SENATE

Tuesday, October 17, 2006

The Senate met at 10.30 a.m.

PRAYERS

[MR VICE-PRESIDENT in the Chair]

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Mr. Vice-President: Hon. Senators, I have granted leave of absence from today’s sitting to Sen. Harry Persad Mungalsingh who is ill.

SENIOR’S APPOINTMENT

Mr. Vice-President: Hon. Senators, I have received the following correspondence from Her Excellency Dr. Linda Savitri Baboolal, Acting President of the Republic of Trinidad Tobago:

“THE CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

By Her Excellency, DR. LINDA SAVITRI BABOOLAL
Acting President and Commander-in-Chief
of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

/s/ Linda Baboolal
Acting President.

TO: MR. WAYNE MUNRO

WHEREAS Senator Harry Persad Mungalsingh is incapable of performing his duties as a Senator by reason of illness:

NOW, THEREFORE, I, LINDA SAVITRI BABOOLAL, Acting President as aforesaid, acting in accordance with the advice of the Leader of the Opposition, in exercise of the power vested in me by section 44 of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, do hereby appoint you, WAYNE MUNRO, to be temporarily a member of the Senate, with immediate effect and continuing during the period of illness of the said Senator Harry Persad Mungalsingh.

Given under my Hand and the Seal of the President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago at the Office of the President, St. Ann’s, this 17th day of October, 2006.”
OATH OF ALLEGIANCE

Sen. Wayne Munro took and subscribed the Oath of Allegiance as required by law.

PAPERS LAID


APPROPRIATION BILL
(BUDGET)
[Second Day]

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on question [October 16, 2006]:
That the Bill be now read a second time.

Question again proposed.

Mr. Vice-President: Those who spoke on the Bill were: Sen. The Hon. Conrad Enill, Minister in the Ministry of Finance and mover of the Bill; Sen. Wade Mark; Sen. Mary Kathleen King; Hon. Dr. Keith Rowley, MP; Sen. The Hon. Danny Montano and Sen. Basharat Ali.

The Minister of National Security (Sen. The Hon. Martin Joseph): Thank you very much, Mr. Vice-President. I am pleased to participate in this debate on “a Bill to provide for the service of Trinidad and Tobago for the financial year ended the 30th day of September, 2007.”

When the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance presented his budget in the other place and our Minister in the Ministry of Finance presented it in this place yesterday, he noted that the theme of this year’s budget is “Vision 2020, Moving Onward”. I am sure you are aware that Vision 2020 involves five development priorities, or sometimes referred to as development pillars. They are as follows:

1. Nurturing a caring society.
2. Governing effectively.
3. Facilitating effective business.
4. Developing innovative people.
5. Investing in sound infrastructure and environment.
The development priority or pillar for which the Ministry of National Security has primary responsibility, is governing effectively. Four components comprise that pillar or priority:

1. The administration of justice.
2. Governance and institutional structures for development.
3. Law administration and legal affairs.

The Ministry of National Security also has primary responsibility for national security and public safety. “Vision 2020: Operational Plan, 2007—2010” has the vision for effective government and is stated as follows:

“Our vision:

An efficient, accountable, participative and transparent Government that is committed to providing quality public institutions, promoting safety and security for all citizens, cooperating with local, regional and international bodies and ensuring justice and equality of all.”

It goes on to say:

“Our goals…

1. Our society and our Government will adhere to good governance principles and practices
2. Our Public Institutions will be high performance professional entities effectively and efficiently meeting the needs of all their clients
3. Trinidad and Tobago will have modern technologically advanced legal, regulatory and enforcement systems
4. All citizens will be assured of fair and equal justice
5. Trinidad and Tobago will be a safe and secure place to live, visit, do business and raise families”

I move on again into the same “Operational Plan, 2007—2010” and the objectives and targets are as follows:

“1. Significantly reduce crime by using a holistic, sustained approach that addresses the root causes of crime
2. Reduce the involvement of young people in crime
3. Increase the homicide detection rate
4. Reduce recidivism through the rehabilitation and re-integration of offenders
5. Instil a culture of law and order and respect for human life among all citizens
6. Restore public trust and confidence in the Protective Services
7. Create an integrated national security infrastructure which ensures that the issues of crime, public safety and national security are addressed on a holistic and sustained basis
8. Protect the borders of Trinidad and Tobago from illegal entry and exit of people and products
9. Secure Trinidad and Tobago's interest through international, regional and local defence efforts
10. Protect all citizens from the hazards of natural and manmade disasters”

The targeted outcomes are:

- Number of Serious Crimes (especially murders) reduced
- Homicide detection rate increased
- Gang related activity reduced
- Number of youth offenders reduced
- Recidivism rate reduced
- Number of domestic and industrial accidents reduced
- Number of road accidents reduced
- Illegal entry of goods/products reduced
- An integrated National Security System in operation
- New fire stations constructed at Sangre Grande, Couva, San Fernando, Rio Claro, Mayaro, Arouca, Tunapuna, Four Roads, Point Fortin, Siparia, Princes Town, Belmont, Chaguanaas, Black Rock and Plymouth
- New police stations constructed at Carenage, Matelot, Manzanilla, Maracas Bay, Oropouche, Matura, Moruga, La Brea, Arima, St. Clair, Roxborough and Old Grange
- Anti-terrorist Unit established
- New prison complex in Tobago constructed
• Multilevel Correctional Complex established in Central Trinidad
• National Disaster Plan revised
• Public education campaign on disaster preparedness conducted
• Machine-readable passports system implemented”

I am saying this because we have a clear road map; clearly identified targets to be accomplished between now in the fiscal year starting 2007 for which this debate is taking place, and by 2010. It is a clear road map. Also, while you did not hear me identify reduced crime by this per cent or that per cent, those things will be filled in, in each year from 2007 to 2010. I am saying this because yesterday you heard some criticisms being made about this Government as it relates to its planning; how it is preparing to deal with taking the country towards 2020. So we have a clear, identified operational plan for the years 2007 to 2010.

**Sen. Mark:** Is that a secret document?

**Sen. The Hon. M. Joseph:** What is a secret document?

**Sen. Mark:** We have not seen a copy of the operation document.

**Sen. The Hon. M. Joseph:** You will get it in due course.

It is against that backdrop that I propose, during the time allotted to me this morning, to address the progress made towards these issues that are confronting us; the challenges faced; where we fell short and what we propose to accomplish.

I heard some commentators criticize the Prime Minister on his budget presentation by saying he did not spend sufficient time on crime. Hopefully, I will spend sufficient time on the Government’s approach to dealing with this very challenging issue that faces us.

This Government has indicated clearly its intention of sparing no effort in ensuring that this country is provided with a level of security and safety that our citizens deserve. This Government has also indicated that it recognizes that the only thing in the way of allowing our citizens to enjoy their fullest potential to be able to enjoy all the fruits of what this economy is generating, is to provide an acceptable level of security and safety. But we also recognize that in order to do that there is a fundamental requirement, an indispensable requirement.

10.45 a.m.

If we want good law enforcement we must have good law enforcement institutions. The institutions are not just the buildings; it also requires individuals who are responsible for law enforcement. We have to build law enforcement
institutions. As a result, we have made bold the intention of transforming the police service which is the primary law enforcement agency in Trinidad and Tobago.

In that regard, you have recognized that the Government continues to ensure that national security is adequately funded. In 2005, the allocation to national security was 7.8 per cent of the total budget; in 2006, 8.2 per cent of the total budget and in this fiscal year, 2007, it is also 8 per cent of the budget. The Prime Minister indicated again in his presentation:

“functional classification,

…12.5 per cent of the budget will be spent on education; a similar percentage on social development and poverty alleviation, 8 per cent on national security, 6 per cent on health and 6 per cent on infrastructure.

It is instructive to see what kind of expenditures other countries allocate in terms of national security.

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<th>Country</th>
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We are consistently investing in national security and public safety so that we could improve safety.
We continue to be involved in the transformation of the police service putting in place a cohesive long-term plan for law enforcement. We have been restructuring the Police Complaints Unit. The staff was increased from 16 officers to 58. The Police Complaints Unit is important as a means of policing, so that we can ensure there is an acceptable level of police behaviour that would deal with some of the issues that the population raises from time to time with respect to police behaviour. We impacted upon the perceived high level of corruption and aspects of misconduct.

We have focused heavily on the Homicide Bureau of Investigations (HBI). As you would know, over the last two years three major criminal activities were high on the national agenda. One was the question of kidnappings; the second was the question of bombings and the third was the question of homicides. With respect to homicides, you would recall that we had established a Homicide Prevention Working Group; a Repeat Offenders Programme designed to target repeat offenders and a Repeat Offenders Task Force. We established the Homicide Bureau of Investigations (HBI) and increased the staff from 47 to the current strength of 103 and there would eventually be 200 officers operating out of the HBI. All officers of the HBI would be beneficiaries of crime scene investigation courses that are currently being taught by the officers from the United Kingdom attached to the Special Anti-Crime Unit of Trinidad and Tobago (SAUTT). Two weeks ago, it was a pleasure to be part of the graduation of the first group of Crime Scene Investigators, (CSIs), after spending two months in training. It was the first time that we have graduated nine persons and the intention is to continue to increase the capability of those persons in the Homicide Bureau.

Given the problems associated with eyewitnesses, the Homicide Bureau Investigators are being trained to utilize forensic evidence to solve crimes. That HBI will also handle the homicide assessment team who would arrive at crime scenes within what is referred to as the “golden hour” as to when a crime occurs and the ability—[ Interruption ] you can make a note of it. To better preserve crime scenes and by extension forensic evidence the HBI would be working closely with the Forensic Science Centre and the district medical officers. That is a terminology used. Prof. Deosaran might be able to help you. Family liaison officers would be utilized to improve two-way communication with families of the deceased and to provide timely information and support to families. All the HBI’s work would be intelligence led and they would have full support of the officers from the United Kingdom.

Let me deal with some of the good news which is so obvious. It is good news on behalf of law enforcement and the people of Trinidad and Tobago. We have been able to deal with the unacceptable levels of kidnapping that plague the
society. Kidnapping in this period has been decreased by 73.9 per cent compared to a similar period in 2005. [Desk thumping] To date, we have had only 12 kidnappings for ransom. We have been able to treat with this by the establishment of the Incident Coordinating Centre which comprises the Anti Kidnapping Unit, the Special Anti–Crime Unit and other intelligence agencies. We have improved police and intelligence reaction to kidnapping; we have received assistance from the FBI, DEA, Interpol and other international organizations allowing us to improve our ability to deal with kidnapping.

With respect to homicide, we are not satisfied with our ability to handle homicides in the manner in which we would like. What is not going to happen, contrary to the prediction made by a colleague on the other side—sometime in one of your contributions you were talking about the fact that homicides would reach 400 or 450. You were saying it with a hope that it would reach there. [Interruption] My incompetence?

When we look at the homicide statistics over the past nine months, in January, it was 38 compared to 34 for the previous year, an increase of 4. In February, it was down by 9, from 28 to 19. In March, that was the month we really had a serious spike; there were 51 homicides that caused a serious consternation, an increase of 21. In April, there was a reduction from 26 to 20. In May 2005 and 2006, it was even. In June, there was an increase of 7. In July, it was even. In August, there was a reduction of 12. In September, there was a reduction of 9. If you count we had three months with reductions; three months with increases and two months with evening out.

The fact that homicides continue to be our number one issue, we are ensuring that our law enforcement especially the Homicide Bureau of Investigations is focused on treating with homicide. Let me make the point again that given the increased capability of our law enforcement we would be able to deal with homicides. Let me indicate again that at this point in time some homicides—when I made the comment the last time, a commentator and I do not want to call the person’s name here, said Martin Joseph is crazy. I made the point that a husband and wife or somebody falls out in a domestic arrangement and he or she decides to take a particular course of action, there is no way law enforcement can deal with that now. We will reach the point where effective law enforcement would be able to deal with it.

You would be able to deal with that because given the relationship between law enforcement and the citizens, you would know persons who would be likely to have such tendencies. As a result actions can be taken. If you look at developed
societies there was a curve. They were able to deal with the gang related and drug related and then, the final set of homicide they were able to deal with was those domestic related. We will get to that point.

In areas where we have focused attention especially in dealing with drugs and gang related, here are some of the statistics. In Port of Spain between 2004 and 2005, homicide increased by 16 per cent; between 2005 and 2006, it decreased by 6.7 per cent. In southern, there was a decrease by 6.3 per cent in 2004 to 2005; it was increased by 13 per cent in 2005 to 2006. In the western division there was an increase of 43.6 per cent between 2004 and 2005; in 2005 and 2006 there was a decrease by 28.6 per cent. In northern there was an increase by 4.5 per cent between 2004 and 2005; there was an increase between 2005 and 2006 by 13 per cent. In central there was a decrease by 35 per cent between 2004 and 2005; between 2005 and 2006 there was an increase by 107 per cent. Unacceptable. In south western there was an increase by 41.7 per cent between 2004 and 2005, there was a decrease by 52.9 per cent between 2005 and 2006. In eastern, there was an increase of 50 per cent between 2004 and 2005; there was a decrease of 25.9 per cent between 2005 and 2006. In north eastern where there was a decrease by 2.5 per cent between 2004 and 2005; between 2005 and 2006, there was an increase by 43 per cent. In Tobago, where there was an increase by 125 per cent, in 2004 to 2005; between 2005 and 2006, there was a decrease by 55 per cent.

11.00 a.m.

Mr. Vice-President, let me put this on the record, immediately, because I may not have time later. Yesterday, I heard Sen. Mark talking about the high crime rate in Tobago being unacceptable so I will quote from a letter sent to the Assistant Commissioner of Police:

“Secretary of Tourism, Transportation Enterprise Development And Settlements.

3rd October, 2006.

Dear Mr. Bastien,

I wish to commend you and the members of the Tobago Police Force for the magnificent job that you are doing in Tobago in recent weeks in combating crime at every level.

I am particularly heartened by the tremendous increase in the interdiction rate that has been achieved especially with regard to crimes that have been committed against visitors to Tobago.
In fact, I have been reliably informed that foreign Government Representatives based in Trinidad have been so impressed by the results of your efforts that consideration is being given to the possibility of a reduction of the severity of the Travel Advisories that have been responsible for the reluctance of foreign citizens to visit Tobago in recent times.

Of course, we are also genuinely appreciative of the support that has been forthcoming from the judiciary who have ensured that justice has been dispensed with due dispatch.

Once again, I congratulate you and your team on your outstanding performance and I trust that under your committed leadership, this transformation that has occurred since your assumption to office will be sustained well into the future.

Yours faithfully,
/s/ N. E. Wilson
Secretary.”

[Desk thumping]

Sen. Mark: [Inaudible]

Sen The Hon. M. Joseph: We know! We are all trying. Mr. Vice-President, if you listen to some of the commentators you will believe all is lost; you will believe that we are folding our arms and not doing anything.

When we make the point that Trinidad is not unique in what is happening, they say it is a cop-out, but we are part of a global environment. We cannot escape the fact of our location, because we are smack between producing countries and consuming countries which makes us a transshipment point. But not only that, that drug trade is also fuelling, as we know, drugs and also guns.

Mr. Vice-President, it is an established fact that the drugs are now being accompanied by guns. If Trinidad is the only transshipment point between here, North America and Europe, the drugs will continue north and the guns will stay. If there is another transshipment point, whether it is St. Lucia, St. Vincent, Grenada, the drugs and the guns will continue to that destination and it is where the final drop-off point to Europe and North America is that the guns stay.

