mason, on TV6, and he was saying

Diversification of the Economy (cont'd)
Mr. Karim (cont'd)

2018.01.26

that he was very concerned about youth unemployment and, therefore, he was concerned about jobs for youths and the lack of opportunities for youth. But, Madam Speaker, would you believe if I tell you in that very area of Point Fortin, that the Government under the Minister of Education has closed down the NESC Programme in Point Fortin. He has also closed down—a colleague of his—the NESC Programme in Moruga. In addition to that, the NESC Programme in La Brea, in the constituency of La Brea, in Palo Seco, has been closed down. How do you want to create jobs when you are closing down opportunities for young people to prepare themselves for the jobs of the future? Madam Speaker, I told you that they closed down the NESC in Point Fortin, what have we heard about the MIC Institution of Technology in Point Fortin; what have we heard about the UTT; what have we heard about the OJT Programme which would have helped a lot of these young graduates to get jobs, or at least to start with something? I can tell you what we did. We built for Point Fortin, under my watch and under the leadership of Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar as Prime Minister, the first Servol Life Skill Centre at Striker's Village in Point Fortin. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker, I want to give you a few of the highlights in terms of the labour market. We would have heard some of it this evening, : 410 jobs impacted at Caribbean Nitrogen Limited, the potential for shutdown, unemployment has hit a four-year high in this country, thousands lose their jobs in 2016, the Central Bank estimates 5,000 jobs lost, and I want to tell you something, Madam Speaker, and I want to tell the country this, and I hope when whoever is responding to me speak honestly. Do not say what I did not say. Argue against the statistics and the figures I am telling you and the truth, and present it to the nation. Do not come and play politics with people's lives and jobs in this country [*Desk thumping*] and I want to

Diversification of the Economy (cont'd)
Mr. Karim (cont'd)

2018.01.26

tell you why you must not do that.

One of the things that we lament tremendously is the fact that the OJT Programme has been emasculated. When I was Minister and I left in 2015, I left in the account of the On-the-Job Training Programme \$374 million to help young persons who are graduating from our institutions to eke out a little living, but you know what is important as well, Madam Speaker? So that even if they are OJT and they could put that in their resume, it was an opportunity for them to articulate to another job [*Desk thumping*] to promote themselves. Where is the hope? Madam Speaker, I want to tell you—I am not prophesying this, I wish it does not happen, but I want the Government to take note of it—it could be a long hot summer, but let me say dry season because we do not have summer here—if you do not watch what is happening with these young people. Madam Speaker, we just have to read about the Arab Spring and what happened with the Arab Spring. I will just give you a name so they could google it, and they could find it, and they could talk about it. It was a young man called Mohammed Bouazizi in the country of Tunisia, in the town called Sidi Bouzid, and what happened to him is that he was a computer science graduate who was unable to find a job upon graduation, decided that to mind his family he will take a fruit cart and sell. He was confronted by a policewoman who slapped him, and he vowed that if he did not see the Governor of Tunisia he was going to set himself on fire. Well, he did not see the Governor of Tunisia and the rest is history, and that was the ignition for the Arab Spring. Madam Speaker, I want to tell you—my colleague is saying if somebody slap you will want to kill yourself, but that is in the Islamic world. It is a different culture and, therefore, I want to say that while—I am just giving an example and I hope it does not happen here. This Government must not take its eyes off these young

Diversification of the Economy (cont'd)
Mr. Karim (cont'd)

2018.01.26

people who have been frustrated on a daily basis. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker, I was telling you about the OJT Programme. Would you believe for a programme that was running well, 119 OJT administrative staff was sacked, and do you know what they did? They rehired who they want. I am reading the newspaper about people being sacked at the University of Trinidad and Tobago—and I hope I will move fast enough because I want to get there too—and at COSTAATT, and you know what we are wondering, is this a cleansing of some type that is taking place? And therefore, I also want to put on notice the concern for the high level of youth unemployment.

As I move quickly on to my other aspect of investment, I just want to indicate that investment really is money committed or property acquired for future income, and I hope that anybody who is responding will respond on the basis of that definition. There are two types of investment, fixed income investment or variable income investment. We would have heard just now about even investment through the credit cards. The hon. Minister of Finance told us about \$3 billion in credit card purchases, but what is also important, Madam Speaker, is that investment has an ROI, a return on that investment and, therefore, it is important for us to see where we are as a country in terms of investment.

Madam Speaker, I wish to just give some data from the Global Competitiveness Rating, the World Economic Forum 2017/2018, and it says the GCI ranking of a total of 137 countries Trinidad and Tobago was 94th in 2016/2017, 83rd in 2017/2018, but I want to say that that was as a result of the competitiveness pillar of higher education and training in Trinidad and Tobago. It was not anything that this PNM Government did. It was reaping the benefits of our investment in the tertiary education. [*Desk thumping*] And if I may just continue in that vein, the

Diversification of the Economy (cont'd)
Mr. Karim (cont'd)

2018.01.26

highest percentage we ever saw in the history of this country of the participation rate in the tertiary sector was under the People's Partnership Government, led by Mrs. Bissessar of 65.24 per cent. [*Desk thumping*] I ask the Minister of Education, and I challenge him to tell us what is the current participation rate in the tertiary sector?

Madam Speaker, the report goes on to show the most problematic factors of doing business in Trinidad and Tobago. We have heard from Dr. Terrence Farrell that the Government is to blame for the foreign exchange crisis. I will come back to that in a while, but I just want to give some information with respect to Moody's and Standards & Poor's downgrades, and we have seen our rating move from Ba1 to Baa3. That rating was based on the following key drivers and I could give you a lot of those things, but I believe some of them are well known to us and I will want to move on quickly because I want to get on to some very important points. But let me just say with respect to an important aspect of investment in Trinidad and Tobago is the ease of doing business, and I want to quote from the World Bank Ease of Doing Business in Trinidad and Tobago:

In 2010, out of 190 economies we were ranked 76; in 2011, 68; in 2012, 63—that was the lowest under the People's Partnership Government—in 2013, 66; in 2014, 85; in 2015, 92; but under this PNM Government, the ease of doing business was ranked at 96; and in 2017 it goes to 102, the highest we have ever seen in Trinidad and Tobago.

3.30 p.m.

Madam Speaker, we know that there are a lot of factors that will impact negatively upon investment, both domestic and foreign. We have heard about the number of murders in the country and we know lamentably, it is now at 48, I hope

Diversification of the Economy (cont'd)
Mr. Karim (cont'd)

2018.01.26

it does not really increase too quickly. [*Interruption*] Fifty-one, the current situation. Trinidad and Tobago, in terms of the Global Peace Index, has ranked 97 out of 163 countries, an increase from the 84th position in 2016. The report goes on to show the economic cost of violence in millions of dollars and the per capita cost as a percentage of the GDP is 14.9 per cent. Crime has become one of the main deterrence to investment both local and foreign. Local businessmen are suffering. They are cutting back hours and nightshifts for safety and security of employees. They are experiencing higher cost of production from having to increase security personnel and equipment. They must now find a way to absorb that cost or pass it on to the consumer. In some cases, Madam Speaker, some of these businessmen, they close down and others migrate out of here.

Madam Speaker, I am just going to be quoting briefly from Economist Dr. Roger Hosein who says that:

Since 2005, 1 per cent of the labour force has been murdered in this country. Madam Speaker, I am sure that all of us know that even in churches, mosques, temples, they are varying their services and their schedules to ensure that the congregation or the membership get home early. I am looking at a new phenomenon, Madam Speaker, when you park your vehicles and you go to a function, even a church or a place of worship, you come back to find that your windows are smashed and your belongings are taken and removed.

Madam Speaker, I just want to give an idea as to what is happening too. In terms of investment, foreign direct investment to Trinidad and Tobago plummets and I have the source, the publication is the *Daily Express* and the date is the 14th of June, 2017: \$730 million—the Chinese built a highway and opens it in Jamaica.

“St. Vincent threatens to sue Trinidad and Tobago over foreign exchange”

Diversification of the Economy (cont'd)
Mr. Karim (cont'd)

2018.01.26

Trade Minister says that the Cabinet is reviewing the plan on the ease of doing business and also in terms of investing in Africa. And you know, Madam Speaker, this one I liked in a sense.

“Brazil ready for investment in Guyana’s oil...”

Madam Speaker, we were told that we have the hon. Prime Minister as the best marketing officer for Trinidad and Tobago. [*Crosstalk*] And somebody said yes. And he went, the best marketing officer that we have, went to Guyana and met with the Prime Minister of Guyana, and tried to get Guyana, which has an expanding and burgeoning energy sector, oil and gas—Exxon is there right now—to collaborate with Trinidad and Tobago. And what does the Guyanese Government tell us and show us and have us read in the papers? They now say that they are preferring to go to Brazil and they are saying that they will get the expertise and the training from Petrobras.

Madam Speaker, I want to tell you, Petrobras, the oil company, to work in that company, you must go through the Petrobras University. But we had opened the only drilling academy this country has ever seen under the People’s Partnership Government. [*Desk thumping*] [*Crosstalk*] Academy. Well, the drilling school. [*Crosstalk*] The former Minister of Science, Technology and Tertiary Studies says the drilling school but we opened it under the People’s Partnership Government and therefore, I want to say that we are very disappointed in our chief marketing officer. He was unable to attract Guyana to invest or to collaborate with Trinidad and Tobago.

I want to also say that we were being told that there would be \$3 billion, by the Minister of Trade and Industry, in investment over the next three years. We would like to hear what that is, tell us. But when you are telling us about the \$3

Diversification of the Economy (cont'd)
Mr. Karim (cont'd)

2018.01.26

billion, do not tell us how much started and negotiated under the People's Partnership you know, tell us what you have done under your tenure. [*Desk thumping*] And tell us how many jobs and in what categories, what sectors of the economy. And Madam Speaker, we are seeing now that the Tobago economy suffers and that there is an agenda.

But I want to just deal with some other matters in terms of human capital investment, and more particularly, Madam Speaker, I want to deal with this whole aspect of the GATE programme. The hon. Minister of Education says that there is no crisis in COSTAATT and but yet COSTAATT is saying themselves, the president and vice president of COSTAATT, they are saying on a radio programme that they are facing some critical times because of the lack of money from the GATE programme. We are seeing what is happening as well. The University of the West Indies is saying that they are finding difficulty to pay salaries but they are committing to ensure that they will keep their staff and not have anybody leave their jobs or suffer.

But I just want to make mention about something that I recently saw in the newspapers. Madam Speaker, I have with me a part of the budget speech for 2018 and as a matter of fact, since the hon. Minister of Finance is asking the question, I just want to remind him that as on page 58 if I remember—[*Interruption*] It is on page 58, I have it here, of the budget presentation by the hon. Minister of Finance and I want to read it. [*Crosstalk*] I want to read it. I have the page, I photocopied the page. I have it here, page 58, I cannot show it to you. But I want to read what the hon. Minister of Finance says.

“...we are justifiably proud of our Fashion Industry. We are now establishing, in collaboration with the University of Trinidad and Tobago

Diversification of the Economy (cont'd)
Mr. Karim (cont'd)

2018.01.26

(UTT), a Garment Production Facility which would be located at the John Donaldson Campus...A Tailoring Certification Programme will...be introduced at this facility.”

Madam Speaker, I want to tell you, I want to read something here. I want to read something here. This is a statement from the Chairman of the board of Governors of the University of Trinidad and Tobago and he says:

“...it was never the intention of UTT to offer any such certificate programme...”

Express, the 25th of January, 2018, [*Crosstalk*] and I gave the source.

“...it was never the intention of UTT to offer...”

Sorry.

Madam Speaker: Members, kindly observe Standing Order 53. I understand the banter but I want to hear the Member’s contribution. Please continue.

Mr. F. Karim: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I was just saying that the head of the University of Trinidad and Tobago says, he is quoted as saying, after what I read on page 58 of the budget speech from the hon. Minister of Finance, he says:

“...it was never the intention of UTT to offer any such certificate programme...UTT has no association with this programme.”

Madam Speaker, I want to ask, I want to find out who from UTT has misled and embarrassed my colleague, my friend [*Desk thumping*] from Diego Martin North/East, hon. Minister of Finance. Who has done that to him? And he must find out. Who from UTT told him to write that and put it in the budget speech?

[*Crosstalk*]

And I want to tell you, I have an advertisement for that programme. It is being run from someone who is closely associated with the civil academy in

Diversification of the Economy (cont'd)
Mr. Karim (cont'd)

2018.01.26

London. [*Crosstalk*] “Ah-ca-demy”, whatever it is. I mean, it is like aircraft—well, “people doh say aircrafts”. [*Crosstalk*] Savile Row, that is it, Savile Row. And therefore, I want to also ask the question: How much money has been allocated to this certificate in tailoring programme? Because it might well be an investment to create jobs but we want to know more about it. We want to know how many students are going to be involved. And when I raised the matter about maybe there will campuses of the University of Trinidad and Tobago that may well be closed, I was replied to here that there is no such thing, no decision has been made.

But I want to read from a document that I have here. You know, because I was formerly associated with the University of Trinidad and Tobago, people will give me information and I have before me here something I want to just refer to. The information says:

Programme suspension for the 2018 intake, the following six programmes have been removed from the list:

- Diploma in Agriculture;
- Diploma in Forestry;
- Diploma in Animal Health Production and VET Public Health;
- Diploma in Agricultural Engineering;
- Bachelor of Science in Crop Science and Technology;
- Bachelor of Science in Animal Science and Technology.

And you are telling me that you want to diversify this economy? [*Desk thumping and crosstalk*] This is an attempt to close down ECIAF and they have on the books as well to close down the world famous Tate & Lyle agricultural research station in Waterloo. [*Desk thumping*]

But there are some things that I want to indicate. UTT must tell this country as well

Diversification of the Economy (cont'd)
Mr. Karim (cont'd)

2018.01.26

and I have the information here. I have the résumé of two persons from UTT who went to China to look at and to be a part of the vessel trials. [*Crosstalk*] The *Galleons Passage*. Is that what it is? On the way. We want to know how they were selected. Did they have the requisite competence? What was the cost? [*Crosstalk*] I have their CVs here. We did not hire them to go to China. [*Continuous crosstalk*] Let me just continue. So I was talking about that.

But therefore, I also want to indicate that when we asked about the University of Trinidad and Tobago having the ability and the capability for investment in human capital so that we might be able to train our students and our graduates to access the jobs in our economy, what have we seen? The removal of \$323 million to a Tamana project, a personal legacy project. [*Desk thumping and crosstalk*] I want, with your permission, Madam Speaker, to read a paragraph from a document that I have here:

We are meeting with the forensic auditors tomorrow.

This is an email from Aquitas and this is a public document, the project managers.

We are meeting with the forensic auditors tomorrow and we will be providing them with the clarification on the variations to the CJJETCC China Jiangsu contract as requested. We, however, note that time is of the essence and wanted to share some of the particulars, which we know that you are familiar with due to the level of apparent misinformation and confusion that currently exists and surrounding these variations.

Madam Speaker, I will deal with that at another time. But one of the things that I wanted to relay as well—[*Interruption*] Oh sorry.

Madam Speaker: Your speaking time has now expired.

Mr. F. Karim: I beg to continue.

Madam Speaker: Madam Speaker, your speaking time is now completed.

Mr. F. Karim: Okay. I beg to move, Madam Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. David Lee (Pointe-a-Pierre): Madam Speaker, I would like to second the Motion brought by Member for Chaguanas East and I reserve the right to speak at a later time.

Question proposed.

The Minister of Trade and Industry (Sen. The Hon. Paula Gopee-Scoon): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker and let me say how pleased I am to be in this honourable House. [*Crosstalk*] “Ah come back. Ah come back to stay? Nah.”

Madam Speaker, this Motion has given us great opportunity to speak about all of the programmes that are going on under this Government and therefore I hope that the Minister—the MP does not end the Motion today because we have number of speakers who are very willing to speak on everything that is being done under this Government.

My disappointment came with the Minister—[*Interruption*] With the Member bringing to us a Motion on three things. [*Crosstalk*] He used to be a Minister—that is all right—and we have always treated him well you know. Even when we were in Government, we hired him in the Ministry of Science and Technology. [*Crosstalk and laughter*] But I was very disappointed because this Motion was supposed to be about three things: investments, jobs and primarily, diversification. I am yet to hear from this Member anything about diversification and what the last administration did about diversification when they were in the office. [*Desk thumping*] Absolutely nothing. And he came here with a lot of statistics—[*Interruption*] The Member came here with a lot of statistics. I treat the Member with great respect. The Member came with a lot of statistics but what he did not speak of and what we want to remind him of is the unforgivable debt

Diversification of the Economy (cont'd)
Sen. The Hon. P. Gopee-Scoon (cont'd)

2018.01.26

situation that that last administration left this Government in. [*Desk thumping*] And you are talking about moving from a public debt situation from \$45 billion in 2010 to \$76 billion in 2015, he did not talk about. Of course, he did not seem to understand the economy and the sort of boom and bust cycles which this country always undergoes on account of our small, open economy and our hydrocarbon-based economy, and our situation now where, therefore, our revenues have fallen by 90 per cent on account of fallen oil and gas prices and on an account of low production levels. No kind of understanding about that but I will tell you why. No understanding and that is why they did not seek to diversify this economy when they were in power.

And then, I can tell you, oil prices speak to something like 120 barrels a day and in fact, it averaged—[*Interruption*] 120,000—oil prices I said peaked. As a matter of fact, from 2010 to 2015, it averaged about US \$90 per barrel and yet this Government did nothing about diversification when it had excessive revenue streams and they could have done something. Absolutely nothing was done. And now, we were faced, in 2015, with average oil prices of US \$43 and in 2016, of average oil prices of US \$37 and this is what we have to cope with. I am talking about this Government is faced with doing more with a lot less and I could tell you, we are taking on the diversification challenge. [*Desk thumping*]

But this Government, this PNM Government has always been about diversification and has always been about development from 1958 with our first development plan under our Chief Minister and Premier and Prime Minister, Eric Williams. From then, but the Member for Chaguanas East seems to have forgotten. It is us, this Government, that is responsible for the development of Trinidad and Tobago.

[*Desk thumping*] And when we speak about diversification, it is this Government

Diversification of the Economy (cont'd)
 Sen. The Hon. P. Gopee-Scoon (cont'd)

2018.01.26

that developed the oil sector, that developed the natural gas sector, that developed the manufacturing sector to where it is and also that developed the services sector which is responsible for about more than 50 per cent of this country's GDP. And all of that we did because this PNM Government had always had a priority of educating the people of Trinidad and Tobago and that we did. [*Desk thumping*]
 But as usual, the Minister came here and it was just about hyperbole—

[*Interruption*] The Member. I keep—oh my God. What is going on with me?

[*Crosstalk*] But as usual, it was about—[*Interruption*]

Madam Speaker: Order, order.

Sen. The Hon. P. Gopee-Scoon: But as usual, it was about doom and gloom and dismay and hyperbole and of course, and a lot of empty rhetoric and as usual, trying to destabilize the people of this Trinidad and Tobago and destabilize the economy but it will not happen and that is why we are so happy for this Motion.

I mean, the thing that I am most disappointed is the fact that he does not understand the boom and bust cycle of Trinidad and Tobago and does not understand the fact that we are, in fact, oil-based and we would always experience this if we do not diversify. And I go back to the 1980s which was a very, very difficult time in this country, especially when we had two devaluations. In the late 80s, I can tell you, a number of businesses closed down and a number of social programmes were forced to be closed and we entered into a period of structural adjustment; that is what we went through. They, on the other hand, had the opportunity to prepare for any such likely circumstances occurring once again and they did not. And I am saying this is why this Government took very seriously the whole question of diversification and perhaps not enough, but I can tell you, we are very, very focused on diversification and I will speak to this and all of my other

colleagues will speak to it.

And I will tell you if this country—and I am talking about successive Governments had done anything like Mexico had done. Because Mexico, in the 80s, same situation as us you know. Different size country, different geography, different population size but same situation with an over-independence on oil and look at where they are now, with a huge global manufacturing hub, the envy of the world, and let me tell you something, we are going to ensure that we attend to this matter of diversification. But the question is and he did not speak to it: What did the last administration do about diversification? And it is absolutely, absolutely, absolutely nothing and I could tell you that the then Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar, not once in her five years of leadership, ever came to the nation to speak about diversification and transforming this economy. [*Crosstalk*] Never, never once did they come to the economy—the blue economy, the silver economy. I will tell you what they spoke—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Deyalsingh: Madam Speaker, Standing Order 53(1)(g), please.

Madam Speaker: Okay and I will invoke that Standing Order for both sides, okay, with respect to Members not using running commentaries, not shouting across the floor and listening in silence for both sides. Please continue, Minister of Trade and Industry.

Mr. Lee: Madam Speaker, I would like your guidance on 55(b), please.

Madam Speaker: Please continue, Minister of Trade and Industry.

Sen. The Hon. P. Gopee-Scoon: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. There was one semblance of an attempt at diversification and some kind of economic transformation but it was a very, very myopic approach and it was called the five growth poles programme and he could have spoken about it but it is because it

Diversification of the Economy (cont'd)
Sen. The Hon. P. Gopee-Scoon (cont'd)

2018.01.26

failed that he did not speak about it and I will tell you what it was. The North-East Tobago programme and which was supposed to deal with tourism. And Minister of Tourism, have you seen any hotels in the North-East of Tobago?

Miss Cudjoe: Never.

Sen. The Hon. P. Gopee-Scoon: Nothing. On the north coast of Trinidad, the focus was on real estate, fishing, agriculture, hotels and marina. Not one new marina, no agriculture done on the north coast, no real estate, no hotels, no fishing. Nothing formulized by that Government. And then they spoke about the East Port of Spain zone. Oh, and they talked about—this was a good one, Member for Port of Spain South. They talked about construction and the creative industries and tourism and small business. Once again, zero for East Port of Spain. And “doh” talk about the south-western peninsula where they spoke about port development and manufacturing and services and agriculture. Member for Point Fortin.

Maj. Gen. Dillon: Nothing.

Sen. The Hon. P. Gopee-Scoon: Nothing. Member for Moruga, nothing. But I could tell you the last growth pole which I did not speak of which is the growth pole of Couva and Chaguanas and Carapichaima and Charlieville with focus on light industrial development and services and creative industries. Well, we saw nothing on creative industries and services and so on but what we saw was a high expenditure pattern in Couva and in Chaguanas and Carapichaima, Charlieville. Madam Speaker, they were not a Government for all of the people of Trinidad and Tobago, and they never sought to transform this economy and diversify this economy. [*Desk thumping and crosstalk*] And if you had a focus on agriculture, tell us the statistics, tell us the statistics. What are the statistics? What are you producing? What are the main projects that you caused to have been increased in

Diversification of the Economy (cont'd)
Sen. The Hon. P. Gopee-Scoon (cont'd)

2018.01.26

terms of production levels? What are you exporting? What about all these Guyana initiatives and so on that you were supposed to be looking after? Where is it all? Nothing. [*Continuous crosstalk*] Absolutely nothing. Not a single, meaningful project executed under the last administration.