This is the reason all the Caribbean territories are having a similar problem with respect to gangs, drugs and guns. The challenge that we face, Mr. Vice-President, and Members of this honourable Chamber, is to reduce—because clearly we will never be able to eliminate—the inflow of drugs and guns coming into our country. This is the reason this Government has decided it will also take a technological approach to dealing with this problem.
My understanding is that a go-fast boat takes less than 10 minutes between any point in Venezuela and Trinidad. This is the reason for our air assets; this is the reason for our radar system. It is one thing to be able to identify the movements and we must be able to do something about it. I will come to that just now when I talk about the coast guard, and the statement that my colleague made with respect to that.

Mr. Vice-President, I have talked about the training. We have invested a lot in training and development with respect to our police service. We have also increased the availability of vehicles so that mobility and presence can be enhanced. We have had greater success also in terms of curriculum development. We have just passed out a new batch of 166 new police officers who graduated on August 24, 2006 under a new advanced curriculum. But more importantly, we have also introduced a field training programme. Whereas in the past, Mr. Vice-President, as soon as these recruits graduated they were placed immediately into the field, what we have now done is to implement a six-month mentoring programme. We have field training officers, the more competent persons who will serve on the field in improving the competence and the capability of these law enforcement officers. We have indicated that they are supposed to be the new breath of fresh air, as it relates to the new batch of police officers.

The next batch of police officers is due to start on November 01, 2006 and some 120 of them are scheduled to participate in this new programme. The curriculum is divided into seven specific departments: behavioural science and communications, law, police administration and operations, traffic enforcement, health and physical training, firearms, self-defence and tactics, and police science and technology.

We have also progressed, the question about the performance management system. You would recall recently that we had some persons who were not too satisfied with the fact that it was necessary for us to ensure that merit-based promotion is put in place. Up to this day we still have situations where—I believe there are some matters before the court so I do not want to say too much about that.

Mr. Vice-President, with respect to the infrastructure improvements, we have embarked on two phases of repairs and renovation to police stations. In the first phase, some 51 police stations were repaired and renovated.

Sen. Enill: How many?

Sen. The Hon. M. Joseph: Fifty-one police stations. Five sections in each station were worked on, namely, the charge room, the reception area, kitchen, washroom, toilets, dormitories and administrative areas. The works included electrical upgrade of all stations: upgrade of sewage and waste disposals systems,
installation of security lighting and surveillance systems, servicing of air conditioning units, expansion of property exhibit rooms and improvement of ventilation and air conditioning.

We are pleased to say to this honourable Chamber that in keeping with Government's policy of ensuring that 10 per cent of all contracts and procurements are provided to small and micro entrepreneurs, in terms of our refurbishment programme, some 65 contractors benefited: five in the plumbing area, four in air conditioning, nine in electrical, six in painting and 40 in general; some 65 small and micro contractors.

In terms of phase two that has already started, some 94 medium and micro contractors will benefit: 10 in the area of plumbing, 7 in air conditioning, 15 in electrical, 12 in painting and 50 in general. This is at the ministry; I am not talking about the various divisions of the ministry, which from time to time will also be engaging the services of small contractors. We have taken a deliberate effort as we are supposed to because it is Government policy. What drove that policy is that it was felt that when small contractors are sub-contractors of larger contractors they end up almost living at the edge. If they can directly deal with the agency then they will be able to benefit better from the programme, and as a result we have done that. [Interuption] What PNM friends! All of these contractors are in the areas of these police stations. [Interuption] Well, all of Trinidad and Tobago is PNM people. [Desk thumping]

Sen. Mark: No transparency!

Sen. The Hon. M. Joseph: The thing was advertised in the newspaper.

Sen. Mark: Bring it!

Sen. The Hon. M. Joseph: How you mean bring it? It was advertised in the newspaper, Mr. Vice-President. [Crosstalk]

[Mr. Vice-President pounds the gavel]

Mr. Vice-President, in 2007, we will continue the initiatives started in 2006, deepening and widening. We will continue the transformation of the police service. The Police Training Academy is due to be completed by the end of the year. The re-branding of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service will continue. The communications network will be modernized. We will continue partnership with communities.

Mr. Vice-President, you will recall last year we had indicated the intention was to put in place a programme that will allow citizens to directly interface with law enforcement. We launched that 555 programme in May of this year. Since the
launch of that 555 initiative, responsible citizens with a sense of duty to community and country can provide the police service with critical information related to criminal activity. The information is provided to specially trained police officers via telephone. These lines are confidential lines with a toll free system from any phone, no tracking or caller ID, no *69, no recording of calls, secure, convenient and professional. To date, since the launch, I am advised that some 97,000 calls have been received, a number which far surpasses the very successful Operation King Fish programme off which we have piggybacked—[Interruption]—King Fish in Jamaica and Trident in the United Kingdom. We have had major successes in narcotics interdiction and very pertinent information relating to homicide has been received.

In 2007, an initiative is also going to be implemented as part of the transformation, which is called: Policing for People. It is the natural nexus of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Transformation programme. It is designed to provide citizens with professional customer-focused services. The police service has to foster a culture that focuses on the aspects of policing that the public values most highly that is, protection of the public, service to those victimized by crime, and energetic initiative in dealing with day-to-day problems that the public asks the police to handle.

The goals of Policing for People are: improved police work habits, improved employee morale, improved quality of police service, increased positive perception of the police, increased public cooperation with the police, reduced fear of crime and reduced crime. Therefore, there must be a strategic reorientation within the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service where officers will be guided by the following attributes: attentiveness, enough officers working to respond to the public’s needs, reliability, every case meets the minimum standards, responsiveness, client-centered services, competence, knowing how to get the job done, manners, police civility towards the public and fairness, unbiased adherence to the laws and regulations by police officers.

Mr. Vice-President, five police station districts have been selected as pilots for the Policing for People initiative; they are: Arouca Police Station, Chaguanas Police Station, Morvant Police Station, San Fernando Police Station and West End Police Station. These stations will be staffed and equipped to ensure that all the requisite resources are at hand. We have identified the minimum number from inspectors, sergeants, corporals, et cetera. Some of the new recruited officers, after they have completed their field officers training, will be assigned to these five model police stations, so that we will be able to judge the ability of these model police stations to provide a higher level of policing to the citizens.
The tangible results expected from this initiative, when the public recognizes the Trinidad and Tobago Policing for People, with these attributes, the public will begin to provide the level of support that an effective police service requires in apprehending criminals and preventing crime. Thus Policing for People will not only provide the public with the kind of police service it desires, it will provide the police with the support they must have if they are to protect as well as serve.

This new cultural orientation that will be the object of this part of the transformation will be to instill in officers the will and skills needed to police for people.

Mr. Vice-President, Sen. Mark, yesterday, raised the question about the implementation of the Police Reform Bill. Let me make a comment on that, please.

11.15 a.m.

When we passed the Police Reform Bills, it was necessary for us to put in place what we referred to as a senior planning group. The senior planning group was to ensure the effective implementation of the legislation. The Ministry of National Security in consultation with the Police Service Commission proposed the establishment of this senior planning group to focus on planning and implementing the various legal, administrative and financial provisions contained in the Bills.

The senior planning group operated on a full-time basis and is comprised of the following: one legal expert—I do not think it is appropriate for me to call the names of the persons—one financial expert, one human resource expert, one law enforcement professional and one law enforcement professional with administrative skills.

Mr. Vice-President, unfortunately it took us a while in order for us to get the required persons to take up the responsibility and as a result, the group only came into being on July 24, 2006 and held its first meeting on July 31, 2006. The intention is that we felt it should have taken us no more than six months in order to make sure, as I said, that all the administrative, legal and regulatory matters required, making sure that once the Bill was fully implemented that it could take off. Also the question about the regulations—remember there were no transitionary regulations—we also needed the regulations in order to enact the Bill.
The mandate of the senior planning group was as follows:

1. To outline the major tasks to be undertaken and to identify key persons in various government agencies and the private sector to perform the specific tasks.
2. To establish various task groups whose members would be full time as needed in accordance with the relevant subject matters.
3. To outline major tasks to be undertaken for the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service to assume its new responsibilities.
4. To review the consultants’ proposals in respect of the governance structures which constitute the Ministry of National Security, the Police Service Commission and the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, and to make appropriate implementation strategies.

Mr. Vice-President, the first interim report was provided to us on October 11, 2006 and the senior planning group expects that by November this year, they will be able to complete all their work and as a result the implementation will, in fact, take place. That is the status of the question of the implementation of the Bill. [Interruption] But you needed to get—

Mr. Vice-President, I spent some time dealing with the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, as I said, the primary agency responsible for law enforcement. The Government recognizing that it would take some time to get the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service up to the level which is required, and since I have said in this Senate we cannot ask the criminals to wait until the police service reaches a certain level, we had to take some direct action. This resulted in the establishment of the Special Anti-crime Unit of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Vice-President, as you are also well aware, the Special Anti-crime Unit comprises personnel from the police service, the defence force, the prison service and now joined with personnel from the United Kingdom law enforcement, some 34 law enforcement officers.

The Special Anti-crime Unit of Trinidad and Tobago (SAUTT) is ensuring that the UK officers provide not only training capabilities as it builds the capacity of law enforcement, but that there is an added dimension. Whereas before you had individuals going for courses and normally when you are leaving they would ask what you are likely to do when you get back home, the advantage of the law enforcement personnel being here is that they are able to observe and see how the training is actually implemented. So there is a classroom dimension of the training and development and there is also the on-the-job aspect of the training and development.
Mr. Vice-President, it is going to prove to be most effective in terms of cost, this decision that this Government could have made in terms of utilizing the services of the UK law enforcement officers. And, of course, when they first came there was this big hue and cry as it related to their compensation and I think we have explained it. Trinidad and Tobago is not unique in this regard in terms of using foreign law enforcement personnel and as a result there is a difference because you have to recruit them from home. You have to pay them as if they are home, and as a result we are sure that the technological transfer that we expect will take place is, in fact, taking place.

We indicated when we came to this honourable Senate that we were looking at two years in the first instance and with a third year as a possibility because by then we expect that our law enforcement capability will be up to mark.

Mr. Vice-President: Hon. Senators, the speaking time of the hon. Senator has expired.

Motion made, That the hon. Senator’s speaking time be extended by 15 minutes. [Hon. Dr. L. Saith]

Question put and agreed.

Sen. The Hon. M. Joseph: I thank hon. Senators for allowing me to continue. So that we are making use of the foreign capability but the foreign capability is not a replacement for the local capability because at the end of the day, we are going to be ultimately responsible for the level of law enforcement necessary. We are placing a lot of responsibilities on our local law enforcement to be able to benefit tremendously from that capability that is currently with us.

Let me move on to the defence force. One of the things I think that this honourable Senate needs to be aware of is that in most countries of the world there is now what is referred to as a strategic shift of defence forces, moving from defending the nation to what is referred to as securing the nation.

I first heard of it when the United Kingdom said they were moving from defending the realm to the security of the realm. Since we have no realm we have to talk now about securing the nation.

Mr. Vice-President, it requires a greater involvement of the defence force assisting in law and order, ensuring the safety and security of law-abiding citizens, not at the expense of those who want to infringe on the rights of law-abiding citizens. We have also been upgrading and transforming the defence force in order for it to meet those new responsibilities, the regiment, the coast guard, the air guard and so forth.
I spoke earlier about the need for us to have the capability of being able to intercept drug runners and as a result, some time earlier in the year, I also participated in the debate to deal with the question of the OPVs. Once more my colleague on the other side was sensational yesterday when he indicated that he understands that the three OPVs are scheduled to cost some TT $12 billion. Nothing could be further from the truth and, of course, we are used to Sen. Mark’s outlandish numbers.

Mr. Vice-President, let me indicate that, as we speak, negotiations are taking place with the preferred bidder. [ Interruption] I have been advised, and I take advice, that it will be inappropriate at this time to indicate the likely cost because it will interfere with negotiations.

Mr. Vice-President, let me give you and this Senate the assurance that as soon as the negotiations are completed I will come to this honourable Senate and tell you exactly what is the cost. I cannot do it now because like I said—and it will certainly not be $12 billion. I am wondering what Sen. Mark will do when he hears the correct figure for the three OPVs. [Crosstalk]

Mr. Vice-President: Hon. Senators, the Minister has indicated that as soon as the details are available he is going to come to the Senate. Sen. Mark, please. I have to take what the Minister says and if you have further concerns, file a question.

Sen. The Hon. M. Joseph: He does not need to file a question. I have given the assurance to this honourable Senate that as soon as the negotiations are completed I will come to the Senate. Let me indicate, and the records will show, it is a government-to-government agreement. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago is involved with the government of a country as it relates to the question of the provision of the OPVs.

Let me again indicate to this honourable Senate the question of the— [ Interruption]

Mr. Vice-President: Senators, the crosstalk is beginning to escalate and I will have to ask you to desist from it.

Sen. The Hon. M. Joseph: I hope I will get injury time. We have not yet brought the DNA Bill to the Parliament. The DNA Bill is also part of what we had referred to as the crime talks and there was some agreement. We keep our promises. [Desk thumping] There is a promise that says that there is going to be a process and that we are going to follow it as it relates to the question about crime.
As a result of that, my understanding is that the draft DNA Bill is before Members—I do not know which group and soon we ought to be able to get some word as it relates to what is happening.

11.30 a.m.

In the meantime, Mr. Vice-President, it is necessary for us to construct a dedicated DNA lab. That is being done. Because it will take upwards of 18 to 20 months, we are going to use—I do not want to say a trailer, but there are facilities that are available, which we are sourcing and equipping so that as soon as the DNA legislation is passed we will be in a position to implement immediately.

Mr. Vice-President, a brief word on the prison system. The prison system continues its stride toward reformation and transformation through the implementation of programmes that facilitate the fulfilment of its strategic priorities namely, to correct, to protect, to relate and to re-integrate. I am sure that you are aware of some of the challenges that we are facing as they relate to the prison system, as we put measures in place to deal with persons who violate some of the existing rules about prisoners having access to a whole host of things. There is a concerted effort being made to improve the physical facility. We are also making a genuine effort to make sure that some of the illegal activities that are not supposed to be in the prison are not there.

We see from time to time efforts being made to put back in place basic standards of operation because they have been allowed to lapse. People have exploited those weaknesses in our law enforcement in various areas and the aim is to tighten up the law enforcement. Once we talk about tightening up, we talk about putting structures, processes and procedures in place for which, at the end of the day, individuals are required to change how they have been accustomed to do business.

We have also been treating with the whole issue of overcrowding in our prison system. The Maximum Security Prison is now almost fully operational and, as a result, the overcrowding in other parts is now being addressed. There are also moves to increase the expansion of our prison system so that efforts at rehabilitating and re-integrating could take place and we could improve and increase the amount of training. Remember, part of the objective was to reduce recidivism—the revolving door system where you just go in and come out. If while you are there the aim is to rehabilitate to the extent to which we can rehabilitate, we cannot do it in overcrowded conditions, so we are addressing the question of prison reform.
In terms of immigration, we had indicated the intention to introduce machine readable passports before the end of this year. We are well on our way as far as that is concerned. We are also well on our way to meeting the requirements for Cricket World Cup 2007.

Finally, let me say something on the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Management (ODPM). It is a pity that my colleague is not here. ODPM has replaced National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) and it is not a name change. The ODPM is responsible for leading the national effort in protecting public health and safety, mitigating the impact of hazards on the people, environment and the economy, restoring essential government services and providing emergency relief to those severely affected by hazards; the principal player in leading the community’s effort in preparing for, responding to and recovering from disasters. It is responsible for mobilizing all the key players and resources to bring about the best [ Interruption ] Somebody wants to—I am watching you, Mr. Vice-President.

Sen. Ali: Mr. Vice-President, I would like to know what budget allocation has been made to ODPM?