And then you raised the point, Member for Chaguanas East, about parks. You cannot talking about industrial parks. You stopped an industrial park which was the Tamana Intech Park. You stopped it in its entirety in the same way that you stopped the Alutrint project, in the same way you stopped the OPVs, you stopped this. You stopped this. [*Crosstalk*] Right and it is because perhaps, it is in a PNM constituency but you did speak about some economic parks. [*Madam Speaker rises*] You did attempt somewhere in the later stage to speak about these economic parks that you were going to build, seven of them and I will tell you where they are, again: Connector Road, Dow Village, Endeavour, Frederick Settlement, Factory Road, Preysal, Reform, not one in a PNM constituency. Not one. Right, rest of—no equity and fairness. [*Crosstalk*] You are asking me about Point Fortin, I had to finish Point Fortin when we came into office. You did not even finish that. And if you talk about the park in Debe that we had commenced, you did not even give the people of Debe their leases. It is when we came into power that we had to do that. [*Desk thumping*] And all of those industrial parks that you planned to do, you could not do it because you had exceeded the debt ceiling. So it was, again, just a lot of anti-Government—[*Interruption*] no—rhetoric but they were never able to execute any of these things because you had borrowed and borrowed and spent and spent and not looked after the development of this country.

Disappointing. So, therefore, as I said, this Motion is just about uninformed hyperbole. Right? Just regurgitating anti-Government sensationalism. That is what

Diversification of the Economy (cont'd)
Sen. The Hon. P. Gopee-Scoon (cont'd)

2018.01.26

it was about, fake news. Right? But “we not looking back, Madam Speaker, we moving forward”. We are moving forward. [*Desk thumping*]

And somewhere in your discussion, you started talking about trips. You started talking about trips and investments, you want to talk about investments. The then Prime Minister, Kamla Persad-Bissessar took a contingent of persons to India, to China, to London, to New York. Where are the investments for millions of dollars spent? No investments from any of those countries. And in addition to that, you had InvestTT trailing and they did about 50 trips during that period, 50 trips, very, very, very little investment and I am going to talk about it further. Five years of vacation.

But you have to understand if you are talking investment, you have to talk about the whole global economy and the downward trend in foreign direct investment in 2016 and 2017, and you have to look at the Latin and I expected him to do all of that. Look at Latin America, look at the Caribbean and you would have seen that the investment flow into this region and into all of these sub-regions have decreased, they have declined. [*Crosstalk*] But you should have gone into it and you will have your chance to speak, Naparima.

Madam Speaker: Again, I remind Members to desist from the continuous crosstalk and commentary. I would not like to rise on that again. Please continue, Minister of Trade and Industry.

Sen. The Hon. P. Gopee-Scoon: Thank you very much for your protection, Madam Speaker. Right and as I said, you should have paid attention to that.

But I want to tell you that despite all of our challenges and surely we have tremendous economic challenges, but despite all of that, investor confidence is returning to Trinidad and Tobago under this PNM administration. [*Desk thumping*]

And you know what is more pleasing? The fact that our local business community is reinvesting and investing in new businesses in Trinidad and Tobago, and I will speak to that as well and my colleagues will speak to that as well. We are only in office two and a half years and I can tell you, we have had to deal with the economic circumstances that you have left us. Not a cent, not a cent in the overdraft available, not a cent in all of the accounts. We have had to deal with that but we have been able to stabilize this economy and we are on our way, we are going to get out of this. We are the ones that will take this country back to economic growth.

4.00 p.m.

But we go back to investor confidence and the fact that this Government is taking a very, very serious approach to investor facilitation. And I know Member, you spoke about the *Doing Business Report* and the ease of doing business, and we have always had a problem in this country and we are taking it very seriously. And this is why we have established this Cabinet committee, this investor facilitation, and there is one that I am in charge of in the Ministry to deal with particular investment flows.

InvesTT as well is also charged with fast-tracking investment flows. It is that the Minister of Planning and Development as well is involved with investment facilitation, dealing with complex projects. It is that the Prime Minister as well has taken on that responsibility by being in charge of the committee on the construction sector and that is to boost and to build, both from the public point of view and also from the private, the construction industry.

So that, in short order, Madam Speaker, what I want to say is, there is leadership in which we are handling investment facilitation in Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk*

thumping] Because we are committed at the highest levels. Right?

So you said that I spoke about projects and so on, but you made a point about do not talk about anything started under you. Development is not about starting something when you are in office and stopping it when you go and that kind of thing. You all have exhibited that. That is not development.

Look at where we are with the OPVs. It is because of the same approach by you all. You came in and you just stop everything, stop Alutrint and cost this country money. We are not doing that. What is in the best interest of the people of Trinidad and Tobago, we will do.

So let me go on. So in 2017, and you want me to tell you about some of the investments that we are having. In 2017—I am going to name a few, but I cannot detail all. But I want you to put a question to me in writing and I will respond with everything. I will respond with the facts about all of the work that we are doing. So CEMEX came back into Trinidad and Tobago, and you know that increased their footprint in Trinidad and Tobago and right away that was TT \$500 million spent in 2017, in Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] And it is small and large. Small and large. Small and large.

Take a small man like Fresh Start, manufacturer of juices. He started a business, \$2 million spent on juice manufacturing. [*Desk thumping*] I am calling names.

Advanced Foam Limited, with manufacture of high fibre pads and high quality pillows, \$69 million, creating 40 jobs. [*Desk thumping*] Creating 40 jobs.

The HADCO Group, and they are traditionally importers, eh, and traders and they understand the paradigm shift and the transformation that needs to take place in this economy, and they have started with Eco Impact Limited with the recycling of used cooking oil and the recycling of plastic bottles, a small investment, but a

Diversification of the Economy (cont'd)
Sen. The Hon. P. Gopee-Scoon (cont'd)

2018.01.26

necessary one.

You have the existing manufacturers who are reinvesting in this country. VEMCO, a new pasta line, \$40 million. Nestlè, Trinidad and Tobago, a new line of flavoured milk, \$40 million. Lever Brothers Limited, when I heard—I heard you all saying, you know, that these multinationals were closing down. That “aint” so at all. Lever Brothers, a new dishwashing line, \$55 million. KC Candy, I was there this week, two new lines of bubble gum. You know why I am proud of them? Because KC is exporting 70 to 80 per cent of all of their manufactured goods. [*Desk thumping*]
And in the area of agribusiness, you had Habanero Pepper Sauce, established their retail store for fiery and local products. IQOR, which came in under you all, IQOR has started a new call centre in Barataria. And how much have they investigated in Barataria? Go and look at it. Four or five stories; I visited, 600 jobs, \$52 million invested. [*Desk thumping*]

Scotia Bank has brought their BPO manage services to Trinidad and Tobago. AMCO Limited has started the manufacture of plastic bottles in Trinidad and Tobago. AMCO Limited is a well-known international plastics manufacturing company, \$100 million in building and equipment.

And I go on and I go on. Peterson Logistics. When Peterson came to Trinidad— [*Crosstalk*]. No, I had to come and talk about diversification so hold on. I do not want to go on and tell you all, but put the question to me and I will give you all. Right?

And even the area of construction, you have Nicholas Development Limited— Minister of Finance?—the construction of the multi-storey car park, that is going on and will soon be completed. [*Desk thumping*]

I was telling you about Peterson Logistics. When they first came here, they hired

Diversification of the Economy (cont'd)
Sen. The Hon. P. Gopee-Scoon (cont'd)

2018.01.26

about 23 people to deal with some of the maintenance of the trans-ocean vessels. They have now expanded their footprint in Trinidad and Tobago. They now have an office where they hire 125 people. [*Desk thumping*] Right?

Regus Limited, now providing, an international firm. Bizzy Williams came here to open that along with the Blue Waters guy, Dominic Hadeed. Office Space; a new international office entity providing office accommodation and they are in, whatchamacallit, BHP Billiton as well. As you say BHP Billiton, yes, BHP Billiton has now brought their business process outsourcing accounting services to Trinidad and Tobago [*Desk thumping*] under this Government. You were there. And listen “nah”, Pennywise, they constructed their new plaza and store in La Romain, \$70 million.

And the Member for Caroni Central will probably tell me that the UNICOMER investment would have been theirs, but you know very well, the Member knows very well, that UNICOMER came into Trinidad in 2006, and they are the ones who bought over Courts, and they have continued investing in Trinidad and Tobago and we are not going to stop. We are going to facilitate. [*Desk thumping*] And you were at that function and you know that \$400 million was spent on that distribution centre and 500 jobs are being created there. [*Desk thumping*] Five hundred jobs, and for 2018, it is going to continue, eh. I can tell you.

And the same HADCO Group, a new ice cream plant for export, \$18 million, to be opened this year. Manufacturing of ice cream cones, \$6.8 million for export. And I could go on.

Lange Manufacturing Limited, they are going—and the Minister of Finance knows about this one—to be manufacturing automotive batteries in Trinidad and Tobago, and in January they will be opening. That is an investment of \$35 million,

Diversification of the Economy (cont'd)
Sen. The Hon. P. Gopee-Scoon (cont'd)

2018.01.26

employing 27 people. All right?

So I could go on and on and on. A number of businesses, and Nutrimix will soon begin their hatchery and \$20 million will be invested in that and that is going to start in 2018 as well. And there are a number of private construction businesses taking place in Trinidad and Tobago as well. I drove down to Chaguaramas the other day and I was pleased to see a new complex by Patrick Boocock, upscale apartments, all sold out.

So I think I have said enough about investments. I can tell you a lot more, and of course, it was also in the press that we are having discussions with an Italian firm, and so we are looking at the manufacturing of aluminium coils and sheeting. So that is another project that you look forward to. I want to tell you that this Government has the vision, this Government is taking action and we have all of the data to support it. [*Desk thumping*]

And as I told you about industrial spaces where you built no parks to encourage any investors in Trinidad and Tobago, it is this Government that completed the Tamana InTech Park. It is this Government that gave the leases to the Penal/Debe Industrial Estate owners. It is this Government that is now establishing the Phoenix Park Industrial Estate, 133 acres in Phoenix Park and Couva, and that is going to be a magnet for firms for investing in Trinidad and Tobago because of its close proximity to the Port of Point Lisas. Two major international firms have already shown interest in putting their operations right here in Point Lisas. So listen and learn. Listen and learn.

And as you talk about jobs, only today I saw in the newspaper, but of course being a Cabinet Member I would have known, public advertisement by SWMCOL. Small contractors to be engaged for garbage collection services; small contractors,

Diversification of the Economy (cont'd)
Sen. The Hon. P. Gopee-Scoon (cont'd)

2018.01.26

medium contractors, large contractors. This Government is breaking up the cartel that existed before. [*Desk thumping*]

So let me tell you about—Madam Speaker, how much time do I have?

Madam Speaker: Just about three minutes left of original time.

Sen. The Hon. P. Gopee-Scoon: Oh no, and then what?

Madam Speaker: And then 15 minutes extended, if you so desire.

Sen. The Hon. P. Gopee-Scoon: Oh, I so desire. Thank you, Madam Speaker. And let us talk about diversification. Let us talk about real diversification. And I will tell you something. Diversification, Madam Speaker, there are no quick wins with it, but you must be prepared to plan and you must plan for the short term, for the medium term and for the long term, and this is what we are doing. Because varying sectors will require differing amounts of attention and many of the sectors are at different stages of maturity. So you really do have to focus on it sector by sector and you really must engage in planning, and this is what we are doing, and I am very proud to speak to the diversification plans of the Ministry of Trade and Industry.

Now I will tell you, this Government, in our PNM Manifesto 2015, outlined the areas of diversification for focus: manufacturing, agriculture and agro-processing and fish processing, maritime services, aviation services, the creative industries, financial services and the software design and applications. And all of these industries have been validated by the work of the Economic Advisory Development Board, all of them, in collaboration with work done with Stanford University.

And so I would go on to speak to what the Ministry is doing with regard to manufacture in the creative industries and also the maritime sector and all of my

Diversification of the Economy (cont'd)
Sen. The Hon. P. Gopee-Scoon (cont'd)

2018.01.26

colleagues will speak to tourism and so on. Manufacturing is already a net earner. The manufacturing sector is already a net earner of foreign exchange in this country, so therefore it is a critical pillar of transformation and expansion. All right? So the plan is really premised on our Vision 2030. So when we speak about employment potential and competitive advantage and export growth potential, this all fits in with our Vision 2030, which is about growing globally-competitive businesses and nurturing our best assets, which are our people. So we are very, very focused.

In addition to the number of incentives which have already been introduced over the years by this PNM Government for manufacturers, there are a number of new ones which were introduced in the last budget by the Minister of Finance in here and a number of them have already been implemented. [*Desk thumping*] So, the research and development facility, which existed under exporTT, we have already revamped and we have put it out there, and there is now a million dollars available per business for commercial exploitation.

And as I speak about research and development, I want to say—[*Interruption*]

Madam Speaker: Hon. Minister of Trade and Industry, your original speaking time is now spent. You are entitled to 15 more minutes extended time if you wish to avail yourself of it.

Sen. The Hon. P. Gopee-Scoon: Madam Speaker, I do wish to avail myself.

Madam Speaker: Please proceed.

Sen. The Hon. P. Gopee-Scoon: I have so much to say. [*Laughter and desk thumping*]

So that we spoke about the research and development facility and I just want to say that the Ministry of Trade and Industry is working in close collaboration and

Diversification of the Economy (cont'd)
Sen. The Hon. P. Gopee-Scoon (cont'd)

2018.01.26

in conjunction with the Ministry of Planning and Development on the implementation of our national innovation policy. All right? And that is going to yield rich dividends.

With regard to small and medium enterprises in the manufacturing sector and in the agro-processing sector, Madam President, we have introduced a special grant fund facility for small and medium-sized manufacturers, where a small and medium-sized manufacturer or someone engaged in the agro-processing and agribusiness industry can avail themselves of \$250,000 grant funding for the purchase of machinery and equipment. I want to tell you that this is already in place; that in the first week of announcing in November of 2017, we had more than 100 enquiries and we already have applicants in and we will be communicating with the public as we release funding under that programme.

The Minister of Finance also announced a \$50million programme aimed at providing working capital or seed capital through grant funding for start-ups and existing small businesses. The Minister of Finance also announced that this favours the manufactures as well, the licensing of Eximbank as the foreign exchange dealer for the benefit of eligible manufactures and exporters to access raw materials.

Again, this is helping. The Member for Point-a-Pierre is wondering what this has to do with diversification. This has to do with growing and expanding the already healthy and mature manufacturing sector. We are helping manufacturers. Right?

These manufacturers, I will tell you something, the importance of them is because they are producing products that are already in 124 countries of the world.

And whilst we do that, we are going to continue with our market access and market penetration assistance through exporTT. And this is why the Panama Partial Scope, which was negotiated under the last regime, under the UNC Government, we are

now implementing. We are not stopping it. We are implementing. So we took an implementation note to Cabinet and I would lead a delegation to Panama and Costa Rica so that we can penetrate those markets.

Cuba and Venezuela, we continue to penetrate those markets as well. We are doing extremely well with Cuba and we now have direct connectivity with CAL to Cuba twice a week. [*Desk thumping*]

Before I digress, there is now a proper trade mission strategy and I can tell you that the strategy is for 2018, manufacturers in collaboration with exporTT and the TTMA, will be going to Panama, Costa Rica, Guyana, in fact they go to Guyana very soon, Colombia and they are also going to Haiti. All looking to expand the manufacturing sector. And I will tell why. Growth in the manufacturing sector will bring increased jobs, will bring increased foreign exchange, if you understand it. Of course, and our national quality policy, which you will see being rolled out as well, will help in ensuring that we meet the competitiveness standards with the rest of the world. So there we are.

But I continue to talk about diversification. I can tell you our focus will be on the services industry, because the services sector contributes to more than 50 per cent of this country's GDP. So we are going to be very focused on particular service sectors: the professional services, educational services, health and wellness services, the creative industries, medical tourism, energy services as well, for which we are well-known, and in fact tourism. And we are going to ensure that we regulate these sectors, work with TTCSI and also modernize their national data collection systems, provide an incentive framework so that they can export their services, ensure that it is very well regulated, the sector is very well regulated, and that we promote the use of technology all within the sector. So that, over the next

three years you are going to hear the roll out of all that we are doing through our national services plan with the services industry as all.

We are also working on the maritime services and focusing on the areas of ship repair and dry-docking, trans-shipment and coal stacking and yachting and marina development. And the area of ship repair and dry-docking, there are many opportunities. The existing ship repair and dry dockers are very willing to expand and we are working with them, and this, again, is an opportunity for substantial jobs, and it is not talk. There is legitimacy to what I am speaking about and we can give you the facts. [*Desk thumping*]

With regard to coal stacking, all of those drill ships which you see outside in the Gulf, for which you negotiated a package of US \$350 per day and never, never closed on that contract, we are going to close on it, and far from the \$350 per day we are going to be charging retroactively US \$750 per day, per ship. And we see this as a sector that can grow; this is the coal stacking and trans-shipment industry, and therefore, the policy is almost finalized at the level of Cabinet. This is an excellent opportunity for growth, and ship-to-ship transfer as well. It is an excellent opportunity for growth. For the first time we are developing, this country is developing a maritime spatial plan, with a focus, again, on developing this industry.

The yachting sector, finally a yachting policy and action plan is in place. We are very close to a commitment. In fact we have established a standing committee—you never did anything like this—for the development of the maritime sector. Right? We are very close to committing to two marinas, one in Chaguaramas and one in Tobago. We are developing yachting-specific legislation. There is now a single harmonized form for entry into Trinidad and Tobago. There will now be

Diversification of the Economy (cont'd)
Sen. The Hon. P. Gopee-Scoon (cont'd)

2018.01.26

that, as against the 13 forms and the very bureaucratic process which yachties had to endure to get into Trinidad and Tobago. I want to thank the Ministry of National Security that there are no issues of piracy in the Gulf and with regard to yachties and there is constant surveillance by the coast guard. There is considerable work being done in this sector, Madam Speaker.

Let me briefly speak about the creative industries. There is a lot of murmur, Madam Speaker, and I might seek your protection.

Madam Speaker: Order! Order!

Sen. The Hon. P. Gopee-Scoon: How many more minutes, thank you, please?

Madam Speaker: You have seven more minutes.

Sen. The Hon. P. Gopee-Scoon: Ohhh. Thank you very much. So, the creative industries, which is of great interest; let me tell you something, when this Government was in power they are the ones who created CreativeTT, you know, and we have not closed it. In their first year of operation, which is in 2015, there were no plans, absolutely no plans, no commitment. All this Government did, there were \$6 million in the PSIP and all they did was to give donations. I have the donation sheet right here, you know, but I will not spend any time on it; \$6 million in giving donations to Soca Monarch and Chutney Soca, no kind of development of diversification.

And, so Madam Speaker, I am pleased to announce the very successful fashion Value Chain Investment Programme, which was launched by FashionTT in 2016/2017 and which has benefited five designers: J. Angelique, Charu Lochan Dass, Ecliff Elie, Millhouse, Ted Arthur Leather Collection in Tobago. And of course, I want to announce again, Madam Speaker, with regard to that fashion Value Chain Investment Programme, a second cohort we will now be engaging at

Diversification of the Economy (cont'd)
Sen. The Hon. P. Gopee-Scoon (cont'd)

2018.01.26

CreativeTT, picking another five designers to work with them so that they can understand the business of fashion.

With regard to the Bespoke Tailoring Programme, which was announced by the Member for Chaguanas East, we are pleased to say that this one-year certificate programme in Bespoke tailoring will actually commence in this first quarter of fiscal 2018. [*Desk thumping*] And it is a collaboration with CreativeTT, the Savile Row Academy and the MIC, under the very famed Professor Andrew Ramroop. [*Desk thumping*]

I want to say that this is the beginning of a substantial industry and already there are 40 participants. We thought we will do 20. The response was so overwhelming that there are now 40 participants in this programme, which will kick off in March 2018. And the garment production facility, which you spoke about, which has been delayed, we acknowledge, we expect to start as well by the second quarter. [*Desk thumping*]

With regard to music, and let me tell you, whilst they were giving donations in 2015 when CreativeTT started, we have now strategic plans for fashion and for music and we are just about completing the strategic plan for the film industry.

With regard to music, our artiste, the portfolio development programme continues, giving an opportunity for musicians and artistes across all genres to create job opportunities for themselves. This is not just about diversification. This is about opportunities for jobs. It would have been in the newspapers only in December where MusicTT held a showcase consisting of 30 artistes to select persons to be part of this programme. There were also several programmes with making a living from music and the business of calypso.

But I want to announce, and it has created quite a stir in the press, the live music

Diversification of the Economy (cont'd)
Sen. The Hon. P. Gopee-Scoon (cont'd)

2018.01.26

district, the first of its kind in Trinidad and Tobago, where Port of Spain, as a pilot project, will come alive with 30 music genres in Trinidad and Tobago and this programme begins 1st of March, 2018. So it is not just talk, cheap talk. [*Desk thumping*] It will start, so much so that we have already engaged, this is MusicTT, 60 potential venues and we will in fact close with 30. So this is not just about music. This is about restaurants and so on, because a number of people will be attracted to now dining at those facilities. So it will be NAPA, the Queen's Park Savannah, Rust Street and Ariapita Avenue and we invite all of the Opposition to attend the first week of the live music district.

We continue with work in film. We have redone the production expenditure rebate programme. There are a number of films which were done in 2015/2016/2017 and all of them have qualified to benefit from this programme. There is a cash flow problem with the Government at this time, but we will honour our commitment, which we have given to these film producers. And there are a number of good films, *Green Days by the River*, an excellent film based on the novel by Michael Anthony, and that is going to go international.

Madam Speaker, in the agricultural sector, the Ministry of Trade is working with the Ministry of Agriculture and the Moruga Agro-processing Park is well on its way to completion by mid-2019 [*Desk thumping*] and we expect to create world-class agricultural entrepreneurs from Moruga and its environs, Madam Speaker.

I feel that I am nearing to the end, so therefore I would want to conclude that this Government is very committed to diversification and creating jobs and transforming this economy so that there is the balance between energy and non-energy, not that energy will be irrelevant, but there is a significant balance.

Diversification of the Economy (cont'd)
 Sen. The Hon. P. Gopee-Scoon (cont'd)

2018.01.26

But I will tell you what, Madam Speaker, this involves. This diversification involves planning and perspective, which we have. It involves patience, which we and the population have as well. It involves partnerships, which we are engaging with all of the different sectors and stakeholders and it involves a very positive outlook, which this Government does not have at all. And all of this, it speaks to leadership. And you can find no better leadership than this PNM administration, under Dr. The Hon. Keith Christopher Rowley, putting people first and building globally-competitive businesses. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker, I thank you.

Madam Speaker: Leader of the House.

**JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE
 (APPOINTMENT OF)**

Anti-Terrorism (Amdt.) Bill, 2018

The Minister of Planning and Development (Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis):

Madam Speaker, by agreement we are reverting to the issue of Motions relating to Business or Sittings of the House and moved by a Minister, and I would like to name the Members of the Committee. Thank you very kindly.

Madam Speaker, subject to the concurrence of the Senate on the establishment of the Joint Select Committee on the Anti-Terrorism (Amdt.) Bill, 2018, I beg to move that this House appoints six Members to sit with an equal number from the Senate on the Joint Select Committee to consider and report on the Anti-Terrorism (Amdt.) Bill, 2018.

Mr. Faris Al-Rawi, Miss Marlene Mc Donald, Mrs. Camille Robinson-Regis, Mr. Fitzgerald Hinds, Mr. Prakash Ramadhar and Dr. Roodal Moonilal. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, I just seek your concurrence for maybe one or

JSC (Appointment of) (cont'd)
 Hon. C. Robinson-Regis (cont'd)

2018.01.26

two minutes for us just to complete this Motion.

Hon. Members, subject to the concurrence of the Senate on the establishment of a Joint Select Committee on the Anti-Terrorism (Amdt.) Bill, 2018. The question is that this House do appoint six Members to sit with an equal number from the Senate on the Joint Select Committee to consider and report on the Anti-Terrorism (Amdt.) Bill, 2018.