Sen. The Hon. M. Joseph: I will provide it subsequently.

Sen. Enill: I will supply that in the winding up.

Sen. The Hon. M. Joseph: The Minister of Finance has indicated that he will help me and provide it in his winding up.

Mr. Vice-President, the engineering battalion of the defence force also plays a key role in the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Management.

I would like to end by indicating to our national population that this is a time for understanding and cooperation as we place the security of our nation above other considerations. Without an environment in which we pursue our legitimate activities without fear of criminal interference, Trinidad and Tobago will never realize its full potential. Only when we manage crime effectively will we take our place among the developed nations of the world with our citizens experiencing that sense of security, which is indispensable to the creation of wealth and the enjoyment of the spiritual and material fruits of their labour. This Government is committed to that.

Sen. Ato Boldon: Thank you, Mr. Vice-President. It is my pleasure to join this debate. Every year many of us make New Year's resolutions. Correct? We think of how we would like to see ourselves in the future; where we want to be and how to improve. We try to adopt new habits so that we can be better the following year than we were in the year previous.
Unfortunately, as many of us here would admit, those resolutions do not always become fulfilled. We fall short. Resolutions, sometimes, if we make them on January 01 and we get to the 15th and we are still hanging on, we are doing well. When a government does not come good on its New Year’s resolution, however—which, if we are honest, is what the budget represents every year; these are the Government’s New Year’s resolutions—the repercussions are often very severe.

This year, in the budget, specific mention was made of the Government’s intent to protect this country's most vulnerable citizens. I would say that the voiceless children, who are being physically and sexually abused, represent that same group of citizens. We have heard various contributions today and yesterday where we were told constantly of how bountiful a time this is in Trinidad and Tobago. I believe that any government that wants to can make anything a priority. Where does this group of citizens lie in this Government's priorities?

When we look back at 2006, it will be impossible to escape a very sad reality. Children are under siege in our country. When I mention the names Sean Luke and Akiel Chambers, who was a victim in 2005 [Interruption] —you all should know [Laughter]—it will conjure up—you know the two names, though—Mr. Vice-President, some of the most painful memories in our country's recent history. There were many other high-profile cases that generated media interest and outrage from the community. In other words, these matters are of high priority to the community at large.

I joined with the community in protest over the actions of many of these heinous acts. We drove with our lights on. We wore black. We walked for peace, but that is not enough. There is an issue that is happening more each day and, according to every single local expert, it is getting worse. Unfortunately in this country, we forget very quickly. We call it the 10-day mentality. We cannot wait until the next one happens, Mr. Vice-President, for us to put pressure on this Government to make the abuse of children in this country a priority.

Mr. Vice-President, we must demand that this Government take action on the issues that are most important to us as a people; not the issues that are most important to them. They represent the people. What is important to us must be important to them.

As I said, we are told time and again that this is a time of great resources in our country. If they want to, they can make this the highest priority. Instead, what do we have? Lots of controversial spending. I was not aware that this country’s
citizens were clamouring for a $15 billion rail system, but we are going to get it anyway. It is a question of priorities. It is not, as they have suggested, that people are against spending. We understand that is the Government’s job, the hon. Minister said so yesterday. It is the job of the Government to spend the money. The question is: How are they spending this money?

On the issue of properly protecting our children, they have dropped the ball. They have lost their way. We the people need to demand of them that they get this matter in hand and I will give just how much of a lack of a priority this issue that we have with children in this country is to them. They need to get the matter in hand, because, as Anand Ramlogan declared this year, we have already begun to fail our children.

Hon. Senators: Oo-oo-oo-oo.

Sen. A. Boldon: That is right. I will quote from anybody.

Hon. Senator: Quote from Dookeran, “nuh”.

Sen. A. Boldon: He coming next. [Laughter]

Mr. Vice-President, Sen. Dana Seetahal, S.C.—are you familiar with her—my colleague on the Independent Bench, said this year that this Government has been too complacent, failing to deal with obvious issues of child abuse and neglect, which has been staring us in the face for years.

11:45 a.m.

In other words, this is not a case—as the hon. Senator said earlier when he referred to—of a man deciding one evening to physically assault his wife and the Government, obviously, cannot be held responsible for that. This is not such a case. This has been pushed on the back burner, in terms of the Government's priorities and now we are seeing more and more cases because it has not been dealt with properly for years and years.

Dr. David Bratt, in a column in the Trinidad Guardian in May of this year, said that it is not a good time to be a child in this country. Child abuse is rampant, personalized and institutionalized. We cannot continue to leave the welfare of our children up to the police because we are well aware of the strain that the police are under in simply dealing with the rampant crime in our community. The police clearly have their own issues. We need some concrete plans. We need new thinking, proper consultation with the experts who have dedicated their lives to the welfare of children and then we need to actually demand that this Government
execute the plans and that they spend as much money as they do taking out full-page ads and on things that we did not know that we really needed, to make sure that we have an entity in this country that is dedicated to ensuring that anyone can anonymously report anything they deem suspicious involving a child. This organization needs to be powerful and well funded. As they have told us: “We have the money.”

This administration is not just failing the children, when it comes to identifying abuses against them. Even if someone is convicted, we still have a problem, because they have failed to put some teeth into the laws that have been passed. This past weekend Theresa Hadad, domestic abuse activist and legal professional delivered a presentation entitled: “Caring for Children, a Public Policy dilemma”. I would quote her:

“Local child protection legislation is outdated and failing the country. The laws in our books, relating to sexual offenses against minors, were passed in 1925.”

The year 1925 is not 2020. We are going backwards. She went on to say:

“Although the Act had been amended from time to time, it remained substantially the same as it was 81 years ago.”

The problem is when a report has to be made, if a child is being abused in any way by those closest to him or her, who is going to do that reporting? What happens if this abuse is taking place within the home by a parent or a guardian? This is why, in many other countries, including the United States, there is an agency whereby someone else can report something suspicious that they think is going on in the life of a child. Those who come into contact with the child on a daily basis throughout the course of the day are probably best equipped to do this.

How high a priority are children on the Government's list of priorities? They said in the budget that they are interested in protecting the most vulnerable members of the society. The Children's Authority Act was created and passed in 2002. The last comment that we got from the Government—[Interruption]


Sen. A. Boldon: Thank you for the correction. The last comment we heard from the Government is that the process is still ongoing. How many of us would wait six years to rescue one of our young family members from abuse of any kind? Just think of the many young children in this country who would have had to endure abuse while this Government gets around to it; while they put priority on starting projects that are wasteful and unnecessary.
It is time to wake up to what is happening. A country is often judged by how it looks out for its young citizens. Right now, we are failing many of them. We do not need any more airships or radar systems to detect this problem. The experts have said that this problem already exists. We dishonour the memory of all the young victims that have already paid with their lives, at the hands of those who would choose to violate them, if we continue to ignore this pressing problem. This is not something that is going to get better. It is going to get worse.

**Sen. Jeremie:** Would you? Thank you. The 2000 children's package to which you referred was passed under a previous administration. It is comprehensive in scope, it requires a lot of institutional support and it was unfortunately defective in many respects. What has happened since then—I am making the point because, obviously, you do not know—is that there has been a Family Court and a Children's Committee, which has met and the practical fruit of that is the Family Court, which the Government opened a year and one-half ago. That is really children-centered. Perhaps, you should take a visit to that facility and you will see.

**Sen. A. Boldon:** I am well aware of the existence of the Family Court. The bottom line is that—we see it all the time—anyone can stand up in this august House and say anything. They can drag out the statistics, as we had this morning, about crime and how the people and the figures are wrong because they are, as the hon. Senator said, not folding their arms and that they are doing the best that they can. We are supposed to accept that and ignore what, in fact, on the ground, in the country, are the results. What do the people say? What are the people in this country feeling? I acknowledge the existence of this court. The question then remains: why do things continue to get worse? I do not profess to be an expert about children. When we listen to those who do know, they are the ones who are saying that this problem is getting worse. Whatever they have done, it is not working. You would forgive me, as my colleague said, I am only interested in the results. I am glad to hear of the great grand plans every year. At the end of all of the talk what are the results?

Mr. Vice-President, this is a major pressing problem. The Government needs to act now. Whatever they have done to this point has not worked and this problem will not go away. The budget specifically states that they are interested in protecting the most vulnerable members of society. Here they are and it is getting worse. The Children's Authority, promised by the hon. Prime Minister, will, in his words: “function as a guardian of all the children of Trinidad and Tobago.” That is not a resolution that can be put off for next year’s list.
The thinking that is allowing that kind of behaviour is really only reflective of a wider national move towards people doing whatever they feel, because they do not believe that if they break the law it will affect them.

I always enjoy the contributions of Sen. The Hon. Martin Joseph. I bring him some news. On the ground, what the young people think in the street is that they do not care because they do not believe that there are going to be any repercussions. Why? This is because they do not see any. This Government has proven that it is incapable of enforcing the law. As a result, people who have an option to either go the right way or the wrong way have a very easy choice—I am not going to get caught. The powers that be are incapable of any meaningful prosecution. I am going the wrong way.

One of the things that I enjoy is being able to visit other countries. I have been privileged enough to spend some time in Saudi Arabia, a country which I would be the first to admit, has a wealth of human rights violations.

Sen. Dumas: A country where you cannot live.

Sen. A. Boldon: Yes. Even in a country with that many issues, you can find some good. You can take home some lessons. Every now and then, in Saudi Arabia, you see someone with a severed hand. Saudi Arabia is one of the places where the level of crime and petty theft is low. I am not, as they are suggesting for a second—[Interruption and crosstalk]—I run in a straight line. I do not turn. Mr. Vice-President, despite what the colleagues across the floor are suggesting, I wish to put on record that it is the lesson. [Interruption and crosstalk]

Hon. Senators: What is the lesson?

Sen. A. Boldon: I will get to it if you give me a chance. The lesson is if you enforce the law and people see examples of the law being enforced, it is the best deterrent to crime.

Sen. Dr. Kernahan: That is the point.

12.00 noon

Sen. A. Boldon: So, of course, we have spiralling crime rates in this country, but who do you see being prosecuted? Witnesses are murdered. There is absolutely no form of consequence when someone breaks the law in this country. [Interruption]

Sen. Dr. Kernahan: They break the law with impunity.
Sen. A. Boldon: I will digress from the Saudi Arabia point. [Laughter] The bottom line is that examples must be made. The reason young persons are going the route they are going is that they do not see examples of people who do wrong being punished.

If you look in nature, there are examples all around us. I am a big fan of nature shows on television, and you will see the little lion or tiger cubs playing and frolicking, and when they get out of line they get slapped back into place by their parents. [Desk thumping] I have said it in this House and it is on record, that crime is not just the responsibility of the Government. I have admitted, as I am sure that everyone in here does, that there is a role to be played by the home. However, this Government has taken that and made that into: “We totally absolve ourselves of any responsibility, because it is the fault of the home and the parents why this has dropped on our laps.” When, in fact, it is a relationship which functions in a cycle. It is cyclical. It does.

Sen. Jeremie: Will you give way one more time?

Sen. A. Boldon: No, I am not giving way. Mr. Vice-President, I made mention of the examples in nature. The Government has been so ineffective at prosecuting persons who break the law that it has created a culture of lawlessness in this country. [Desk thumping] There will be no penalty and, as such, I am free to do as I please, and no wonder we are facing record crime numbers every single year.

Sen. Jeremie: On a point of order. [Interruption]

Sen. Dr. Kernahan: What is your point of order?

Sen. Jeremie: Mr. Vice-President, the Government does not prosecute. The Senator is misleading the House. The Government does not prosecute anyone. That is a serious point.

Hon. Senator: That is semantics.

Mr. Vice-President: Please, continue.

Sen. A. Boldon: Of course, he is misquoting me. Mr. Vice-President, thank you. [Crosstalk] I dream sometimes of having a job in this country whereby—I will even accept employment from you—I will start with a small sector in this country, and I will start on the roads, because that is a microcosm of how people feel about the laws of this country. Let me head up a task force, and I am going to have 50 to 100 police officers, and we are going to go out on the roads, and those
who want to drive on the shoulder, litter out of their cars, speed and drive drunk, and go against the light; no problem, but in six months’ time I guarantee you that I will show a decline in all of those offences. Do you know why? People need to feel some consequences for their actions.

There are some persons and, perhaps, even the hon. Senators on the other side, who will tell you no, that is just how we are. For some reason, because we are Trinbagonians, we are somehow predisposed to take shortcuts when it comes to the law, but I know that is not true, because these same persons will leave and go to the United Kingdom and the United States of America and, all of a sudden, they fall in line. They are not speeding; they are not violating any laws. Why is this? This is because in some of these countries there is proper law enforcement, and they know that because there is going to be a repercussion, they are going to fall in line. That is what is absent here. They can attempt to talk over me all they want, but the bottom line is, at the end of the day, when people have a real fear of what is going to happen if they break the law, their actions will change.

Sen. Jeremie: If you had no legs, what will happen?

Sen. A. Boldon: Mr. Vice-President, the difference is that here we are content to allow the Government to say that because it is doing all it can, that is enough. That is the extent of what they claimed that they could do. As the hon. Senator said, it is not as though he is folding his arms and just sitting back and letting it happen. I agree fully; I am sure he is not, but what are the results? What do the numbers say?

Why are all the citizens of this country barricading themselves in their houses earlier on evenings and flying out? Why is that? There has to be a reason for that, and the reason for that is people who break the law do not feel as though there will be any repercussions and, therefore, we are close to anarchy; very close. That is not a word that they like to hear because that sounds like they are not in control; but they are not. [Desk thumping] Everyone knows that the criminals are in control of this country. The criminals run this country. [Desk thumping]

Mr. Vice-President, these promises that we hear every time the budget rolls around do not apply to young persons alone or the criminals alone—the great plans that we have every year for what is going to change. In 2005, I attended the launch of the Sports Company of Trinidad and Tobago. The whole concept of the sports company was and I quote:

To give Trinidad and Tobago athletes an added advantage to compete with the top sportsmen and women in the world.
I sat very encouraged. I have always been an advocate for sports as it relates to delinquent youths, poverty, and to the image of a nation. I was told by the Chairman of the Sports Company of Trinidad and Tobago that the objective of this sports company would be to bridge the technological gap separating Trinidad and Tobago and more developed sporting nations, and to develop infrastructure that would put Trinidad and Tobago on par with such countries.

Here is where we get to the promises. When I joined the Senate in February of this year, there was much reported as to what were the promises, as my hon. colleague said, were broken that led to this decision. You see, they assumed that the promises were to me. The promises were never to me. I simply grew extremely frustrated with a Government and with a ministry that every single year promises the same exact thing and nothing changes, especially when it comes to sports which is one of the few things that absolutely unites, not only this country, but this region and the world. [Desk thumping]

I had a conversation with the chairman at the time and my only question to him was: Is this really going to represent a real change in direction of the thinking of how we approach sports in this country? I was assured that it was; but it was not. I know this because if you look at how the ministry has approached these abundant resources that we have now—the clinical definition of insanity is doing the same thing and expecting a different result. [Desk thumping] You cannot do the same thing year in and year out and expect a different result.

**Sen. Munro:** Tell them that.

**Sen. A. Boldon:** And then you want to talk about crime! Well, it is young persons who are committing these crimes. Maybe if we had a sport ministry that was really serious about putting this country in a 2020 sort of frame of mind when it came to sports, some of these issues would be alleviated. Let me give you an example.

**Sen. Dr. Kernahan:** Give them Ato. [Laughter]

**Sen. A. Boldon:** Perhaps it gets forgotten by the Government, and people who are in a position in power in sports in this country, so I need to say it. You can build 10 Brian Lara stadia, it will not increase the chances of another Brian Lara coming along; it will not. That is a myth. You could build 10 Ato Boldon stadia and that will not change it either. Here is the thing: The people who have already written their names in sports history for this country did not do so because of facilities. This is a Government that is hell-bent on building facilities, and to be quite honest they have done an utterly poor job of maintaining the ones they have
inherited, but they want to build more. [Desk thumping] People succeed because of programmes and coaching, of direction in sports. That is why they succeed. Could you imagine if so many of our past athletes had the abundant resources that this Government now enjoys? They continue to do the same things.

**Sen. Manning:** Mr. Vice-President, on a point of order. I do not know if the hon. Senator on the other side knows what is happening in the school system with respect to physical education and sport. Physical education and sport is now compulsory in the school system. It is now CXC examinable and, therefore, if he would drive around during the day and, especially, on weekends, when he is here, he will be surprised to see what is happening in the Savannah and all the parks in this country—[Desk thumping]—as our young people—starting at the primary level and even younger—are being formed into leagues to ensure that there is a seamless move until we get to the elite athletes. Thank you. [Desk thumping]

**Sen. A. Boldon:** Mr. Vice-President, despite the fact that I do travel a lot, the hon. Minister would be well aware that last year I travelled 70,000 miles in order to visit schools that the Minister oversees; 70,000 miles. [Desk thumping] So, to be quite honest, it is a little insulting for it to seem as though I am out of touch. I have probably visited as many schools as the hon. Minister. [Desk thumping] [Laughter] Not only that, but we have the videotape to prove it. [Laughter] [Desk thumping]

12.15 p.m. But to respond, through you, Mr. Vice-President, they are so concerned with everyone having parks that very recently they were ready to take the one adjacent to their residence in St. Ann's; that is how concerned they are. [Desk thumping] That is the level of concern they have for people having a place to have recreation facilities. It is only after an uproar and the controversy that all of a sudden it was left alone. So I am well aware of exactly where sports fall under this administration; it is not high.

A government cannot support a sport, or an individual, or a team after the success happens or when the success appears imminent; it cannot work that way. The same smiles that greet the victors at Piarco; the people in the suits, those are the same people that should be front and centre when it appears that the campaign is now beginning. The year 2006 would go down as a historic year in this country simply because of how proud the Soca Warriors made us in Germany. [Desk thumping]

In fact, at a time when splashed across the front page headlines were, unfortunately, the issues and the situations relating to young victims of abuse, the Soca Warriors gave this country something to rally around, to unite for and really galvanize the entire country and the region; we had something to focus positive energy on. But I do not, for a second, forget that those same Warriors were left out in the cold for a
very long time by this Government. They were left out in the cold for a very long time, and despite the calls about Mr. Warner, the reality is that that team is Trinidad and Tobago's team and they are the Government of Trinidad and Tobago.

Therefore you will understand, Mr. Vice-President, me being a little uneasy, seeing the reception at Piarco and now all of a sudden, this is the sport-supporting Government—in a second I would get to evidence to the contrary. Sports has never been that high on their list of priorities; do not take my word for it, ask Hasely Crawford. They have never in their history in government put priority on sports or sports people. It is always an afterthought; if you do well, absolutely, we will come and we will smile and we will take the pictures and we will get all the political mileage we can from it, but not until then.

Sen. Dr. Saith: How much money we gave you?

Hon. Senator: "Doh worry, he deserved every cent."

Sen. Dr. Kernahan: This is politics. [Crosstalk]

Sen. A. Boldon: No, I am glad they know how much money I am getting.

Mr. Vice-President: Hon. Senators, whenever you interrupt you are reducing the speaker's time. You have already heard Sen. Mark complain about losing six minutes, do not make Sen. Bolden lose ten.

Sen. A. Boldon: Thank you, Mr. Vice-President. To get back to my original point, we need to be very careful that we do not allow this Government to wildly spend the taxpayers’ dollars on wasteful edifices in the name of sport. It is already a fact that the stadia that are already in existence are being severely underutilized; we have enough already.

It is time to use some of these construction millions to put some real teeth into our sports programmes, especially as it relates to the ambassadors of this country, who in various sports, spread along the disciplines, go out there and fly this red, white and black flag. Take some of these construction millions and develop programmes. The problem that we have right now is that this Government makes grand plans and we are then forced to say, "now what?"

As it relates to the very controversial Tarouba stadium; I think Brian Lara is the best athlete this country has ever produced, but at the same time, what an insult to him that first of all, we decided that because we wanted the support of our Caribbean neighbours that we were not really going to bid against them for the upcoming Cricket World Cup next year, please God. Then that fell through,
and what are we left with now? The dregs! And worse, now the stadium is not even going to factor in. Therefore, the world record holder, hero of the country gets to spend his last few years not playing in front of his home crowd. Why? Because no real thought went into how significant that would be to have something like that here. [Desk thumping]

Hon. Senator: We should have the final say in Trinidad.

Sen. A. Boldon: As I said earlier, when we, as a people decide we want something we can do it. This Government, when they decide you all are getting this, we get it. For some reason they just decided we have other things on our mind and the sports is going to be pushed to the back burner, once again. Now, here we are, the Brian Lara Complex, which depending on who you believe, will cost anywhere from half a million to almost a billion dollars, which mind you, we were told was necessary to be built for us to even have a chance of being able to host any games for the Cricket World Cup.

Sen. Dr. Saith: We never said that.

Sen. A. Boldon: That was said; that was the justification—

Mr. Vice-President: Hon. Senators, the speaking time of the hon. Senator has expired.

Sen. Mark: Mr. Vice-President, I have the pleasure to move that the speaking time of the hon. Senator be extended by a further 15 minutes.

Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh: I wish he had one hour.

Motion made, That the hon. Senator's speaking time be extended by 15 minutes. [Sen. W. Mark]

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. A. Boldon: Thank you colleagues, thank you, Mr. Vice-President. I am not here to only criticize, I would like, before I close, to offer some suggestions, things which are not being done right now even though they have been in the works and have been promised. I need to make it clear that this is not something that I have to read in a paper or ask advice on; this, for all intents and purposes, has largely been my experience. I have had conversations with people who are in power in sport in this country. Promises are made—and not promises to me, or anything to benefit me, my time has passed. I am not concerned with my own person but I know, because I have gone through, the benefit of what sport can mean for a country such as ours, I cannot rest idly while we continue to have the wrong direction in sport.
If you are going in the wrong direction you can never arrive at the target that you set out for, and unfortunately it seems to me that we are continuing in a direction that is going to lead us nowhere. At the end of the day, we are going to have a bunch of money that has been spent; we are going to have beautiful facilities and they will sit there collecting mildew, cobweb and dust. To be quite honest, the average young person on the street does not even have the kind of access that they should to these facilities. So it is not as though all of these communities are going to benefit because these stadia are there, because we have already seen in the past five years that these stadia are very, very underutilized.

Mr. Vice-President, as I said I want to offer a suggestion. The Sports Company of Trinidad and Tobago needs to sit with all of the national sporting associations in this country, knowing that there is going to be some serious capital required, even if it means scrapping the projects that are already planned, in terms of future complexes, stadia. They need to sit and try to meet every reasonable need of each one, because at the end of the day, it is my opinion that even with many of these social programmes that the Government has put forth, if they are in fact executed, even where they may fail, sports will succeed and we need to act accordingly.

Mr. Vice-President, I thank you.

Mr. Vice-President: Hon. Senators, it is 12.27 and we are going to take the lunch break now and return at 1.30 p.m. The Senate will now be suspended for lunch.

12.27 p.m.: Sitting suspended.

1.30 p.m.: Sitting resumed.

Sen. Prof. Ramesh Deosaran: Mr. Vice-President, since—[Desk thumping] Thank you, thank you. I hope I get as big an applause as the last speaker. [Laughter]

Hon. Senator: When you are finished.

Sen. Prof. R. Deosaran: In fact, while we are on that, we have had two very challenging contributions this morning from the Minister of National Security and one from the last speaker, Sen. Ato Boldon. It seems as if Sen. Boldon is following in the footsteps of his leader in the Senate, Sen. Mark, so you have Mark one and it looks as if you are having Mark two in a short while. [Laughter]

I think he has produced some issues that should be responded to by the other side and I hope, perhaps, the Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs should make an appearance because those are very incisive and I think the national community would do well to hear the response from the Government side. I, myself, would
like to express my pleasure at hearing Sen. Boldon as a former athlete, wishing that other athletes should follow in his footsteps as it were. Too many of them fall by the wayside either through charges of drug addiction; cuffing down somebody in a bar; having all kind of incestuous relationships and I think he can continue to lay down that path of exemplary conduct in the Parliament.

Mr. Vice-President, this budget has been described as a do-nothing-budget; it has been described as the most wicked budget. I believe it is one of the most intriguing budgets we have had and if I was a lecturer in economics I would have used this as an example to show how the linearities and the assumptions in orthodox economics fail dismally; both in predicting the result of economic prosperity, and trying to manage inflation which, almost, by random evolution emerges unexpectedly and dramatically even when all the macro fundamentals are properly in place.

It therefore means that we have to have some new thinking in economics both at the academic level and also certainly at the policy level. The latter seems to be one of the missing gaps in this budget speech and that is why I say it remains a very intriguing document. Because the Government itself persists in admitting the question of inflation, food prices and even crime are driven in a negative direction as your GDP goes up and your unemployment goes down. It is a fascinating paradox that we are facing in this country.

There are three directions you can take, Mr. Vice-President, in entering this budget debate. You can do like the Government as it is obliged to do, defend, explain and express hope for the future. Or you can do as the Opposition as they are also obliged to do, to condemn almost everything in the budget, professing that they can certainly do better in the future. But in-between these two forces there is the citizen looking on for a better life; for a safer community, both personally and in his or her home. I believe I fall in that third category.

The person who presented the budget in the Lower House provided us with a fascinating experience which we would have been able to do without had it not been for having live broadcast of Parliament in our homes—most homes that is. It was an experience that I hope Tobagonians will soon enjoy, since I understand from my colleague, Sen. Dr. Mc Kenzie that they do not have the benefit of that broadcasting experience. If it were, people would have seen you, majestically presiding, very fairly, diligently, and they would have heard my friend from Tobago, Sen. Dumas, likewise, and of course my dear colleague, Sen. Dr. Mc Kenzie contributing to national development in the Parliament.
If I might say, Mr. Vice-President, from what I have been hearing, this live broadcast is causing its own political magic from those who are tuned to it regularly. Of course, you do not have to thank me for it; you could thank the Leader of Government Business and Leader of the Opposition who have been inspired to join hands in what will remain a celebrated achievement in this parliamentary session. [Desk thumping]

The gentleman, the Prime Minister, was like a wizard, especially in his winding up that we witnessed. The devastating blows he delivered on the political opposition will be remembered on live television for many a year to come. He deserves to be called a wizard because as he said one of the Opposition's persons wrote him asking him to change the Standing Orders to accommodate speaking engagement and then the Prime Minister said he cannot do any magic. But I believe he was requested to do so because the way he moved like a wizard, I have said so before, and I learnt as well that this is his 35th year in dealing with budgets in the country which is an achievement I must say for his own political party. Thirty five years in politics, consecutively, is a remarkable achievement in the politics of this country.

I am taking time to allude to these important trends because it seems as if the political architecture of the budget is not properly in place in terms of representing the views of the national community. It seems that defect starts from the structure of the political parties we have; something which I believe should be attended to in terms of, one: Succession within parties, so when a leader leaves or is indisposed the succession should be naturally inserted as we have in other modern democracies—England for example. We already know the people who would likely be the next Prime Minister, without, of course, subverting the democratic process. That creates stability. In other words, it is a point I would elaborate on later much more, if you do not have in the Westminster system party democracy and party stability it means the system as a whole suffers from an important defect.

Last night I was preparing my notes and my lights went out very early and I slept for more than four hours; still I managed to get my notes together. But I am looking for a budget, not one of perfection, Mr. Vice-President. There could never be a perfect budget. There could never be a perfect public policy because public policy has to do with allocations in a multi-interest community where somebody's interest has to be sacrificed to show growth and benefit to another interest. But the larger interest of course, must always be the greater number of people for the greater good. So I expect reasonableness in the policies to which I would allude as I proceed and I would also try to insert or put upon the budget a human face between the GDPs, the per capita income, the inflation and the employment figures, a human face.
Because in the face of the macro-fundamentals which look quite impressive, I must admit; there is also an underground economy in this country which we speak little about. Apart from the casinos having some alleged connection to money laundering; drug trafficking is another one; you have a fleet of PH cars all over the country; you have illegal vending and you have squatting for which there is no legitimate formal trading of currency or even in terms of tax structure. When you add it up, you have a $5 billion underground economy in this country and that is the estimate that we have come to at the University of the West Indies. A $5 billion, annually, black market economy, as it were. That is a significant distortion to all these figures we have been hearing about and perhaps it might cause you to wonder, how come the prosperity is at one end and the dislocation in terms of poverty, hardships and the delivery of services are not being properly met; this is one particular reason.

Mr. Vice-President, it is true that the Government, about two years ago, embarked on what are three impressive strategies for economic development. One was to liberalize the economy, relaxing price controls being one; another one was to stabilize the economy by having proper fiscal policy which would then be connected to the Central Bank’s monetary policy. That went well for a time. The final one was institutional strengthening which had to do with the direct delivery of service market forces and so on.

Mr. Vice-President, it is time to rethink numbers one and two, particularly. Prices have gotten away, as if according to Sparrow, “capitalism gone mad”; and we will come to that. I really wanted to speak a bit more about what is the number one issue in the country; crime and security, but I would divert some of my time to this very serious issue; this crippling issue, especially for the underclass, the working class and the poor—food prices and inflation. Especially when the Government should ask itself, and I hope in Cabinet some Minister asks of another one: why is it the 25 per cent allocation to all the social sector programmes is not producing results as fast as they ought to come? Because at this point we have to realize a very important point in running a country and sometimes I wonder if the Ministers themselves who cross the line to persuade and to bring hope recognize that there are limits to government in a democracy.

There are limits to which a government could change family life; there is a limit to which government could stop you from drinking rum, no matter how high you raise the price; and there is a limit to which a government could stop you from smoking and gambling. Even if you close down the casinos you are going to have the resurrection of “whe-whe; when I say “whe whe” I do not mean “whey, whey my MP”. They are looking for their MPs too. I am speaking about “whe
whe” the illegal gambling in Aranguez Savannah, in Curepe and so on. There are limits to which a government can stop those things, so the Government now must pause and reconstruct this ideology. Are you going to be an increasingly welfare state or are you going to allow freedom of choice? As my previous speaker, Sen. Boldon said: “you must also suffer the consequences”, by having a disease, become an alcoholic and all the consequences that flow from that. In addition to the consequences to which he refers that is enforcement of the law and punishment.

That is why this issue of lifestyle and the role of community development and social development are so important. You can allow them to face the consequences but they would return to the State coffers to get treatment; be it AIDS; be it addiction or other such forms of bad lifestyles. So we still have an obligation and the route we have been using, I believe there is no alternative to try and spend the money in the hope that the people so affected will come to their senses to know in the fundamental final sense, your lifestyle and your actions depend on your sense of personal responsibility.

Nowhere in the budget statement—for the third time I am making that point, Mr. Vice-President—have I seen a strong call to the national community—except in terms of crime is everybody’s business—an incisive, penetrating statement from the head of government, that people must now begin to stand the consequences for their own actions. I think a government has to be courageous now and start calling a spade a spade, and the defensiveness could be used for political purposes. But any other government on the other side would have the same problems because these are what you call “systemic problems.”