The members are Mr. Faris Al-Rawi, Miss Marlene Mc Donald, Mrs. Camille Robinson-Regis, Mr. Fitzgerald Hinds, Dr. Roodal Moonilal and Mr. Prakash Ramadhar.

Question put and agreed to.

Madam Speaker: This House is now suspended and we shall return at 5.00 p.m.

4.31 p.m.: *Sitting suspended,*

5.00 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

[MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

**DIVERSIFICATION OF THE ECONOMY
 (GOVERNMENT'S FAILURE RE VIABLE PLAN)**

Mr. Deputy Speaker: As we resume the Motion after tea, I recognize the Member for Couva South.

Mr. Rudranath Indarsingh (*Couva South*): [*Desk thumping*] Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I join this debate, and give support to my colleague, the Member for Chaguanas East, for providing and presenting a very compelling argument [*Desk thumping*] this evening in relation to the Motion that is before this august House here this evening. And my colleague took the opportunity to provide to this house and to provide to Trinidad and Tobago a sense of vision and development that occurred under Prime Minister, Kamla Persad-Bissessar [*Desk*

Diversification of the Economy (cont'd)
Mr. Indarsingh (cont'd)

2018.01.26

thumping] which was unparalleled and unprecedented and that is why the tertiary level education in Trinidad and Tobago, that system blossomed and benefited all the young people of this country and that is why they are calling for the return of Kamla Persad-Bissessar to be the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

And Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Minister of Trade and Industry spent 45 minutes and her vision for the future of Trinidad and Tobago—her vision for the future of Trinidad and Tobago was one which had me looking at the Power Mint. [*Laughter*] The Power Mint that is on the parliamentary desk and so on. And I want you to take note, and I want Trinidad and Tobago to take note. I have nothing against the well-being and development of the manufacturing sector in this country; that is laudable. But this is a Government that committed itself to spending over \$150 billion in their three budget presentations, and a Minister of Trade and Industry will come to the Parliament of this country and provide a vision for chewing gum in terms of growth and development of this country. [*Desk thumping*]

And that for me reflects the malaise and the lack of ideas and vision and leadership [*Desk thumping*] that has been in this country over the last 28 months. Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I cannot help it, I cannot help it, to say that Trinidad and Tobago is in real trouble, real trouble [*Desk thumping*] and the Minister of Trade and Industry just affirmed that in 45 minutes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, and the vision for growth and development in terms of employment generation in Trinidad and Tobago has to focus on garbage collection and solid waste, and what?—breaking up the cartel in the solid waste, in terms of garbage collection. Without providing an iota of evidence, you know, again wild

Diversification of the Economy (cont'd)
Mr. Indarsingh (cont'd)

2018.01.26

card, reckless and irresponsible statement on the part of a Cabinet Minister. On the part of a Cabinet Minister, without any sense of evidence to give as it relates to what cartel that is existing in the collection of garbage and waste disposal in Trinidad and Tobago, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Minister of Trade and Industry went on a lot, and apparently the role that they have for her in this incarnation is to shadow my colleague from Chaguanas East—

Hon. Member: Really boy.

Mr. T. Indarsingh:—and she went on to speak about Central Trinidad, and Couva, and Carapichaima and so on. You know, sources tell me that she wants to become the Member of Parliament for Chaguanas East, you know. [*Laughter*] She wants, that is her aim and that is her aspiration, to attempt to dethrone my colleague, who in his last term has provided visionary leadership to the constituents of Chaguanas East. [*Desk thumping*] But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, she said that the Motion provided a great opportunity, and she would have hoped that the Motion will not end this evening, because it will provide an opportunity for all of her colleagues to come to the Parliament and provide their vision for the well-being Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if you conduct a poll, in relation to the performance of this Government over the last 28 months in Trinidad and Tobago, the preschool child will tell you that the worst Government, and the worst Prime Minister that this country has ever had is Prime Minister Dr. Keith Rowley and the visionless and incompetent [*Desk thumping*] Government that Trinidad and Tobago has been subjected to over the last 28 months, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And the Minister went on to focus on the previous government being responsible for the debt situation in Trinidad and Tobago.

Diversification of the Economy (cont'd)
Mr. Indarsingh (cont'd)

2018.01.26

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is always good to go back in history, and take the opportunity to remind the PNM of what they did, and to remind the stakeholders of where we were when we assumed the responsibility of being the government of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Partnership Government inherited a hole at CLICO that cost the taxpayers of Trinidad and Tobago over \$25 billion, and the PNM was responsible for that because they did not oversee the regulatory framework in Trinidad and Tobago from a financial point of view. [*Desk thumping*] And Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we became the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, Mr. Deputy Speaker, contractors were being owed over \$7billion. [*Desk thumping*]

In addition to that, there was an outstanding debt to the trade union movement of over \$2billion. And in addition to that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Partnership Government, against the background of a global economic meltdown and slowdown, had to settle 135 negotiations and find an additional \$5billion, as it relates to dealing with liabilities and so on, all in the service of Trinidad and Tobago, and all in relation to the well-being of the citizens of this country.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Prime Minister, Kamla Persad-Bissessar, did not throw up her hands in the air, and her Cabinet did not say that we were frustrated [*Desk thumping*] in terms of carrying out our role and responsibilities. We understood our job description—

Hon. Member: Correct.

Mr. T. Indarsingh:—from the point of view of Prime Minister, Ministers of Government and what we were elected to do [*Desk thumping*] in upholding the oath and Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago on all fronts.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, you know what is interesting. The goodly Minister, and

Diversification of the Economy (cont'd)
Mr. Indarsingh (cont'd)

2018.01.26

again, you have to give them a lesson in political history too. [*Laughter*] Because if you do not, the people will forget, and in relation to that, she continued to harp upon this issue of, we are in this today because we did not diversify the economy over the last five years.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, they will forget, but I will not forget, I will remind them that they were part of the political history of this country for 45 years and what did they do with the oil windfall, the oil boom—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member, Member, the document in your hand please.

Mr. T. Indarsingh: Mr. Deputy Speaker, any time I am on the floor, I seem to get—the passion becomes part of my delivery and sometimes, my hand movement results in, documents that I am not displaying, really in control of my hand. But I will try from your trajectory to adhere [*Desk thumping*] to your desires, and your ruling, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, 45 years and two oil booms, the PNM presided over and they want to come here in this very brass-faced, brazen manner to talk about diversification in Trinidad and Tobago, as it relates to the economy of this country.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is important to note too, that the Minister bordered on being divisive in her presentation in relation to—and she must answer and tell us what was her direction when she attempted to—the Minister attempted to say that the Partnership Government built infrastructure that focused solely on constituencies that were under the control of the Partnership. She sent a subtle message of divisiveness, and that is the history of the PNM, you know. [*Desk thumping*] Any time they cannot deliver, as it relates to the progress and well-being of this country, they fall back on attempting to divide the people of this country.

But I will again, rewrite history for them, and remind them here today. Because

Diversification of the Economy (cont'd)
Mr. Indarsingh (cont'd)

2018.01.26

when Trinidad and Tobago was under the leadership of Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar, it was equitable distribution of resources across the 41 constituencies of this country. [*Desk thumping*] And I will provide the examples to support what I am saying here this evening, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Because, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Minister indicated that we only built, as I said and we only developed Couva, Carapichaima and Charlieville.

Hon. Member: Misleading.

Mr. T. Indarsingh: From a growth pole point of view, and from an economic point of view, the Partnership focused on five growth poles in terms of development in this country. And when the Partnership Government built the National Cycling Velodrome and the National Aquatic Centre, it was to focus on the development of athletes throughout Trinidad and Tobago, not from central Trinidad, but in every constituency of this country [*Desk thumping*] in terms of the vision that we had for the young sportsmen and sportswomen of this country. And, in addition to that, it was our vision to ensure that these world-class facilities focused on revenue generation from the point of view of earning foreign exchange and so on, in relation to sports tourism in this country.

And the Member for Diego Martin Central, he has brought teams to Trinidad and Tobago to use these world-class facilities, whether it is from a swimming point of view, or a cycling point of view, and every visiting foreign delegation has indicated that these two facilities are world-class standards and the vision of the Partnership Government was world class in terms of the development of Trinidad and Tobago, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

5.15 p.m.

But the Minister of Trade and Industry, who wants to be a Member of Parliament

Diversification of the Economy (cont'd)
Mr. Indarsingh (cont'd)

2018.01.26

in central Trinidad, must not get away with her divisiveness, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because she said that we built only in the constituencies under the control of the Partnership Government. The vision of the highway to Point Fortin—and I would not say “the vision”, but the execution of the highway to Point Fortin, it was to pass through the constituencies of La Brea and Point Fortin, and it is something that was promised to Trinidad and Tobago by Dr. Eric Williams since 1962. We had a vision and we went beyond a vision in terms of walking the talk, Mr. Deputy Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Minister of Trade and Industry must tell us where the National Aquatic Centre was built—not the aquatic centre, but the National Hockey Centre and the National Tennis Centre and so on. These were built in PNM controlled constituencies. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, my colleague, the Member for Caroni East and the Minister of Education who turned around the education system of this country in five years [*Desk thumping*] had the distinction of building 19 primary schools in PNM constituencies.

In Port of Spain South—I wish my good friend was here to give testimony to the fact that the Rose Hill Government School was built, and toady the students are benefitting from education [*Desk thumping*] of a standard that we have set over the last five years. The Prime Minister, Dr. Keith Rowley’s constituency, Diego Martin West, he had the benefit as it relates to the construction of the Point Cumana Roman Catholic Primary School and the Minister of Finance, Diego Martin North East, had the benefit of the construction of the Paramin Roman Catholic Primary School and 13 Early Childhood Care and Education Centres in PNM-controlled constituencies. So the Minister of Trade and Industry must not attempt to divide Trinidad and Tobago [*Desk thumping*] because the only thing the

Diversification of the Economy (cont'd)
Mr. Indarsingh (cont'd)

2018.01.26

PNM understands that when they are in political power is to divide the country to hide their incompetence, [*Desk thumping*] their lack of vision, [*Desk thumping*] their lack of delivery, and this Opposition will not shirk its responsibility, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We will ensure that Trinidad and Tobago understands that the PNM cannot deliver anything in relation to the development and progress of this country.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is important, as I said, because also from the point of view of Early Childhood Care and Education Centres in Malabar, Maloney, Morvant and Mount Hope, these are constituencies under the control of the People's National Movement. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to ask the Minister of Trade and Industry because during her delivery she, in a very subtle way, attacked the support for culture. She attacked the support for culture and said that we give away when we were giving support to calypso and soca and chutney soca and so on in Trinidad and Tobago.

We understood the importance of giving support [*Desk thumping*] and that is why we supported it. And if you give a million dollars to calypso or you give a million dollars to chutney soca and so on, that will not break the Treasury of Trinidad and Tobago, you know, because there is a spinoff effect in terms of small and medium-sized businesses [*Desk thumping*] when people attend functions such as the Soca Monarch Finals and the Chutney Monarch Finals as it relates to—whether it is the doubles man, the corn soup, the bake and salt fish, whatever—it helps the ordinary man in Trinidad and Tobago, and if that is focus of a Minister of Industry and Trade here today, in this Parliament, it shows that they have no empathy and they will give no support to the ordinary man and the small man in this society. [*Desk thumping*]

Diversification of the Economy (cont'd)
Mr. Indarsingh (cont'd)

2018.01.26

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, before I go on and provide a sense of where we are, the Minister of Trade and Industry attacked the former Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago for going to China and going to India. And I really want to understand the modus operandi of the Minister in attacking a former Prime Minister for going to China and India. China and India, in terms of a global point of view, from a statistical point of view, are the economies of the world that everybody is looking towards [*Desk thumping*] in terms of growing and transforming their respective economies and so on. And as Minister of Trade and Industry, I thought the Minister would have said that she appreciated the idea of a Prime Minister of this country going to China and India. I wonder what was her position when the late Dr. Eric Eustace Williams, as a former Prime Minister of this country and the founding father of the People's National Movement, what would have been her position when Prime Minister Eric Williams visited China and visited India. [*Desk thumping*]

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, while the Minister took the opportunity to attack the former Prime Minister, the current Prime Minister is jet setting all over the world, Mr. Deputy Speaker. [*Desk thumping*] In fact, he has been out more than in the job. [*Desk thumping*] And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, at what cost to the taxpayers of Trinidad and Tobago and what benefits have been derived? What can they report to the Parliament of this country in relation to diversification and sustainable growth and so on for the trips that he would have made outside of Trinidad and Tobago? And my colleague who understands these things very well, the Member for Princes Town, Mr. Deputy Speaker, has just reminded me—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member, please, he is doing well, he needs no assistance.