1.45 p.m.

These lifestyle habits will not change because the government changes. We have to put on the front burner, on the agenda as it were, what are those structural deficiencies what you call systemic problems, that are common to all governments, of all names and all leaders; and what can a government do at the same time in terms of money allocation, money resource allocation, rehabilitation, community work and so on.

I had spoken to Sen. Dr. Lenny Saith two years ago, I thought I persuaded him, he is not here but I would make the remark. When you are coming up with your macro fundamentals, your GDP, your per capita income, debt ratio and so on, it is time this country has an index of what you call the psychological fundamentals, the well-being of people; and if you want to have Vision 2020, a lot of what you call modern democracies do have such an index alongside the
economic indices. The well-being of people, there are about five or six such criteria and measures which could be consolidated into one. So you will also know how people feel in terms of what is offered to them. You will know the distance between the GDP and the ordinary man in the street who will tell you through that quality of life index how he feels, the sense of comfort, the sense of safety and other such things, because it is no good that you have all the money in the world and your safety is in jeopardy. You are in jail because you cannot enjoy the prosperity.

I would like to propose that to the Government once again. It will not damage your credibility; it will not subvert your political chances; it might not look good in the first instance, but at least you would be showing the people faithfully that you want to hear what they have to say and also how they feel and what they think about certain things and you could frame that into a quality of life index.

I keep hearing about this Singapore comparison. Singapore doing this, so we must do that; Singapore is this and Singapore is that, so we must do that. Mr. Vice-President, Sen. Chin Lee can tell you, Singapore is different from here not only now— [Interruption]

Sen. Chin Lee: How can I know that? I am not from there.

Sen. Prof. R. Deosaran: No, he is a travelling Minister. What is the point? [Crosstalk] Your imagination is getting a little too far ahead of yourself. [Laughter] I am talking about the Minister's experience. He may not have travelled as far as Sen. Boldon [Laughter] but at the same time, we have to respect the experience of his visits to South East Asia. What the Prime Minister at that time did with Singapore and let me repeat, he jailed a lot of businessmen, bankers and politicians. He passed a state of emergency and locked up people, left, right and centre. Do we want that to happen, hon. Attorney General?

He put severe restrictions on the press and you could not go in the square and talk and talk about the government this, the government that, they clamped that down too. You could not spit on the pavement; you could not throw a piece of paper on the pavement, that is the Singapore culture that led to what we call them, one of the Asian Tigers. The tigers were not just by fiscal policy and monetary policy, it was challenging and changing the culture of the country, by holding it by its neck and bending it in the direction it is supposed to go.

Now, if you think we should go that route, we could do like the Singapore experience, but if you think that is not an alternative in this land of the free and this fullness of our democracy, we have to choose the other routes in which we are seeing all the difficulties in the world. The lifestyle is difficult to change as I
said just now. So it is the Singapore illusion and I wish we could drop that idea once and for all, and develop ourselves, to what we know about ourselves, and the limits to which we can go in what time frame because that is the real world. If we continue dreaming about Singapore, we will always think that we are failing because it is impossible, since the two systems are so different, to match what Singapore has achieved in the time frame in which they have done it.

There is an alternative route for us and we can do—and I was a bit inspired by my friend, the Minister of National Security, when he ended his speech with a call for collective wisdom and collective effort. But, I have a few other remarks to make about that later on. So I would not go and compare the macro fundamentals and so on anymore, I think those figures are already recited, except to refer to something that the whole world has read about us.

The whole world has read about us, the opinion leaders, senior politicians who read a magazine called The Economist. It says on August 26, 2006, this year—two months, this is hot news—what is the world opinion about us? On page 29, the article starts off, Trinidad and Tobago. Its headline is, very important and I think the Minister in the Ministry of Finance, both of them will be very interested in this headline, “Trinidad and Tobago, a Caribbean tiger.” Very positive. It starts:

“If you fly in Port of Spain at night over the Gulf of Paria, you will see the island of Trinidad, ablaze with lights from roads, suburbs, shopping malls, buildings sites and a necklace of chemicals and steel plants. Cash is pouring into Trinidad. It has become the biggest supplier of liquefied natural gas to the United States…which gives rise to the GDP.”

This is another issue. That GDP as I explained last time is an inflated measure of the island’s domestic prosperity, because it is negatively driven by a lot of expenses and services that have to do with crime. The expenses for crime contribute to your GDP and also there is some money made on site which is exported, that also goes to the GDP. So that issue will have to be properly dealt with and I will agree with my Senator colleague on the left, that we need some new measures of development for countries like ours, this use of industrialized measures really lead us astray and sometimes make us feel worse than we really are.

But, as I proceed they speak about unemployment at 7 per cent from a peak of 22 per cent in 1987; positive things. It goes on to say the biggest worry is crime. There were 390 murders last year in a population of just 1.3 million, anxious middle-class people weigh the risks of a late night journey home. You see how the
balance sheet is working. The quality of life index; personal safety; so we have to know how you balance that equation just as you try to balance a budget. What is the credit side and what is the debit side and how you deal with the debit side. So it goes on to say and the language is one of prosperity but on the other hand, one of doom and pessimism.

It continues:

“Flush with revenue, the government has gone on a spending spree on free higher education and skills training, as well as roads, a commuter railway, low cost housing and national cancer treatment programme and leisure facilities. It seems to find such mega projects easier to implement than reforming routine public services.”

It did not stop there.

“But the biggest threat to prosperity may be Trinidad's fractious politics which mirrors the island's racial divide.”

And it goes on to talk about the politics of race. That is why if we are speaking about culture, I believe the Government should rethink its policies on culture in terms of financial allocation because every time Divali comes, Emancipation Day comes, Eid comes, whatever function it is, the Minister in the centre always gets blame and the allocation is always looking not enough because they say last year you gave somebody else more and you are giving me less. Could we not retreat from that cultural confusion as it were and reconstruct the allocation of grants through a more independent body, through which you apply and so on?

If that is not the solution, I do not think we could continue to live year after year, apart from the mess of expenditures and grants at Carnival time, buildings on the highway for years at vast expense to the taxpayers; $6/$7 million lying idle as you go up to the airport and you give it to the Carnival people who do nothing. If those things have political implications, so be it, but you can no longer disregard that the taxpayer needs value for his or her money. And this matter of cultural confusion, every time it comes for festivals, give them the grants, but maybe, it will do well for the politicians of whatever hue or whatever party, because I am sure it will distress the particular Minister to know that no matter what he or she is doing, there is still this lack of appreciation, as necessary as his or her function might be.

So, that is an important point because this race issue will not go away, it will continue. It will resurrect at certain auspicious times as you know and it is better you clear up the role of government in culture for this particular reason. I am sometimes very embarrassed as a citizen of this country, very embarrassed in this context, to witness and sometimes hear, when my Prime Minister goes to a
function to be insulted along the lines I just spoke about, how there is oppression and how this group is taking advantage of that group, and the distinguished Prime Minister sits there and has to listen to this as an invited guest. Mr. Vice-President, these are issues, these are civic values that we really have to extricate ourselves from. That is just one example, but I can go on to give other examples.

I want to come to this inflation food price issue really, because that is the grumbling you hear in the taxis, on the television, talk shows, even by people who know little or nothing about it. You really have to make some hard decisions as a government in this respect. First, we say the Central Bank and the Government's budget statement says, well, it is due to global increase in oil prices. They also say a lag in local agricultural production; they also say the reduced food imports from the Caricom region. But I will ask this question; we have to ask this question: How come the pressure from those three conversion forces apply so much more heavily on this particular country and not on the Bahamas, not on Belize, not on Barbados and so on? We are even worse off on food price increases than Haiti. I mean, I cannot put it any more emphatically and if my decibels are a little too overbearing, I have to use them because it is a very important point.

We are, in terms of food price increases, worse off than Haiti. So I come back now to the underlying issue in this debate; what are limits of Government in a democracy in such a matter? So you have the issue of lifestyle and limits: if you go too hard into people's bedrooms and you jail them for drinking too much rum, you have another problem; you put the issue dramatically—cannot have three wives, things like that; or you cannot watch pornography and so on. There is a limit to which a government can intervene in people's personal or private life, which is where lifestyles are found.

2.00 p.m.

We will witness the hue and cry about Government's treatment of casinos; even with matters similar to that, I could tell you the response. People do not want to understand if it is harmful to others; it is part of the selfish nature of things around us. Central Bank, to start at the top, as it were, made a very important statement. The Central Bank, in trying to curb this inflation matter, spoke about the measures that should be used.

It was very unfortunate, as sometimes is the case, that the Governor of the Central Bank, Mr. Ewart Williams, got a lot of licks for it, because what the media, perhaps, picked up in isolation and what the labour unions picked up was only the section about wage increases. This is what the gentleman at the Central Bank, with a flair of responsibility had to say. He said that in Trinidad and
Tobago, inflationary pressures have arisen from sources other than excess demand. That was the point. That is why Dr. Rowley was wrong. The inflation here is not due mainly or purely or largely to excess demand, but he gave a whole economic definition of inflation which was really not quite on the mark.

The Central Bank Governor also said that effective inflation control required that tight monetary policy be supported by fiscal discipline, wage restraint, exchange rate stability and very importantly, measures to increase agricultural output so as to moderate the rise in food prices. He left out "exorbitant, inflationary price mark-ups”. I think that is an essential ingredient in the situation we face today.

While you might blame a government and believe that it is spending too much, at the same time, there is enough proof to suggest that there are inflationary mark-ups by some sectors of the business community in this country. [Desk thumping] It is not something people like to hear and a lot of people, presumably, apparently, the Government too, are afraid to speak about it, because that is an important political and, perhaps, financial constituency. That is why I speak as a citizen, lodged between the Government’s obligation to defend the budget and the Opposition’s obligation to criticize most things in it.

I think I speak for thousands of people in this country who are fed up with these high mark-ups in the groceries. You see a tin of that one day and the next two days the price goes up exorbitantly. A country cannot sit by and see a government not doing anything about a matter like that. We would not be a Caribbean tiger anymore. The country and the Government would look like a pussycat in the face of such social and economic perversity.

Of course, we know that food prices have gone up about 23 per cent from the last report we had from a previous occasion, but the question we have to face once again is what the Central Bank inflation report said. From 2004 to 2005, food prices in Trinidad and Tobago increased by 15 per cent; twice the Caricom average. Caricom is facing the same three pressures you are talking about; how come our suffering in food prices and inflation is so much greater than our comrades who are in the Caribbean Single Market and Economy (CSME) with us? That is a very important question. This is why I said that this increase was worse than the one we had in Haiti. The Bahamas is 2.3 per cent; Belize is 4.7 per cent, and even Barbados, without oil, gas and methanol, is 6 per cent.

Mr. Vice-President, the story does not end here. The story is a frightful one; where you have to look forward to a higher sense of responsibility from the business sector or something has to come from them to explain why this thing is
so, apart from blaming the Government, perhaps, with some justification, about overspending. The business community keeps harping on the Government about overspending; this is something I want to spend a few minutes on as well.

Let me just refer to page 97 in the budget speech of 2006. I counted there more than 30 items in which the Government reduced tariffs. Meat, from 15 per cent to 10 per cent; lamb, from 15 to 10 per cent; goat meat—not everybody eats goat meat—cheese, milk, wheat, peanut, cooking oil and mixed vegetables; basic foodstuff. Over 30 items reduced, just about a year ago. And you want to tell me, at the same time, these mark-ups are exceeding their reasonable limits and ignoring this, as if that was a giveaway to the business community and not to be justifiably, properly and fairly passed on to the consumer, which was, I believe, the original intention of the Government? [Desk thumping]

Mr. Vice-President, I am so angry about this; you would not imagine. Do you know why? Because the Chamber of Commerce, what you call "the Westmoorings Club", wants to cuff the Government, [Laughter] figuratively speaking, over crime. Sometimes I am disappointed to see the Minister of National Security always jumping when they make a remark.

**Sen. Joseph:** I do not jump.

**Sen. Prof. R. Deosaran:** Well, you fly then, because something happens down there when I see you responding. They have to now give a reason; just as they want the Government to give a reason, why the foodstuff has gone up by so much. [Desk thumping] They have to give a reason. In fact, do you know what is happening in this situation with the economy, with the role of business? It would make Karl Marx laugh, because that is what he predicted: the exploitation of opportunity by the business class.

That is why Thomas Hobbes was also right: Left to themselves, interest groups would be brutish and selfish. It is a disappointment to one of the founders of economics, Adam Smith, because while he really spoke about the invisible hand of the marketplace, meaning that there would be restraint and competition evenly balanced, and supply and demand in the equation to even out things, he also said that the commercial sector should have a conscience; what he called "moral sentiments"; to the point where he wrote a book called *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* to follow and accompany the other book he wrote, *The Wealth of Nations*. This cannot be a free for all in the economy. Business must have a proper, responsible role to play in helping to keep food prices down.

I note what the Prime Minister said; that if this situation goes on for long he would take certain steps. I am aware that a lot of businessmen work hard: nightclubs, housing development, the agencies, accounting companies; all
different things. They work, not 8.00 to 4.00, but weekends, overnight. I know that; but there is an issue where those with good conscience in the business community must also come forth and speak about the ethics of the profit margin as well. Otherwise, I believe the Government, the Minister of Trade and Industry, the Prime Minister, will have to take definite steps on behalf of the poor people of this country.

The situation has gone beyond the poor. The salaries of the middle class have been subverted too and it is reaching the upper classes sooner than later. It is not only a matter of paying high prices; it is the whole unethical aspect of the issue, that when you have an opportunity, you want to beat the public to death by marking up the price because nobody could control you at the present time. I do not like it. I think it should be tackled. Government should intervene.

I would suggest that Government intervene by first calling urgently what you call "tripartite talks"—there is not much you can do; you cannot lock them up yet—labour, business and the Government. Tell them frankly and squarely, "Let us determine what is a reasonable wage and a reasonable price mark-up", and set some gross standards, at least, temporarily and give the business community about a year to clean up their act with some measurable indices inserted therein.

For this reason, I also suggest serious consideration to a prices commission; not merely to restrict the inflow of goods, but, in the first instance, to trace the value of that product from where it leaves, where it comes to the port and when it reaches the shelf; somebody must monitor that adventure of those highly priced commodities. A prices commission is now necessary. I am sure labour would follow the business example. If business says, "Yes, so and so is so and so", the labour movement might be encouraged to follow suit and be inspired. They should also talk about a reasonable wage structure.

The business community also has to monitor itself; and the Prime Minister should tell them so. How come in this country, which is so advanced in manufacturing and business, we do not have a Better Business Bureau? Why does the business community not open a business bureau in San Fernando and one in Port of Spain, rather than our rushing to the Minister of Consumer Affairs every morning or writing these long letters? You just send your complaints to the Better Business Bureau which, by its self-monitoring mechanism, would contact their fellow business house and get the matter remedied properly and fairly. That would bring some better reputation to the business community.

Before my time runs out, there are two issues I want to put on the Hansard. When the Telecommunications Act came before this Senate, the then Minister was Ralph Maharaj; it was a different government. In fact, when I speak about
systemic problems, I know what I am speaking about. I have been here to see three governments come and go and I have seen very little change in dealing with these structural, systemic issues. Why? Because of the limits to the government’s reach, both by statute and public policy.

When Ralph Maharaj was here, I pressed him to put in a section whereby these telecommunications companies, radio and television too, would have to appear in public and defend their price structure or their increases. So you would not be able to jack up your price for cable overnight, especially when the service was bad and, quite arbitrarily, get people to pay. So we had section 15(10) put in, after some wrestling and so on; I would not say the whole story. I was speaking about services over which the government had some obligation to ensure were properly delivered. I want to ask the Telecommunications Authority and the line Minister, to make sure that this section is activated, because a lot of people are suffering from cable television services.

2.15 p.m.

The section says:

“The Authority may conduct public hearings in respect of applications for concessions for public telecommunications services and broadcasting services, when such applications are made in the first instance or subsequently at five years intervals when such services are in existence.”

I know people who have their cable TV broken down for weeks and when I check with the cable company’s personnel they tell me there are 4,000 complaints lined up in the office which is called Columbus. Columbus reached Trinidad from Spain faster than the servicemen could reach from the cable company to one’s home. [Laughter] And there are only 16 servicemen available. If you want to talk about the economics of profitability, that is all right, but service must come first and if the service is not properly done, I want the Telecommunications Authority to invoke section 21 subsection (10).

Look at this letter: “Things not flowing with cable service”. This is just one example. They have changed their name from Columbus to Flow TV and as soon as they changed the name, things stopped flowing. [Laughter]

Mr. Vice-President: Hon. Senators, the speaking time of the hon. Senator has expired.

Motion made, That the hon. Senator’s speaking time be extended by 15 minutes. [Sen. Dr. E. Mc Kenzie]

Question put and agreed to.
Sen. Prof. R. Deosaran: Thank you, Mr. Vice-President. You see there is nothing like transparency, it clears the air. They might have reasons for the difficulties but it is good to know at a public hearing what the reasons are. That is all we are asking, and we will go home satisfied knowing that the reasons no longer apply, because in the next six months, so and so will happen. We would get digital TV or whatever may be better. We do not know. It is very dangerous to keep the public in the dark when services are not efficient. It compounds the problem. It is not what the Government calls client-centred services, customer services and so on. Enough said on that. There are other things about the cable, but I think time is of the essence here. My next issue is really the trains.

Mr. Vice-President, let me tell you the truth about the train. Whenever I go abroad, whether it is Germany, London, Canada or the United States of America, the greatest pleasure I have is to take a ride on a train. Not only because of the aesthetics of it, but it takes you quickly from one point to another in a relatively safe way. It trains us in punctuality in many things. One of the saddest things that happened in this country about 40 years ago was to uproot the train lines in an arbitrary fashion.

The report that went with the recommendation was very inadequate. Eric James I believe at the time was in charge of the railway, the unions played some politics and they surrendered and we have never recovered from that. Rio Claro to San Fernando lost its connection, the rural areas, Sangre Grande, became dispossessed, the traffic jams, and lack of transport for foodstuff and if you really want to know what helped to kill agriculture in this country, it is the lack of proper transportation. Again, I want to cut a long story short and say I support the introduction of a rail system in this country. [Desk thumping]

The $15 billion which we hear about could be revisited, but in principle, if it is $15 billion—


Sen. Prof. R. Deosaran: “Well, ah get ketch.”

Anyhow, briefly, I am for the train. I can give a million reasons because since 10 years ago—and the staff in my office can tell you—I am saving a file called “The train” because I know one of these days, I would have to come to Parliament and raise it as a motion. In fact, I am on a roll now because the last motion I raised, the one with the broadcasting passed. So perhaps I can try my luck again and I may get through. It is at home, but time is of the essence. I support the train.
Sen. Dumas: Good support, come again.

Sen. Prof. R. Deosaran: Those people who talk in such a way, I do not think they appreciate the value of the train however configured, especially in light of the traffic conditions we have. The train line will be a separate line, if it is a mini rail or whatever it is, could be on top, but we really need additional modes of transport in addition to the water taxis and the ferries.

By the way, the ferry should not only be from San Fernando or from Point to Port of Spain, it should be around the island making trips to Tobago and let us live like a country—Trinidad and Tobago—with ports of call at each district. What is wrong with that and why the objection? Expand, develop towards Vision 2020. Let us be elastic, thoughtful and creative, and that is one area I think we could pay attention to.

The issue related to prices and these services and so on, is really the agricultural dilemma. Before I proceed, there is another issue that bothers me. I went to the Arima Licensing Office to renew my driver’s permit, I really thought I was in a dog kennel.

The office is so congested, so unsanitary, both for the public and especially for the public servants, and I want the Minister in the Ministry of Finance to take this very seriously because they wanted to protest and I spoke to one of the officers. I would not call her name, and I promised her if the Minister does not do it before, I would try to remind him.

I will cut out the Hansard section which I believe would record what I am saying and send it to them. They want to protest because if you see the boxes piled up with people's forms and applications. They are cardboard boxes and if somebody lights a match by accident outside—the way they are congested like rats inside that premise at the Arima Licensing Office—there will inevitably be fatalities because they will all be scrambling out, about 50 of them, through a little Mickey Mouse door like this. I need to present the issues like this because I have to grab the people's imagination and I would like the Minister in the Ministry of Finance, whilst he is refurbishing police stations and so on—

Sen. Enill: That is the Ministry of Works and Transport.

Sen. Prof. R. Deosaran: I know you have a plan through the UNDP Office, I know all that, and the conflict of interest in terms of getting contracts smoothened out, but there are priorities in the meantime. How long will they wait? We all have issues that concern the public welfare and these are things you should take up, like the food prices.
The man in the licensing office who goes at 8 o’clock with his form to get it after 1.00 p.m. because of the line and congestion, and the worker who works diligently I must say. I do not know how they have that patience to work in that condition, but they diligently do their work. Patience has a limit and I think it would be nice for them to know that the Government is responding.

What do they know about the GDP? What do they know about bauxite and the gas price and so forth? They know about the comfort, the convenience and having a comfortable existence to trade and get their matters renewed.

The exam section is the same thing. That is why I support the building programme of the Government—[Desk thumping] except the buildings are important for the comfort of public servants and apart from the hotel which is built on the forefront, there are too many public servants working in very dilapidated, congested conditions and the Minister of Public Administration and Information should know that.

So if you are building these offices to bring relief, it is a pleasant gesture and a worthy accomplishment. [Desk thumping] The concern is this; you have gone ahead with those buildings, but you are going to aggravate your transportation and traffic problems. From now on, the Government should make a solemn vow having heard the public view on this, to build all other big buildings in another part of the country. [Desk thumping] It would have many benefits. It will bring country into town psychologically. That distance about country bookie and living in rural areas, this country is too small to have any isolated rural communities. The same thing goes for Tobago.

All new buildings should now be built outside of Port of Spain, and the reasons are obvious, I mentioned one or two, but there are more, there are also useful governance issues. You will absorb the employment from the particular area. People would not have to travel so far. Many things would become easier; your marketing would be easier, people would have lunches in those areas, open up city centres, you will be making here a mecca and in the next 10 years you might hear Singapore talking about the Trinidad model. [Laughter]

Hon. Senator: Yes, why not.

Sen. Prof. R. Deosaran: That is how I believe we should think. We have the capacity and the resources, but sometimes I feel we lack the ideas.

Returning to the farming business. Eight large farms, that is a very good start, Mr. Vice-President, because it is a matter of economy of scales. Agriculture could not be resurrected, or an aggressive push could not be made into agriculture by
having scattered small farms all over the place. The report from the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) should be laid in Parliament. That is a very important document. Let us all be sensitized and committed to the large farm concept and see how best we can reshape it to suit our needs.

The idea of bringing ECIAF and developing it is a commendable initiative and I must commend the Minister for taking that particular step—[Desk thumping] and link it to the University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT) as a research component, or continue the applied nature of the training at Centeno. Let it feed into the farms and your YAPA, the youth agricultural programme, bring them in that too and create a coordinated network to build agriculture. It can be done. We have not done it, but it can still be done especially when you are going to protect the small farmers in case the food prices lapse, there is a guarantee to fill the gap.

Mr. Vice-President, I hear about ochreos, potatoes, yams, dasheen, and lentil peas from the Prime Minister’s mouth. Well, he might be a dedicated vegetarian, but I ask what about dairy farming and animal farming? I would like to see those farms include animals too, livestock.

When you have workers in these large farms you are talking about praedial larceny. Every Sunday meat on the table would be assured and I would not tell you the meats they would use. That is a problem in many of these areas. While I am on farming, you know we had a place called Mappa Valley? We had farms and agricultural stations at Cantaro. Those things are now almost dead. We used to get nice Julie mango and avocado plants from these nursery centres. All those things are dead. Whose fault is it?

Sen. Munro: The PNM.

Sen. Prof. R. Deosaran: That is why I say we have some systemic problems in this country that need to be attended to way and beyond which party is in office, and that is what we have to dedicate ourselves to following on the words of the Minister of National Security about this collective effort.

I had something on crime, education, and family life, but I believe my time is running out. The whole family life I must say is falling apart; we are having a crisis in the East-West Corridor with the young people. I think in the next seven or eight years the youths of African descent will create an explosion in the East-West Corridor if certain things are not put in proper place as compensatory mechanism, and I am telling you so because I have been speaking with them face to face for the last three weeks to find out how they feel. And even though the
opportunities are there, we have to construct a bridge between their aspirations and the opportunities. They are not aware of them. They have to be guided, they have to be shown some career goals, otherwise this thing will explode.

So Mr. Vice-President, in closing I have my last clipping from Sen. Conrad Enill where he told us that budgets would no longer be election budgets. That is a very commendable statement; that is, that budgets should be responsive to the needs at hand and not be inflated by unrealistic promises and other magic propositions.

Thank you.

2.30 p.m.

The Minister of Local Government (Sen. The Hon. Rennie Dumas): Mr. Vice-President, the lesson that we were just given by the goodly Senator is the way I would like to start, suggesting that I am sure that a lot would have been learnt, and the third posture that he took is quite interesting and informative. I am certain that it stands by itself. In the examination of the budget from his wealth of experience and knowledge as he has demonstrated, I think we have all learnt something from that. Unfortunately, I have to contrast it with what I heard before. Certainly, if I go through the contributions made by the other Senators from yesterday and today, one could not help but note that according to another Independent Senator, nothing that is happening in this country is to the credit of the Government and nothing that is likely to happen is supposed to take us any further along the road to development that we have visualized and are seeking to have put in place.

I am suggesting that that view is as bad as you could have and, therefore, we may need to lend the Senator some glasses, whether they are political or conceptual. Certainly, those glasses could afford the opportunity for seeing other than gloom and doom in the history and development of Trinidad and Tobago.

We have been in this place about four years under this Government; this is the fifth presentation, I think, and, certainly, a lot of what has happened is to the credit of the Government. I just heard an experienced gentleman who has lived in this country for a long time, whose responsibility it has been to examine what we are doing and what has been developed, say that he has seen a lot of positives in the future of Trinidad and Tobago. I am quite happy to have my children here and to understand that there is hope for them and for all our children in the future development of Trinidad and Tobago. [Desk thumping]
The speaker before that—you know, there is a saying that we have a way of using language that says: “You farse.” We know that the Senator is a “fas” fellow.

**Hon. Senator:** He has world records.

**Sen. The Hon. R. Dumas:** I want to suggest, unfortunately, that where we are sitting today, the only record we can give him is that he has been disqualified. He has had three false starts and, therefore, cannot stand in the running for the discussion today. [*Desk thumping*]

You see, when he says that the children are not being treated with by this Government and we have paid no attention to the interest of the most vulnerable, I think he ignored the fact, fully, that the first responsibility for children lies with their parents. It is the training, the development, the guidance, the organization and cooperative development systems that you put in place that have a chance of protection of children in the first instance, and the education and training in the second instance.

I am suggesting that just as he was trained and somebody took responsibility for him—I heard in fullness of praise of his father in previous times—that that responsibility of the parent lies with all of us. If he was listening, he would have also heard about all that has been happening in every system of Government, whether it is in the development of the safety of the pre-schools that we have set up, the primary school security systems, the homework centres, the support system for parents, the community programmes up and down the country that have been put in place, I am sure that the goodly Senator would come to a different conclusion than the one he came to. [*Desk thumping*] That was false start number one.

False start number two: Criminals running the country. I would have let it pass if we were not now being placed in the living rooms of every citizen of this country.

**Sen. Mark:** No, no, not everybody.

**Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh:** Eighteen per cent.

**Sen. The Hon. R. Dumas:** We take care of ourselves. Channel 5 re-broadcasts what is critical, like this contribution that I am making now. [*Laughter*] [*Desk thumping*]

**Sen. Mark:** Nice one.
Sen. The Hon. R. Dumas: Mr. Vice-President, false start number two: I am suggesting for a person—

Sen. Munro: You have plenty words.

Sen. The Hon. R. Dumas: Wayne, you would not bother me, you know. I am here and comfortable.

False start number two is when you have an individual who is sitting as a Senator, having been placed here by an individual who leads a party who is a convict.

[Expressions of shock and surprise from Opposition Senators]

That is the reality. When you tell me—

Sen. Mark: On a point of order—

Sen. The Hon. R. Dumas: What is the problem? [Crosstalk]

Sen. Munro: Totally out of context. [Crosstalk]

[Mr. Vice-President pounds gavel]

Mr. Vice-President: Please, Sen. Mark, Senators—[Crosstalk]

Sen. Mark: That is before the court. We cannot allow that in this House.

Sen. Munro: Here is not Tobago.

Sen. The Hon. R. Dumas: This is Trinidad and Tobago, not Tobago.

Sen. Munro: This is Trinidad and Tobago, so watch your mouth. Boldface! [Crosstalk]

Mr. Vice-President: Sen. Dumas, I would honestly prefer if you do not be as abrasive as that in your language. In terms of whether—

Sen. Mark: Basdeo Panday is a parliamentarian—[Crosstalk]

Mr. Vice-President: Sen. Mark, allow me, please. In terms of whether the statement is casting an aspersion, I would like to consider it as so and I would ask you to withdraw it, please. [Desk thumping]

Sen. The Hon. R. Dumas: Mr. Vice-President, I withdraw the statement, but I would like to suggest that I was interrupted before my sentence was finished.

Hon. Senators: No, man. [Crosstalk]
Sen. The Hon. R. Dumas: I would just like to indicate to the Senate that I was interrupted before my sentence was finished. Let me make my statement in this way. The leadership of this party has significant issues facing them.

Sen. Mark: You have corruption facing you.

Sen. The Hon. R. Dumas: We are living with it.

Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh: If we tell you about the $1 million in a paper bag—

Sen. The Hon. R. Dumas: But you have done it before. You have gone in the newspapers and said it; you have climbed on the radio and said it. So what is the worry? You did not find it.

Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh: In your office; $1 million in a brown paper bag in your office.

Sen. The Hon. R. Dumas: You said that and I have no problem with that. “Look it here.”

Sen. Mark: Make a proper contribution and take your seat! “What wrong with he?”

Mr. Vice-President: Senators—Sen. Mark—[Crosstalk]

Senators, the statement has been withdrawn. I am asking Sen. Dumas for the second time to proceed. Let us go past there and I would like us to keep the disturbances and interruptions down.

Sen. The Hon. R. Dumas: Mr. Vice-President, I just want to suggest that a person who is a representative of a party that has a leader with the characteristics of the chairman of the UNC, cannot come to this Senate and suggest that criminals are running this country. [Desk thumping] That is false start number two.

Sen. Mark: That is political charges that you brought against Panday; you and the PNM; politically motivated. That was a set up! He will win his case. [Crosstalk]

Sen. The Hon. R. Dumas: False start number three: When a sportsman of the goodly Senator's development and age, who has participated in sports meetings organized by teachers of this country, in the education system of this country, on playing fields built in this country in the last 25—30 years, who has participated in the benefits of various types, could then make the argument that there had been no expenditure and no priority given to sports by this Government, I am suggesting that that sportsman may just be giving us some responses that we can classify as those of a petulant child. I want to suggest that could have only come from an individual who has a grouse, who has an argument, who is not treating with the reality.
Sen. Munro: Do not go there.