Mr. R. Indarsingh: Thank you.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Proceed.

Mr. R. Indarsingh: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for the confidence that you have reposed in me. [*Desk thumping*] Yes. And, my colleague, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Member for Princes Town, has reminded me that the Prime Minister has been out of the country on 18 occasions in 28 months. So virtually he is flying every month—[*Crosstalk*]

Dr. Gopeesingh: And 110 days.

Mr. R. Indarsingh: Oh. Well, the statistical icon on the Opposition Bench, Mr. Deputy Speaker, has put it in even a better context than I could have this evening. Mr. Deputy Speaker, again, to ask what did we do as it relates to foreign investment, and what we did for the economy of Trinidad and Tobago, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar exited the political office of this country, I want to tell you and just for the benefit of all, when we came into office in May 2010, the country had foreign direct investment inflows of US \$549.1 million in May 2010, and when we demitted office in 2015, the foreign direct investment inflows climbed to US \$1.3 billion in 2015.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, all that we have done, the macroeconomic fundamentals are clear in terms of when they assumed the political office, in terms of unemployment, in terms of how we controlled inflation and in terms of job creation. This particular Motion is about job creation, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I could tell you here without contradicting myself that the Partnership Government created 55,000 jobs in five years. [*Desk thumping*] The Minister of Trade and Industry called a lot of companies but without providing any kind of tangible data to say how many jobs were created in the last 28 months under the PNM Government.

But I want to turn to the very important issue because, as I said, this is a very

Diversification of the Economy (cont'd)
Mr. Indarsingh (cont'd)

2018.01.26

important Motion that has been raised by my colleague, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And why the Motion at this time? Mr. Deputy Speaker, this Motion is of critical importance because, as I said, in 28 months there has been a dramatic decline in the quality of life of citizens in this country—escalating crime, high unemployment.

The education system and the health system of this country have collapsed, and just to itemize or give further clarification or information in relation to what I am saying, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is important for us to understand that they promised much. They promised much in the build-up to becoming the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. We must never forget, because they presented a manifesto to Trinidad and Tobago which focused on health, which focused on education, which focused on infrastructural development and creation of jobs, and I could go on and on, but it is instructive to note—and I just want to reiterate what my colleague has said, because we must be able to understand where we are today because of the failure, the failure to realize the promises that they made or they presented to the population of this country, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I want to quote directly from the message that was provided to the country when the then—well, the Prime Minister was the then Opposition Leader, and he said and I quote:

“As is our practice when in Opposition, we have spent the last five years developing the necessary policies and programmes to rebuild our country and our economy, restore confidence, equity and social justice, and enhance and improve every area of national life.”

Mr. Deputy Speaker, end of quote:

“The end result of this exhaustive exercise is a wide-ranging and broad

Diversification of the Economy (cont'd)
Mr. Indarsingh (cont'd)

2018.01.26

based suite of detailed policy initiatives, projects, programmes and measures that will lift us out of the chaos that has been created by the present Government, and put Trinidad and Tobago on a path to growth, development, social peace, economic stability and transformation, where all citizens will get their fair share of national resources and receive good, honest, equitable and transparent Government.”

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when I hear the words “good, honest, equitable and transparent Government”, I am forced to reflect and reminisce on what transpired at Petrotrin as it relates to \$100 million in corruption and scandal as it relates to the supply of oil by A&V Oil and Gas Limited. [*Desk thumping*]

And, as I said, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I just want to reiterate, because today my colleague, the Member for Oropouche East, indicated to me that someone he knew very well from Rochard Douglas Road down in Barrackpore, their relatives are visiting him on a daily basis at the San Fernando General Hospital.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member, your initial speaking time has elapsed. You have an additional 15. Do you care to avail yourself?

Mr. R. Indarsingh: Certainly.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Kindly proceed.

Mr. R. Indarsingh: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. [*Desk thumping*] And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Member for Oropouche East indicated to me that they are troubled because when they go there they cannot get wipes, they cannot get pampers, they cannot get sugar strips and so on [*Crosstalk*] and based on what my colleague has told me, that is the state of play after two and a half years with much promise to turnaround Trinidad and Tobago, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And just to add to that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo Regional Corporation,

Diversification of the Economy (cont'd)
Mr. Indarsingh (cont'd)

2018.01.26

they cannot buy toilet paper, they cannot buy water, they cannot buy tea because this Government has failed to grow the economy, has failed to create jobs and has failed to put Trinidad and Tobago on any sustainable path of development. [*Desk thumping*]

And I could go on and on, because you have four addresses by the Prime Minister to Trinidad and Tobago and the tagline in those four addresses to the nation, was to avoid the IMF. But what I want to ask him today as the Prime Minister of this country, what type of leadership has he been able to provide in bringing balance to the economy and facilitating the turnaround?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the House must take note of the fact that over 25,000 persons lost their jobs in Trinidad and Tobago in 2017, and in 2018, it has started on the same footing and same front. And you know what is really amazing, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Knowing that the economy is contracting, knowing that people are experiencing challenges as it relates to their quality of life and standard of living and so on, this Government cannot preserve the jobs of the nationals of this country.

It really pains me to see what transpired at Caribbean Nitrogen Company Limited, because office holders—the Prime Minister, the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries, the Chairman of the Board of the National Gas Company—they are all the servants of the State, they are all the servants of the people of this country and they must all be willing to act in the best interest of the nationals of this country. It really pains me to know that someone within the framework of either the Government or either at NGC ordered the gas to be shut off—the supply of natural gas to be shut off to Caribbean Nitrogen Company Limited and 400-plus persons are now on the breadline. And what that means, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is in

Diversification of the Economy (cont'd)
Mr. Indarsingh (cont'd)

2018.01.26

addition to that, the loss of jobs, there is the loss of earning foreign exchange, there is the loss of corporation tax and there is the loss of business activity for contractors associated with the Caribbean Nitrogen Company Limited, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and we must dig deep into this particular issue and find out whether the Government of Trinidad and Tobago led by Prime Minister, Dr. Keith Rowley, sanctioned the shutting off of gas as it relates to this functioning entity, Mr. Deputy Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Minister of Trade and Industry, I thought would have focused on telling Trinidad and Tobago that the Government was committed to addressing the labour instability and the labour problem. Because if you want investment in your country, if you want people to come—whether it is foreign direct investment or investment from a local point of view—you would provide leadership by ensuring that there is labour stability. And, today, we have not heard up till today what is the Minister of Labour and Small Enterprise Development role in terms of the 10-point plan that she provided for industrial relations stability and development in this country. We have not heard what has happened to the National Tripartite Advisory Council chaired by the Member for Arouca/Maloney and Leader of Government Business.

When ArcelorMittal was on the brink of being shut down, the management of ArcelorMittal was pleading, looking for the Minister of Labour and Small Enterprise Development to enter into discussions, and since then the Minister of Labour and Small Enterprise Development has been in hiding, and up till today, the Minister of Labour and Small Enterprise Development has not come out of the woodwork in relation to servicing the labour movement and the workers of Trinidad and Tobago.

Diversification of the Economy (cont'd)
Mr. Indarsingh (cont'd)

2018.01.26

I thought, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the Minister's rebuttal to my colleague here this evening, she would have been providing a sense of confidence to the local contractors who, if they were paid their outstanding sums of money, and if this Government dealt with the outstanding debt to contractors in a very responsible way, in a very decisive way, the moneys that would have been paid to the local contractors would have been ploughed back into the economy from an expansion point of view, from an employment creation point of view. But yet the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, led by the Prime Minister and ably supported by the flag bearers in the persons of the Attorney General and the Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister and the Minister in the Office of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs, of following the money and locking up everybody on this side and so on, fame, in terms of the audits—up till today, after 28 months, how many audits were conducted into all these Ministries? [*Crosstalk*] How many?

My colleague is attempting to throw some light on this particular issue, but I know that it has cost the taxpayers of Trinidad and Tobago over \$31 million, and up till today they cannot tell the contractors association how much do they owe the local contractors of this country while the Joint Consultative Contractors Association, the JCC, has told the Prime Minister of this country that they owe the contractors \$4 billion, and it is out of political spite and malice and victimization that the Government is dragging its feet on this particular issue [*Desk thumping*] and companies have been closed and people have been placed on the breadline. And, in that regard, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the unemployment rate continues to increase in Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I thought also that the hon. Minister or somebody on this particular side would have—well, she would have sought to focus on providing the

Diversification of the Economy (cont'd)
Mr. Indarsingh (cont'd)

2018.01.26

platform and response to my colleague's Motion to focus on the need for the transformation of the education sector of Trinidad and Tobago and build on the foundation that was done by my colleagues, in terms of the former Ministers of tertiary education and education in the persons or the Members for Chaguanas East and Caroni East. The Minister did not attempt to tell the country what really will be done as it relates to the University of Trinidad and Tobago. We need to prepare the workforce of tomorrow to meet the demands of the economy of this country [*Desk thumping*] and the only way you can meet the demands of the country from a labour point of view is to invest and develop your education sector.

I call upon the Government not to stymie the growth of education and every Early Childhood Care and Education Centre which has been completed by the People's Partnership. I call upon this Government to outfit it and open it so that we could develop the minds of the young people of this country, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And when you develop the minds at the level of the preschool, we must be able to challenge this in terms of the development of the children within the secondary education system and the tertiary level education system of this country. This is why we demand to know what is the future of UTT as it relates to the diversification of the economy and the sustainable growth that we want to see for the benefit of all, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

We on this side, we gave life, we supported the development of the University of Trinidad and Tobago in every aspect [*Desk thumping*] and that is why we built the Aviation Campus at Camden, Couva [*Desk thumping*] to service the development of the aviation industry and to save foreign exchange. And if they are serious about saving foreign exchange and keeping our foreign exchange in Trinidad and Tobago, they will immediately open the Aviation Campus that will lead to

Diversification of the Economy (cont'd)
Mr. Indarsingh (cont'd)

2018.01.26

expansion and [*Desk thumping*] tremendous opportunities, not only from an aviation point of view, but it will also help to develop the growth pole in central Trinidad.

And this is why I am saying from the point of view of the Opposition that we must be able to tell the employees of UTT they have a future in contributing to the development of this tertiary level education institution and when they have a future in UTT, they will have a future entrenched in Trinidad and Tobago and will not seek, as the headline is today in the *Guardian* newspaper where workers who have lost their jobs at Caribbean Nitrogen Company Limited are already seeking opportunities abroad. They want to go. They have already signalled, some of them—because they live in the constituency of Couva South—that they will be seeking job opportunities outside of Trinidad and Tobago, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We have a responsibility, collectively, to focus on the future—[*Interruption*]

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

Mr. R. Indarsingh: We have a collective responsibility, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to ensure that we focus on the future of this country, and the future of this country can only be dealt with if we focus on fighting crime. This Government has lost the battle and war on crime since day one—52 murders in less than one month. Over 1,200 persons have been brutally murdered, and it has acted as a deterrent to foreign direct investment and also national investment, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Employers cannot find workers to be employed during the graveyard shift. Their costs from an operating point of view have increased, whether it is from a surveillance point of view, additional security. Workers are asking for premium pay to come to work especially out of designated hot spots and so on, from a reporting point of view. We must focus on education and training from a

Diversification of the Economy (cont'd)
Mr. Indarsingh (cont'd)

2018.01.26

vocational and from a technical point of view, and also we must be able to focus on foreign exchange—the very issue of foreign exchange. And as we continue to develop from an economic point of view, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there will always be a demand for foreign exchange in any society, but we did not hear from the Minister of Trade and Industry, what she is doing in terms of the Government's view as it relates to the manufacturing sector and the overall transformation of this economy as it relates to realizing foreign exchange for the benefit of Trinidad and Tobago. There is no hope for the people of this country. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member, thank you. I recognize the Member for Diego Martin Central. [*Desk thumping*]

5.45 p.m.

The Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs (Hon. Darryl Smith): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for allowing me to join this Motion and debate this evening with regard to the diversification of Trinidad and Tobago moving forward. Mr. Deputy Speaker, first of all, what we are going through here in Trinidad and Tobago is not new, we have been here before with regard to hard economic times. You will all recall during the NAR Government when we had serious issues with a number of things, mainly with the oil and gas price at that time. Mr. Deputy Speaker, in speaking to a number of my colleagues from around the globe, especially in this region who hold the same portfolio as myself, the Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs, the Minister of Sport and Culture, whatever it may be in those different countries, especially in this region, they are all saying the same thing as well with regard to them going through difficult times, and a lot of them are not dependent on oil and gas. A lot of them depend on tourism, agriculture, and other variations with regard to bringing in revenue for their countries. Nevertheless, Trinidad and

Diversification of the Economy (cont'd)
Hon. D. Smith (cont'd)

2018.01.26

Tobago is going through its challenges now, it is no secret, and this Government, under Dr. Rowley, and I would like to thank him, and, of course, the rest of my Cabinet colleagues who have been working as a team to get through these difficult times. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, for things sometimes in life, especially in sport, the stars have to be aligned, for somebody to win a 100-metre race, it is by a split second. When Keshorn throws his javelin, it is by a few inches they measure by, the wind, the temperature, the crowd, what he ate this morning or that day, his journey to the stadium. There are so many factors could make a champion between, there is hotel room to the facility that he is going. And the stars have aligned with sport and youth for the past two years, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I want to thank a number of people who have assisted with regard to that, and I will get to those statistics and facts in a while. I have to thank, as I am on my legs, the staff at the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs and at the SporTT Company, the Boxing Board, the NGBs who work with us very closely with all the sports, all the youth organizations, the parents, the media, the fans, but, most importantly, the athletes and the young people of Trinidad and Tobago. What I am about to explain and show to the people today is why—and these are the persons that have assisted and worked with us to ensure that we have had a successful two years so far with regard to the portfolio of Sport and Youth Affairs.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it has been since the first star—it has been since 2002 that this country has not had a proper national sports policy, and one of the problems that we have seen is while we may do these policies, implementation and monitoring is a major issue, and the policy that was put in, in 2002, clearly now we could see, with the issues that we had during 2010 to 2015, with LifeSport and so

Diversification of the Economy (cont'd)
Hon. D. Smith (cont'd)

2018.01.26

on, clearly it was not implemented and monitored, and even prior to that it was not, and even during my tenure we were having difficulties with it. But it is an archaic, an old policy, and for the first time since 2002 this Cabinet will be approving, shortly, the national sports policy where we are going to be seeing a number of new initiatives that will be assisting as we move forward. We are also working on a youth policy for first time in five years. Again, the last one was not implemented at all, and I will speak about that a little later if I have the time.

It was since 2006 or 2008 when the Sports Company was set up, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It was supposed to be for one year, and a sports commission was supposed to be set up. That was not done for almost 15 years, 10, 15 years, and, finally, we have a team that is doing that now, and I am getting to the point with regard to the stars aligning. We have a Combat Sports Commission that is finally being done. That has been talked about for a while. For the first time we are finalizing for a dispute resolution centre, an anti-doping board, and for the first time in 40 years, Mr. Deputy Speaker, UWI is opening a new faculty. The last faculty that they opened was the law faculty, and for the first time they are opening a sports faculty at UWI that was launched this year. [*Desk thumping*] And that was not done by carte blanche; that was not done fly-by-night by just pulling something out of a hat, it was done with hardcore data and research, and we had a lot to do with regard to working with them. We know UTT already has that programme going on as well.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in terms of Trinidad and Tobago sport you would have seen this last week here, we had a full-page ad in the newspaper, all the pundits in sports, all the NGBs, the athletes; 2017 was a bumper year, the best year in the history of Trinidad and Tobago with regard to medalling, with regard to so many

Diversification of the Economy (cont'd)
Hon. D. Smith (cont'd)

2018.01.26

sports doing well, non-traditional sports doing well, and we have been celebrating with the athletes, and I will talk about that; if not, if I do not have the time now, in the future about how we are going to move forward with celebrating with the athletes. But apart from it being the best year ever for our athletes, it was also our best year for sports tourism. It was the most international events in our history that Trinidad and Tobago has ever hosted for sport. It was the highest level of sporting events that we have ever hosted in Trinidad and Tobago, and this, again, has not happened by chance.

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Madam Speaker, since 2014/2015, before we even came into Government, and I was part of the team that worked on our manifesto to come into Government which won us the election, and which is now our policy, as you see with the Vision 2030, a number of things were planned that is seeing the success that we are seeing today. One of them that I pulled out on page 62, and the manifesto is something that I have on my desk, and I saw my colleague from Couva South having a copy—a very wise man to have that on his desk as well. [*Desk thumping*] One of the things that was said was:

“Promote Trinidad and Tobago as an attractive location for major international sporting events.”

That is on page 62, and I will come back to that shortly. There are a number of other points that were brought up in the sports policy that so far with the two years that we have been in Government that we have done so far. But, again, it is nothing new under the sun. Abu Dhabi in the Middle East has won, for the past five years, the best sporting tourism country in the world. There are the annual awards that they have for various different niches that they have in sports, Madam Speaker,

Diversification of the Economy (cont'd)
Hon. D. Smith (cont'd)

2018.01.26

and something that they are doing in the Middle East, you would see Qatar just won the next World Cup after Russia, and so on. They are very similar countries to Trinidad and Tobago where they depend heavily on oil and gas, and we have been looking at these countries to see what they have been doing in sport that they have been able to win these awards every year and they have a similar economy where they depend on natural gas, oil, and so on. A lot of it has to do with a number of things, Madam Speaker, you have to find a niche, and what they have done is they have found a niche with regard to the weather that they have.

They have spent billions of dollars on enhancing their infrastructure with regard to facilities, hotels, transportation, and also the facilities, the actual sporting facilities. And what they have done, Madam Speaker, is they have created niche events that they sell to the world, annually, to come. One of the events that they have, and is the model, it is the F1 Grand Prix, which is a race that they have. They have a major golf tournament. They have bought into European football teams with the wealth that they have, so they have these teams coming to their countries, and so on. Other countries that were on that list, Madam Speaker, that came in after them was New Zealand, believe it or not, Beijing, China; Qatar; South Africa; London; and in the West there was LA, Miami, New York, Brazil and Canada. In the Caribbean we find ourselves competing with Jamaica, with Cuba, believe it or not, Cuba, and Cuba has found a niche where they focus on technique, science and technology, and training, and a lot of countries go to Cuba for its good weather, yes, but also to get that science and technology.

Jamaica hosts something call the Boys and Girls Games annually, and that brings in a lot revenue because, as you know, a lot of foreign coaches come to Jamaica to recruit. Here in Trinidad and Tobago, under Roger Boynes, since back

Diversification of the Economy (cont'd)
Hon. D. Smith (cont'd)

2018.01.26

then they started the plan for the aquatic, the racquet, the cycling centre. That facility, you would have heard the Member for Couva South talk about it being in Tunapuna, but reading back the files, and so on, on it, it was moved down to several different places. It was supposed to be built in Mucurapo, and so on, but long story short, it was started and it was completed under this Government. We have the Brian Lara Cricket Academy that in nine months was completed, as we know the history on that. [*Desk thumping*]

As we speak right now, Madam Speaker, we have the CONCACAF under-20 women's tournament going on here where we have 10 teams from across this region. Just this morning we have a youth conference going on, the Caribbean Youth Conference at the Racquet Centre where we have young people from 10 different countries here meeting this weekend to trade ideas, to organize to have policies, and so on. So we have a sport event going on where we have 10 countries, and we have a youth event going on at the same time with another 10 countries being here, so which shows the diversification that we are pushing. This year alone in 2017 we hosted a number of major events, as you would have seen, including the CPL finals, which was for the first time held at the Brian Lara Cricket Academy, and that brought in alone in estimated revenue, based on the figures from CPL, \$23 million to Trinidad and Tobago. There were 37 million people watching, viewing that finals, and 20 million watching the games before, and that is streaming and live on television, and we work very closely with the Minister of Tourism to get the Trinidad branding, and so on, there.

We would have seen, for the first time, hockey hosted at the highest level. We see our guys leaving—the indoor hockey team qualified for the Indoor World Cup, they leave this weekend, and we wish them all the best. We saw we hosted the

Diversification of the Economy (cont'd)
Hon. D. Smith (cont'd)

2018.01.26

highest level for volleyball, and which saw 10 teams from across the world coming here, from Japan, from Australia, and so on, and they too for the first time qualified for the World Cup in Japan. What we are pushing and we have asked all the NGBs to do, Madam Speaker, is to not just focus on play, there are other parts of sports and sports tourism that you could look at. There is conferencing, there is training; this year for the first time in 2017 we hosted the CCCAN, which is the highest level of swimming that we have ever hosted in Trinidad's history, and we have won it for the first time.

We also won for the first time in diving, where we had over 1,000 athletes from over 20 countries being here, and we saw a number of revenue being earned from that tournament as well. And what was important with that tournament, Madam Speaker, is that we also doubled it to have a training programme where we actually had people from all over the world coming to our shores to train, how to judge, and to coach synchronized swimming, to judge and to referee for water polo, and we had over 100 coaches, judges and trainers come to our shores to get certified by FINA. Last year as well was the first time that we met with so many international sporting governing body presidents. We would have seen FIFA's President being here, UCI's President, which is cycling, being here; FINA's President, which is the world governing body for swimming being here, and this is all part of us working and progressing to finalize to make Trinidad and Tobago the sporting capital for this region.

We are about to sign, within the next few months, to make the aquatic and the cycling event through world development centres where we are going to see thousands of athletes from across the globe. The average for one of these satellite centres per year, the Cycling Velodrome, is estimated 3,000 to 4,000 world-class

Diversification of the Economy (cont'd)
Hon. D. Smith (cont'd)

2018.01.26

athletes coming to Trinidad and Tobago, spending a minimum of US \$2,000 to US \$3,000 a week to be here to train. So we are anticipating that will be signed pretty soon. We are working with the local governing bodies to do that. For the first time in our history as well, Madam Speaker, that we are going to have naming rights for these facilities, and we purposely held back—if you notice there are no signs on any of those facilities yet, and we did not do the politic side of it with regard to naming it after an athlete, because now that we are going to have them as international centres, following the model we could get international organizations coming in and giving us foreign currency to brand these locations. We are speaking to a number of major brands, and once it is approved we are going to move forward to get that currency in for a long term. That is because—

[Interruption]

Mr. Mitchell: Sports marketing.

Hon. D. Smith: That is what it is about, diversifying, but you have to find your niche. So we are very pleased that we have the good weather, we have the infrastructure. Right now as we speak, there are eight teams here visiting Trinidad and Tobago. Duke University was here last week, Columbia University was here, the Canadian Olympic/Paralympic team was here, the full team utilizing the Aquatic Centre. We have been advertising and marketing in North America, especially with the bitter winter that they had this year, and we have 300 athletes here until March, and we are anticipating, expecting many more teams to come in the next few months. And what it has done, Madam Speaker, it has changed the trend, usually in Trinidad and Tobago and this region we see a bumper in events and activities for sport and international sport during the summer for obvious reasons, school is out, a number of international organizations host tournaments

Diversification of the Economy (cont'd)
Hon. D. Smith (cont'd)

2018.01.26

July, August, September. We also see a bumper in the Easter week, that period between March and April, but now that we have these facilities up and we have the good weather, we are seeing that January, February, March is increasing with regard to the use and having foreign athletes being here to utilize these facilities.