Sen. The Hon. R. Dumas: You want the floor?

Mr. Vice-President: Sen. Dumas, would you continue, please?

Sen. The Hon. R. Dumas: I am suggesting that I heard the first statement made by this Senator in this Senate and when he made that first statement, I was quite proud of it. Because do you know what characterized that statement? It was a promise of national service, a willingness to contribute to the further development of youth in the discipline for which he was successful and to which this country contributed. So he would give back to the country and to the youth, some of that.

I am suggesting I understood today that that might be a doubtful position. The position was placed in the context immediately after the Minister of National Security had begged for the full support of all hands in this country for the execution. But then I heard the end of that. You see, the one suggestion that came up was that the sports company should sit with a committee and that this committee should be able to place before the sports committee the scrapping of all the programmes and plans that they now have, and they would suggest in what directions the money would be spent. Then I smiled. Do you know what I thought about? I was sure it was a false start, because I could imagine the goodly Senator with his present disposition as he exposed today, with Anil Roberts, the other Minister of Sports from the UNC, and with Jack Warner, the third possible member of that committee which I will call “the committee to grab the sport funds of this country”—I am suggesting that those issues we will treat with otherwise.

2.45 p.m.

I speak to the proposals made by the leader. Unless those came yesterday, I think that it has already been pointed out that much of it was wild imagining. I thought he was given an excellent opportunity yesterday to place on the table of the Senate the counter proposals to the proposals coming from the Minister of Finance. Unfortunately, I think that he had a bad day. Normally, if there is one person on that side that I listen to, it is the goodly Senator.

Sen. Mark: Who me? Is me?


Sen. Mark: “Is me yuh on?”
Sen. The Hon. R. Dumas: Yes. Yes. Normally, I listen to him very carefully. I do not move. But, yesterday you were off the mark. Yesterday you lacked lustre. [Interruption]

Sen. Mark: “Doh worry wid me nah.”

Sen. The Hon. R. Dumas: I am not dealing with you. I am dealing with your contribution.

Sen. Mark: We want you to deal with corruption in local government.

Sen. The Hon. R. Dumas: We will come to that.

Sen. Mark: After that, a million dollars in “ah” brown bag.


Sen. Mark: That is Tobago business.

Sen. The Hon. R. Dumas: I was just told that this is Trinidad not Tobago. You do not hear the other end of your Bench. Without and not by your leave he was not representing his party because his party has no presence there. He said that he was representing his brothers and sisters in Tobago. By definition, not members. One thing I like about Sen. Mark is that he says clearly, “I represent the people in the UNC who voted for us.” Unfortunately none of them is from Tobago. In Tobago we like to talk about “washing yuh foot first before yuh jump in”.

They do not even have a representative from Tobago on that Bench. I was asked to bring this to his attention because there is a saying that good opposition makes good governance. In that tone Tobago asked me to point out this to him. We noted in Tobago that every Tobagonian who has been associated with the UNC has been abused, rejected, repulsed, maligned, attacked and abandoned by the UNC. If that is individually, then, we know very clearly what happens on the collective stage. We remember a suave, successful and revered first citizen of Tobago who is now maligned, abused, UNC-bad talk and hated. I have sat here, Mr. Vice-President—I contrast clearly—

Sen. Mark: Mr. Vice-President, Standing Order 35(1). I want to refer this Standing Order to you. I think the hon. Minister is very irrelevant. I made no reference to any PNM person who has been maligned. I did not say so. I spoke about Tobago. He is not dealing with the issues. He is being irrelevant and I ask you to rule. Let him deal with the issues.
Mr. Vice-President:  Sen. Mark, we know that it is tradition to allow certain laxities when we deal with the budget debate. I ask Sen. Dumas to come to the point quickly and move on please.

Sen. The Hon. R. Dumas:  “Ah have it man. Doh worry. Yuh know we eh going far.”

The fact is that the UNC in its last budget it had the honour to present—I am just contrasting their performance with ours—the UNC abused and abandoned the resolute Hochoy Charles. In their development programme funding the Hochoy Charles era that was not funding to Hochoy Charles, but funding to the development of Tobago. I suggest that your treatment of the Hochoy Charles administration of the Tobago House of Assembly was one in which you gave to the Hochoy Charles regime $35 million for the development programme of Tobago. This is where they took you to the Dispute Resolution Committee and was able to demonstrate that you had abandoned the development of Tobago.

That is the context in which I am saying to you, the abuse you gave to individuals who were with you was the abuse the UNC levelled on Tobago. Individuals like Arthur Robinson, Hochoy Charles, Pamela Nicholson, Dr. Morgan Job, Sis. Deborah Moore and Bro. Nathaniel Moore whom you kicked out of the Senate because they were bold enough to tell you that the development programme of Tobago was relevant to the development of Trinidad and Tobago. That is the only reason we treat with you. When you come to talk about Tobago and the budgeting process, you cannot do that in the face of a PNM allocation that funds the development programme of Tobago.


Sen. The Hon. R. Dumas:  Bro. Mark, you even had the temerity to use and abuse Skippy.

Sen. Mark:  “Who is dat?”

Sen. The Hon. R. Dumas:  “Yuh doh know who he is now.”

Sen. Mark:  He is your friend?

Sen. The Hon. R. Dumas:  Always. Every Tobagonian enjoys the privilege of my friendship, as I enjoy the privilege of theirs.

I suggest to you that we live in a dynamic era and in that era the development programme as laid out for Tobago is one that meets the requirements for ensuring that Tobago is a fulsome part of developing Trinidad and Tobago. In that context,
I lay before you the reality. I think that we should revisit the argument made by the Minister of Finance when he said that you have a development programme that is crafted by the Tobago House of Assembly, to be executed by the THA and has been funded to the extent of $2 billion, as has been demonstrated in measures made. Madam Vice-President—

**Sen. Mark:** Madam Vice-President? [Laughter]

**Sen. The Hon. R. Dumas:** I got “mislaid”. I heard a statement from a lady and I looked up to acknowledge the lady. So, I got caught between the two thoughts.

As Tobago does, every community in Trinidad and Tobago has aspirations for fulsome development. The Ministry of Local Government has adopted the special charge as laid out in the national programme outlined in Vision 2020 for facilitating regional development and the creation of sustainable communities. In pursuit of this commitment is the responsibility of local government to facilitate a better quality of life and standard of living for all the citizens in the communities in Trinidad. In pursuit of that programme the ministry has been guided by the administration’s unwavering adherence to the principles of good governance including value for money, efficiency, accountability and transparency, while providing public goods and services at both the local and national levels.

The key priority has been nurturing communities into entities where the residents could retain and access social and physical infrastructure needs and business opportunity, without decreasing the ability of the future generations to do the same. In other words, it is the responsibility of local government to assist in the building of sustainable communities. In pursuit of this charge the ministry and the 14 municipal corporations have a major role in defining, maintaining and developing the social and physical infrastructure of communities to the reduction in unemployment; the increase in community incomes and the overall improvement in community life and the quality of life of the families therein.

In turn, the mobilizing framework for the development of communities proceeds from a regional planning perspective, the region being the municipality whether defined as city, borough or regional corporation. The ministries and each municipal corporation’s infrastructure has been funded and supported of course, by provisions in the recurrent programme as well as the Public Sector Investment Programme (PSIP), the Infrastructure Development Fund and the Unemployment Relief Programme.

In pursuit of this mission the Ministry of Local Government has examined the present local government system and has concluded, as has been demonstrated by the Government’s laying on the parliamentary Table the Draft White Paper on Local Government Reform, that the system needs a period of change and a
The process by which the local government reform agenda should be placed before the nation. At the same time, the reality is that you have to continue to maintain and treat with the issues that arise today and therefore, the institutional capacity to so do must also be enhanced. The ministry and the municipal corporations are also required to provide adequate social and physical infrastructure as for the means provided and further to manage an effective and efficient unemployment relief programme. In terms of the Local Government Reform Programme and in fulfilment of the covenant made between the Government and the people, the Local Government Reform Programme has been put in place as an overarching part of the Vision 2020 framework which calls for national restructuring, development planning and socio-economic progress.

The framework and programmes are geared towards achieving certain institutional strengthening, capacity building and public service transformation imperatives. These include reviewing the local government legislative framework as well as placing local government within the constitutional reform framework; restructuring the local government structures system and corporate organizations; improving the management and operational efficiency and effectiveness of the ministry and municipal corporations; the decentralization of functions and responsibilities from ministries and departments to local government bodies; working on local self-financing capacity and improving the delivery of quality services; ensuring easier access and broadening service delivery coverage by the local government bodies and improving service delivery coordination and resource mobilization. We further work towards promoting greater citizen participation involvement in local government entities, all this while allowing and fostering municipal corporations having a greater measure of authority in the management of their affairs.

3.00 p.m.

Mr. Vice-President, in the last three years, the Government has worked to ensure that an environment for consensus building on this important policy issue of local government reform in Trinidad and Tobago has been built. In 2005, the Cabinet agreed that public consultations on a Green Paper for local government should proceed. This occurred with a number of consultations being held across the country. The consensual issues in these were subsequently converted into a Draft White Paper on Local Government Reform, 2006. Further consultations have since occurred and I expect them to continue.

The main policy positions on this Draft White Paper includes: an arrangement for the sharing of power between central and local government in Trinidad and Tobago; an enlarged Senate with a different type and mechanisms for placing representatives of local bodies in the Senate; the introduction of executive
councils in the local government system; a review of local government boundaries; the ensuring of a higher level of self-financing for local government bodies and further, a review of the legislative framework.

The process now moves to a wider level of national mobilization, including communities and institutions across Trinidad and Tobago. The hope is that as these issues consensually emerge, the public consultations will pave the way for an official policy on local government reform and the delivery of the intended benefits of that system to the general population.

The ministry has been working assiduously to bring this to fruition and, therefore, there has been work proceeding in terms of taxation; training; the establishment of property measures and property arrangements and registration systems across the country; the establishment of an important training programme in terms of an assessment for taxes; and further, the establishment of the relevant legislative committee and the boundaries review committee.

The work is expected to proceed and the deadline for achievement has been set by the year in which we gave the extension to the local government representatives under the last amendment to the local government Act.

It is the hope of this administration that with the participation that we have engendered across the country—I assure you that more than 3,000 persons across the country; individuals and representatives of various organizations, including representatives from the Rienzi Complex, have participated in this programme and have given it their blessings. [Interruption] I am just assuring you that it is national mobilization occurring here.

Mr. Vice-President, we are quite appreciative as a government of all the contributions made by all the people including, as I said before, representatives from the various corporations and representatives from a wide crosssection of our national community. We intend to keep the deadline. We intend to keep the programme on course. We expect that by the deadlines set, we will be able to come to the Parliament with the appropriate legislative framework to make the reform real. Of course, we ask for the support of all the Senators here.

In terms of physical and social infrastructure required, it has been our responsibility to work towards upgrading the municipal and local infrastructure to facilitate the delivery of quality services to communities. The objective has been simple. In terms of municipal and local infrastructure, the mandate was development of infrastructure that works. This administration has allocated substantial funding for local infrastructure development.
Utilizing these funds, the ministry and the corporations have completed more than 2,000 projects in the provision of municipal, local and community infrastructure across the country and across the corporations. Under the Public Sector Investment Programme, I am pleased to report that the Ministry of Local Government received an allocation of $259 million, of which the sum of $174 million was allocated for infrastructure development.

Under the Roads and Bridges programme, the ministry working with the municipal corporations, established that Roads and Bridges programme identifying roadways, drains, footpaths and various other systems that needed review and rebuilding. As part, one specific programme was the Development Management and Maintenance Programme for Municipal Roads and Drainage. Under this programme the Ministry of Local Government consolidates its funding for three areas: landslips, bridges and the establishment of an appropriate geographic information system, which will improve the question of the coordinated approach to the development of community infrastructure.

We have identified that 105 bridges required appropriate attention through the design, construction and replacement activity. These bridges are located both in remote rural areas, as well as in heavily populated urban areas, and constitute a significant requirement on the budgeting process over the next number of periods. In phase 1 of this period, last year 19 bridges were repaired, rehabilitated and constructed at a cost of $3.6 million. These bridges were all done in-house by the Engineering Unit of the Ministry of Local Government. Phase 2 is expected to treat with 15 bridges this year and then the others will follow in sequential order.

There have been a number of difficulties faced by communities. The sudden removal of a bridge, whether by a flood, a fall or an earthquake, as happened recently, and the ministry has embarked on a programme of securing and putting in place the mechanisms to lay, quickly, Bailey bridges to bring relief to these people. At this point, the ministry is in possession of two of these bridges and I expect it to produce three this year.

Mr. Vice-President, I am told that the geological structure of Trinidad and Tobago is a complex one and we have been building roads where they should not be. The Ministry of Local Government has sought to treat with landslips that have occurred; some of them are major and will last for years. In particular we have attempted to deal with several of these that have given significant difficulties to citizens in Couva, Mayaro, Princes Town and Tunapuna. We have treated with these at a cost of approximately $3 milllion. The expectation is that we will treat with 10 more of these at a cost of $4.8 million within the municipalities of Couva, Mayaro and Princes Town, this year. Princes Town has some particular problems.
The ministry has developed an interactive database and map of the essential infrastructure under the charge in its own geographic information system. This project we undertake with the collaboration of the Department of Surveying and Land Information at the University of the West Indies. They have contracted with us to develop this programme and to map all the necessary infrastructure features which are integrated contracts databases.

The pilot project is currently being undertaken in the region of Sangre Grande and it is expected to continue to the municipality of Mayaro/Rio Claro. We have great hopes for this map and this system which we think, joined with the GPS system, will allow us to do a number of things that we see happening and should happen in any developed country, including finding your way home for people who are lost.

Rural development works will be concentrated in north-east Trinidad. A number of activities with built roadways, built access roads and so on, in a collaborative effort between the Ministry of Local Government, the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs and the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment; a significant programme that brought relief to a number of small communities in the rural areas has occurred, and in this year the expectation is that this will continue at an approximate cost of $6.5 million.

The municipal corporations identified drainage and irrigation as one of the major needs of municipalities across the country. For three consecutive years the Government has provided $70 million to this programme. In each municipal region, therefore, there has been significant work on the drainage systems of these municipalities, noting that there have been several infrastructural irritants in various local communities.

For the third year, the Government has provided $25 million in the IRID programme. These are intended to provide increased employment opportunities and assistance to small and emerging entrepreneurs from within the communities as they provide infrastructure to the residents of their various communities.

By localizing the issuance of contracts and the procurement of materials, these contracted projects, small-scale and labour-intensive and of short duration with low skill requirements have mobilized significant numbers of people and a significant number of entrepreneurs.

Mr. Vice-President, 257 projects, at a cost of $23.78 million, were completed under these programmes. Included is the construction of box drains, driveways, curb walls, slipper drains, box culverts, retaining walls, footpaths, sidewalks and attention to small landslips.
It is with some satisfaction that I heard a goodly Senator suggest that we could expect support for enhancing the physical working environment for public officers. In that wise, the design and construction of administrative complexes for the 14 municipal corporations are being pursued. These could only be in the municipalities; they will not be in Port of Spain. To date, six corporations have satisfied criteria set forth and have received approval to proceed with the acquisition of designs and development of contract documentation for ratification and approval of financing.

The Ministry of Local Government, working along with UDeCott, has completed the design of four administrative complexes for the corporations of Chaguanas, Diego Martin, Arima and Princes Town. It is anticipated that in this fiscal year, these designs will be approved, contracts will be made and constructions of these could start.