Madam Speaker, the teams that we are trying to push—the sports that we are trying to push for this coming year, we have already won the bid, and there are a number of governing bodies that come to us hoping to bid and win these different events that are hosted. We have already won the bid for 2019 for the CARIFTA Games for swimming, and we are looking for 2020 to have the CARIFTA Games for track and field, right. But what we trying to do is to have signature events here, just as I spoke about in the Middle East where they have the Formula One racing, they have horseracing, they have golf tournaments that are calendar events for the international calendar, we here in the Caribbean, but more so Trinidad and Tobago, we have to find two or three signature events, just like everybody knows that we have a carnival on carnival Monday and Tuesday, they must know, annually, that we have two or three major events that persons from across the globe could plan in advance. We had a successful year with CPL last year, it was the best year ever, and we are in talks right now with them to see, moving forward, if it is something that we will do for the next few years, because why reinvent the wheel, it was the best, a most successful event that they had since the CPL has started, at the Brian Lara Cricket Academy, and it is only natural that we will look at that as well. Cricket and T20 is being utilized and is loved by the people in this region, and we are hoping that we continue.

One of the things that we are looking at, Madam Speaker, is marine sports, one of our niches is the beaches, and speaking with the TTOC, one of the things that they

are looking at in the future is a beach Olympics, where we have a number of athletes, as you know, two of the top fastest growing sports in Trinidad and Tobago is triathlon, which is inclusive of cycling, running and swimming, open-water swimming sometimes, and dragon boat racing, which is both at the sea or at rivers, and this is something that Trinidad and Tobago is hoping that we could tap into. We saw for the first time in our history the women's beach soccer team won a gold medal and the guys won a silver medal. The beach Olympics will incorporate volleyball, beach soccer, triathlons, rowing, sailing, yachting, speedboat racing, all of the sports that occur at the beach, and it will work very good with Tobago, with the Tobago matting, game fishing as well. So, hopefully, in our tenure we will see Trinidad and Tobago hosting a combined type of event to push for the Caribbean region. But, again, we have to find niche events that we could have the public being able to come and enjoy it from across the globe.

Madam Speaker, there are two types of sport tourism, there is hard and soft; hard is what we consider the big-time sports like the Olympics, World Cup, NASCAR, and so on, and then the soft ones are the non-competitive ones. Case in point, in Colorado they have the snow, and they have beautiful hiking areas, and so on, so they maximize that. It is obvious they may have the X Games and the Winter Olympics, but a lot of people go there just to play golf, just to ski, to hike, and so on. So we are looking at both sides of it. There are so many different parts of sports tourism, but it is the conferencing which is something that we have asked all the NGBs, and it is something that is new to Trinidad and Tobago where we do not hosts sports conferences, we always look at the aspect of hosting an international event or a major event. We also could utilize the hotels that we have to have an election, or to have a policy change for one of these international governing bodies.

Diversification of the Economy (cont'd)
Hon. D. Smith (cont'd)

2018.01.26

Madam Speaker, in terms of the quantity of persons based on working with the Minister of Tourism, and, as I just told you, we are on the verge of launching our new sports policy. Part of it, there are a number of appendices, and the Ministry of Tourism has been working very closely with us, and they have already developed a national sports tourism policy. They have a draft for it which would be appended to it. And based on the statistics and data that they have given us for the past few years, Madam Speaker, the average amount of persons that come in for sports tourism for the past few years varies between 4,000 to 6,000 persons. In 2017, we are estimating that figure has reached as much as 15,000. We are now finalizing those figures from the NGBs with regard to how many events we hosted. What we are seeing so far, with the figures that we are pulling in from the NGBs, and so on, that we had an estimated revenue coming from sports tourism to as much as TT \$15 million, a far cry from what it was, the average, which was estimated at around \$20 million. So, so far so good.

We have set a new benchmark with regard to sports tourism in 2017. It is going to be difficult to continue rising that up but we continue to push the facilities, but once we get these facilities being utilized as the satellite development centres, we are going to see just like what we are seeing now with regard to what is going on in the Aquatic Centre, a number of world-class athletes and teams coming down here to utilize. The same thing with the Cycling Velodrome, right, we plan to ensure that we have a number of teams coming down once we have signed. We have a foreign coach, Erin Hartwell, who is well-respected across the globe. He was Canada's coach before, and he has already started to make links to have universities, high schools and teams come to use the Cycling Velodrome. We met with the ITF development coordinator for this region, and we are also working to

Diversification of the Economy (cont'd)
Hon. D. Smith (cont'd)

2018.01.26

push to have for the first time a Racquet Centre where it will have table tennis, tennis and badminton being world-class facilities where we will use it as satellite development centres.

One of the things that you would have seen us do last year, Madam Speaker, was—as you know, these governments in these difficult times are pushing the PPPs, the public-private partnerships, and you would have seen that we partnered with the Trinidad and Tobago Football Association, who I must give kudos, who have cleaned up their act with regard to balancing the books, and so on, so now they are able to tap into FIFA. They have been able to get the Goal Project where they are getting funding from FIFA, and we were able to open, and they started work on the home of football at the Ato Boldon Stadium, where for the first time we are going to have a location that is going to have indoor football; futsal, beach soccer and football. They are also building a “sportel” which is going to assist us with the dormitory aspect of the athletes that are coming in from these countries, and they are anticipating that facility will be done 2018/2019. Madam Speaker, I am told that my time—*[Interruption]*

Madam Speaker: You have until 6.15.

Hon. D. Smith: Okay, 6.15, all right. Sorry about that, Madam Speaker, I got a note here that said the wrong thing.

Madam Speaker, so in terms of the home for football, we are going to utilize that to assist with the athletes that are going to be coming down here that they could have a safe and secure location. Right now the hotels in the south area are very happy and pleased that they are getting a number of these universities and schools that are utilizing their facilities, and, ironically, that their timing—of course, that they are here now for carnival season, the SporTT Company and the

Diversification of the Economy (cont'd)
Hon. D. Smith (cont'd)

2018.01.26

Ministry is working with the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and the Arts and Tourism to have these young people go out and visit the pan, and so on, and spend their money out there to try our delicacies, and so on.

Madam Speaker, in terms of the other niches that we are looking at with the other sports where—there are a number of other niches with regard to working with the Trinidad and Tobago down at the Chaguaramas, CDA. We are meeting with the CDA to look at with regard to hikes, and the fauna and the hunting, and so on, in those areas across Trinidad and Tobago which is another niche that we are getting requests on a daily basis to work with them with regard to that. Madam Speaker, one of the things that we are looking at as well is there are two sides of the sports tourism, there is domestic and there is international, and what we are doing with the NGBs, just like you would see with tourism where they have something called staycation, where they are asking people to stay in Tobago, in Trinidad, to go to the beaches to stay at guest houses rather than going away and spending foreign currency; that too is something that is used in different countries with regards to sport where they push local sports to host events, to encourage people to play, to do the beach sports, and so on, and spend their money and utilize it here in Trinidad and Tobago.

We had a meeting with all the governing bodies of sport a few weeks ago, and this is something that we are looking at with the NGBs to see how they could increase their revenue on their own, where they could host tournaments locally in the communities, because what we see is a number of newly lit fields throughout Trinidad and Tobago that are not being utilized. Prior when volunteerism was a major part of our society, we would have seen people in the communities coming out and assisting and hosting these tournaments. We have seen a drop off in that,

Diversification of the Economy (cont'd)
Hon. D. Smith (cont'd)

2018.01.26

and we are working with the NGBs to start to get the grassroots, which is part of our policy in the manifesto where we are working with a number of different NGBs and community groups to come out and host events where people will spend their funding, where they could have the “corn soup man”, and so on. We are actually looking at with the Pro League where we have been talking to them to try and get their teams out of the stadium and into the communities where they could sell jerseys, they could sell advertising, and so on, where the money could stay in their location.

Madam Speaker, one of the things that you would have also heard us talking about is the Brian Lara Cricket Academy, and if this Motion continues, I am sure the Minister of Community Development, Culture and the Arts will have a lot to say with regard to culture—the Minister of Agriculture, Lands and Fisheries, if he joins the debate. There is health tourism as well, as you know, a lot of countries from the small islands, people from the small islands come to Trinidad and Tobago for health care; education as well, through UTT and UWI, and the other schools that we hear. Education tourism, believe it or not, is a big factor, and I am sure everybody will have a lot to say with regard to talking with that. But with the Brian Lara Cricket Academy, right now we are finalizing a meeting to discuss moving forward with that, and that is something in its development stage, 10 years ago when it was developed and was started it was to become a full-fledged school as Brian Lara, who was named after his dream when you would have heard his speech at the opening of the facility. And, that in itself, we want to see not just young people coming here to learn cricket from the best from the region, but we want to see people from across the globe coming here to practice in a world-class facility to go to school and get their education, but, more importantly, to learn the game of

Diversification of the Economy (cont'd)
Hon. D. Smith (cont'd)

2018.01.26

cricket as well. So this is something that we have in the cards as well in the near future to push the sports tourism drive.

Madam Speaker, I was fortunate enough to be able to go to China a few months ago in July—*[Interruption]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

Hon. D. Smith:—and in China we were able to finalize an MoU with the Chinese Government where we are going to be having a trade off with them. One of the things that we are talking about for the first time is an internship programme where the young people of Trinidad and Tobago will get the opportunity to go to China to learn agriculture, to learn technology, to learn medicine, and so on, for a six-month period, because a number of things that we hear from the young people is that they are having difficulty getting jobs, not just in Trinidad but across the region, and vice versa. They will be sending their young people over here for a six-month period to learn our culture, to learn oil and gas, to learn cricket, to learn steel pan, and so on, and these are the kind of things that we want to do to encourage young people to come to Trinidad and Tobago through exchange programmes, and so on. Some of them actually are looking at attending because some of our students are going to be given scholarships to go to the University of Beijing, and we are finalizing with the University of Shanghai, and we want to have an exchange programme with that as well. So these are all of the things that we are going to have where we are going to have young people exchanging and going to China, coming back and forth.

They are going to be working with us with regard to technology and science of the sports, and to ensure that we utilize our facilities. And once they come to our facilities which was built by them, they are also looking at working to sending

Diversification of the Economy (cont'd)
Hon. D. Smith (cont'd)

2018.01.26

teams to utilize our facilities as well. So, again, it is something in the future that we could look at that is very positive. We have done all on our end with regard to that MoU, and we are hoping in the near future that their side will be signed and we could see and reap the benefits from that. Madam Speaker, in terms of the airline, and all the other aspects with the sport tourism that we are doing, there are other aspects of it as well with regard to even the manufacturing of equipment. What we find now, and what we are seeing is most of our organizations import all—we are seeing something like, I think, the figure I saw last time was 95 per cent of all our sporting products are imported. [*Interruption*]

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, I am heartened to see the contribution of the Member of Diego Martin Central has invoked so much interest, but I just want to remind you all of the provisions of Standing Orders 53 for how we should conduct ourselves when we not speaking. Member for Diego Martin Central. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. D. Smith: Thank you, Madam Speaker, believe it or not, Madam Speaker, there are a number of young men in Trinidad and Tobago who have gone into a lucrative business with regard to the creation of wind-ball cricket bats, and there is one in particular from St. James that is sold throughout the region, wind-ball cricket has taken off in a number of the other islands as well, and it is a brand name that has taken off with regard to that, and the Ministry has actually been working with them to—[*Interruption*]

Madam Speaker: Member for Diego Martin Central, your original 30 minutes are now expired, you are entitled to 15 more minutes to wrap up, if you so desire.

Hon. D. Smith: Madam Speaker, I take it and reserve it.

Madam Speaker: Leader of the House.

Adjournment

2018.01.26

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.

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 6.15p.m.