The designs for the remaining complexes will also be undertaken. In addition, 11 other local government public buildings were improved or upgraded—I am talking about offices—including five municipal police stations. We have one particular Chairman who is often heard on the radio saying that we are discriminating against his particular municipality. I suggest that the Ministry of Local Government has not engaged in any such activity and all corporations, as they bring their projects to the table, can have their projects approved and attended to. In that light I want to, in particular, make the case that the Chaguanas Municipal Corporation is in this schedule, as well as the new Chaguanas Municipal Police Post.

3.15 p.m.

Mr. Vice-President, unspent balances are funds from the Public Sector Investment Programme (PSIP) projects that remain unutilized at the end of the year. There is a process by which corporations can apply these funds to public building, public building purchases and repairs to public buildings. The tradition has been that where the funding is available and the requests are made, these are all authorized. The corporations and the corporations’ activities are spread in all remote communities requiring a lot of travelling and, therefore, the Ministry of Local Government has supported the purchase of vehicles and equipment valued at $12,985,000 for the municipal corporations.

Mr. Vice-President, the development and maintenance of quality infrastructure in our local communities will continue to be an objective of local government and, therefore, it is required that the appropriate policies, the appropriate systems and standards to be followed by programmes of actions for these infrastructures
should be undertaken. In that wise, working with the Bureau of Standards, the Ministry is working towards ensuring that the local government system of standards 2000, are put in place as a mechanism for guaranteeing that a holistic system of standards for all municipalities that meet international standards are, in fact, in place by the end of the year.

As was said before, the process of regional planning and development must drive all these activities. To ensure that this is done in an efficient manner throughout all municipalities, the provision of a local area in regional planning and development capacity in the Ministry of Local Government is being implemented. In that wise, the recruitment process for the relevant personnel has begun and within a very short period, the first quarter of this year, the personnel that has been approved should be in place.

There are a number of responsibilities of local government as laid out in the Act. We will take two areas: one, the question of markets. Some attention has been paid to the development and completion of our systems of public markets and this year work will start on the new San Juan market and a general upgrade of our markets across the country.

Recreation facilities, also managed by the local government system. We assure you that 54 recreational facilities were upgraded and repaired this year contrary to the argument made earlier. The Ministry is pursuing the development of these play parks and recreational facilities across the country in conjunction with the sports company and these will not be scrapped by a meeting with the sports company.

Public parks and conveniences: There are a number of daily-paid workers across the country, and one of the reasons given for their non-attention to the hours that they should be serving is the absence of public baths and conveniences. For this reason, as well as for the general comfort of the citizenry, a programme of action for the establishment of public baths and conveniences across the country is going to be undertaken this year. [Crosstalk] Are you confused?

Sen. King: Yes.

Sen. The Hon. R. Dumas: You feel that the common people should not wash? When we say public baths—that is why we are saying public baths and conveniences across the country. They would be so designed to be comfortable, safe, secure and well maintained.

The Ministry of Local Government recognizing the demands and challenges for changes in the systems of local government, as well as the provision of all these identified programmes and projects will work with the municipal bodies and
other stakeholders including special purpose companies and the various ministries to ensure the implementation of these plans and programmes. In that context, the capacity and institutional strength of the various institutions are to be treated with. We start first with the issue of the chief officers.

**Mr. Vice-President:** Hon. Senators, the speaking time of the hon. Senator has expired.

_Motion made_, That the hon. Senator’s speaking time be extended by 15 minutes.

[Hon. Dr. L. Saith]

_Question put and agreed to._

**Sen. The Hon. R. Dumas:** In local government, we talk about capacity-building, institutional-strengthening and the enhancement of the image and standards of the local government organizations. In that context we have installed new chief officers in each corporation this year. The argument has been made that the capability of the corporations to carry out their responsibilities were hindered by the absence of accountants, engineers, lawyers and so forth. I assure you that these have been put in place in the last year. We have also put in place planning officers in each municipality and we are working to implement a new training plan and policy programme to ensure the capacity-building and institutional-strengthening initiatives would be brought to each corporation.

In terms of information technology, the ministry is determined to improve and modernize its systems in order to maintain an efficient and easily accessible information system to the corporation’s customers and stakeholders. In keeping with the Government’s requirements we assure you that a contract has been signed with eTeck in terms of ensuring that there is an integrated information and technology system that will meet the local government’s needs.

Mr. Vice-President, Unemployment Relief Programme (URP): URP is responsible for creating short term employment for the unemployed, providing skilled development and enhancement, developing social, economic and physical infrastructure of the communities. The programme has progressed but in line with this statement from the national budget of 2006 which indicated that as the level of unemployment falls, we would reduce the number of special projects undertaken and reduce the size of the programme, restructure the programme and reintroduce a comprehensive training element targeted at the development of construction skills and basic education.

In view of this, the budgetary allocation for the Unemployment Relief Programme has been reduced. The focus of the allocation of resources within the programme has been shifted from maintenance projects to construction projects and a detailed study of the programme is under way with a view to making the changes as indicated.
In 2002/2003 the URP provided relief for 65,000 persons. In 2003/2004, 95,000 unemployed persons benefited from the programme. In 2004/2005, 77,000 benefited from the programme. In 2005/2006, the estimate is that the provisions will cater for 65,000 persons. Last year a total of 46,477 persons registered for the core programme which saw 41,976 persons benefitting. The women’s programme, 13,817 women were registered, and 12,511 persons were employed in the programme.

The Unemployment Relief Programme undertook 717 construction programmes in the last year. For fiscal 2007 URP would align its resources behind the strategy to build on and consolidate the achievements over the last four years taking into consideration the changing environment and the evolving needs of the targeted communities.

The new programme will take into account a declining national unemployment rate, a growing demand to provide sustainable human development through training, an increased need for organizational efficiency and effectiveness, and a strengthening of its role with the construction sector.

As a Ministry, we will focus in 2007 on the continuation of the local government reform agenda, physical and social infrastructure development and maintenance, institutional strengthening and capacity building and, of course, running an efficient URP. The local government system, after the reform, will discharge local government functions in an effective and efficient manner, will develop new ways of managing and administering local activity, will bring together all sectors to solve community problems and provide for local needs, will facilitate and stimulate employment, local economic activities and coordinate local sectoral development; will assist the less fortunate, the underprivileged and facilitate poverty eradication and develop and implement sustainable infrastructure and social programmes.

In summary, the local government system would be seen as a coordinating agency for local development, a provider of solutions to local challenges and a harmonizing agency with responsibility for maintaining social stability at the local and national levels.

The task ahead would involve the implementation of the foregoing strategy, the continuous review of our operation systems and processes so that efficiencies can be sustained and, therefore, higher levels of citizen satisfaction can be achieved.

Mr. Vice-President, with all citizens of Trinidad and Tobago working, with all hands on deck and without the whimpering, I am sure we would go into a bright 2007. Thank you, Mr. Vice-President.
The Minister of Works and Transport (Hon. Colm Imbert): Mr. Vice-President, it is indeed a pleasure to come to this place to provide some information. Regrettably, with the speaking time that this honourable Senate has limited itself to by its standing Orders, I will not be able to give a full account of what has been taking place and what will take place in the Ministry of Works and Transport, but I will try within the 60 minutes that is available with the permission of the Senate.

I thought I would use the opportunity to address the Parliament, specifically the Senate, on some issues that are in the public domain. I understand that Sen. Ali and Sen. Prof. Deosaran, among others, had raised certain issues when I was on my way to the Red House.

I have, fortuitously, however, actually brought some information on those particular matters so I would like then to concentrate on these particular matters for the time being and then we will see how it goes after that.

The first matter I would like to deal with in order to separate fact from fiction is the true situation with regard to the Trinidad Rapid Rail Transit Project.

3.30 p.m.

There has been a lot of nonsense published and bandied about in the public domain and I think it is necessary for Senators and the wider community to understand the facts. There is a little group that, for about a year, despite the fact that scientific surveys show that about 90 per cent of the population—and I understand Sen. Prof. Deosaran is among the 90 per cent—you may correct me if I am wrong, Senator—all of the surveys that have been done by the consultants and others over the last several years indicate that about 90 per cent of the population of Trinidad and Tobago is in support of the re-introduction of the railway to Trinidad. But there is a little noisy group that opposes the project on very spurious grounds. [Interruption] I am not going to say that everybody that opposed it is within this group or that everybody that opposed it is spurious, but there is a particular group that I am speaking about and it does not include anybody in this Senate.

Among the gross inaccuracies that have been put into the system is the fiction that countries all over the world are turning to bus transport as a solution to public transportation and that the railway is becoming obsolete. That is a gross inaccuracy. Another piece of misinformation that has been put into the public domain by a member in the other place and by other misguided groups is that the cost of operating the railway system will be so prohibitive that it will cost $8 million a day or $3 billion a year.
Allow me to quote from a document sent to me by the Trinidad and Tobago Manufacturers Association that is hopelessly misguided. In the conclusion to their document, they said:

The proposed rapid rail project is expected to have a capital cost of $20 billion and an annual operating and maintenance cost of $3 billion. That works out to TT $8 million per day, a cost that will be borne largely by the taxpayers of this country.

This is contained in a position paper—that is what they call it—TTMA’s position on the proposed rapid rail system for Trinidad and Tobago, which they sent to me last week. I was so astonished at the preposterous nature of the figures in this document that I actually waited five days before I responded to them to let them know how ridiculous they were. I was shocked. I was trying to figure out what was going on. Let me now advise hon. Senators what the facts are. Another piece of misinformation in the system is that the Government is proceeding to implement the project without the benefit of any studies or research whatsoever.

We previously did not bother with these unfounded accusations because we had a job to do, which was the implementation of a mass transit solution for Trinidad, but now that we are well on the way with respect to that project and that we are on track, barring unforeseen circumstances, to select a design/build/operate/maintain contractor within the next three to four months, the target is December 31, but if we go to January 31, that is not going to be of any great significance. This year. The target to select a design/build/operate/maintain contractor is December 31, 2006. It may be January 31, 2007 because we intend to be very careful and to take our time to ensure we do not fall into any traps and pitfalls that may exist outside there, especially in terms of conflict of interest. We are being very careful about that.

Now that this stuff—that is the only way I can describe it—is in the public domain, put out there by others, I think it is necessary to deal with the issues one by one. Let me deal first with the issue of cost. We initially estimated, in the preliminary stages, that the length of the railway system along the East-West Corridor and the North-South Corridor, and that is from Diego Martin to Sangre Grande and from Port of Spain to San Fernando, would be approximately 100 miles or 160 kilometres. In total. I will come to the actual lengths in a little while.

We had originally estimated that the East-West Corridor and the North-South Corridor for the Rapid Rail System would be about 160 kilometres in total. We used, as average rates for railway construction, urban areas in developed countries,
just to get a notional figure and an estimate of US $25 million per mile, which is what it costs to develop a sophisticated railway system in an urban area in a developed country. We applied this to our original estimate of 160 kilometres and we got our notional budget estimate of US $2.5 billion or approximately TT $15 billion for the project—a notional figure based on a notional unit rate of US $25 million per mile and 100 miles of track.

The actual cost of construction of modern railway systems, however, is widely variable and anybody who wants to do research on this will discover this, since it is dependent on topography, geology, land acquisition, the prevailing rates for labour, materials, equipment, technical complexity, the capacity that you want for your system—the number of trains, for example, the number of overhead structures, bridges, river crossings, tunnels and so on. The actual cost could be as low as US $3 million, not US $25 million.

I will give you two recent examples out of China. The first example—you can check this out—is a railway called—I am sorry that Prof. Picou is not here because I am not sure that my pronunciation is correct.


Hon. C. Imbert: He told me that his first language is English, but he will correct me. The first example I want to give is the Quinghai Tibet Railway. This is the world's highest altitude railway system, inaugurated in July 2006. That is three months ago, so it is very current and phases of this project are under construction.

The Quinghai Railway, which is a landmark project in China and is part of its overall plan to develop its western regions, involves a total investment of Yen 26 billion or US $3.1 billion. Construction started in 2001 and when it is fully completed, it will be 1,142 kilometres long, with 960 kilometres of the railway 4,000 metres above sea level and its most elevated sections at 5,000 metres above sea level.

Let me give you some idea of the cost and sophistication first. There were many technical difficulties and still are. About half of the second section of the railway was built on barely permanent permafrost and in the summer the uppermost layer of the permafrost thaws and the ground becomes muddy. Chinese engineers dealt with this problem by building elevated tracks with foundations sunk deep into the ground; inserting vertical pipes that circulate liquid nitrogen and cold nitrogen gas into the ground; building hollow concrete pipes beneath the tracks to keep the rail bed frozen and using sun shades as well.
The project includes 361 high-altitude passenger carriages with specially enriched oxygen and UV protection cars and, of these, 53 are luxury sleeper carriages for tourist services. Trains travelling in the frozen earth in Quing Hai attain maximum speeds of 100 kilometres per hour and in the non-frozen earth part of the railway speeds reach 120 kilometres per hour. Despite all the engineering challenges, the cost of this railway system, including tracks, structures, station, cars, “toute baghai”, was US $4.4 million per mile.

The next example I want to use is the Shenmu-Yanan Railway, which was opened in 2003. It was conceptualized and designed to reduce transport bottlenecks and extend services to a relatively undeveloped area of China, the Shaanxi Province. This railway project was intended to provide cost effective transport of coal—it is a coal rich region of China—to energy deficient provinces and affordable and efficient public transportation and facilitate the development of service industries with the ultimate aim of further employment, income generation and poverty reduction. The principal objective was to reduce poverty. That was the principal objective in the northern region of Shaanxi Province.

The project has actually been completed. It is in operation and it is estimated by the Asian Development Bank that the project has actually reduced poverty from the pre-project level of over 20 per cent in this China region to below 10 per cent at the present time through the creation of more than 300,000 new jobs.

I will give some idea of scale: 380 kilometres of track were completed, including 250 bridges, 26 tunnels, 21 stations and, according to an August 2006 report—three months ago—from the Asian Development Bank—you can look this up—which financed the project, the quality of the completed work is excellent and consistent with international standards. I have seen photographs of the trains. They look like anything out of Europe. It looks just like the best railway system in Europe.

The actual final cost for this project, which was audited by the Asian Development Bank, was US $732 million, which works out to be US $3 million a mile and the project is already making a profit with an internal rate of return of 13 per cent and a tariff rate of just TT $0.10 per passenger mile.

In India, the cost of railway construction is also low. India plans to construct a high-speed cargo rail system with assistance from Japan and this high-speed cargo rail system is to be constructed on a 1,350 kilometre line connecting the Delhi metropolitan area and the commercial centre of Mumbai, for those who have been to India. I have not been. A second line, 1,450 kilometres, will connect Delhi to Calcutta. [Interruption] I know when I come here I have to get my facts right because I am dealing with professionals.
With Calcutta, the centre of the eastern Indian Bengal economic zone, the total cost of this high-speed cargo railway, which has a span of 2,800 kilometres, will be US $5 billion and, in order to deal with the vast volume of cargo, the system will be computer controlled. If you divide US $5 billion by 2,800 kilometres and convert to miles, you get a cost of just over US $3 million a mile. Construction of this project is just about to begin and is expected to be completed by 2011.

I have given you three examples: two out of China; one at $4.5 million a mile and one at $3 million a mile and one out of India at $3 million a mile. Let us come closer to home. The government of Argentina recently announced plans to develop the first high-speed railway in South America, stretching 3,010 kilometres from Buenos Aires to Rosario, with a further 400 kilometres of new line between Rosario and Cordoba. Construction of this project is projected to start in March 2007 and they hope—they are ambitious—to have the 310 kilometre line from Rosario open for passengers in 2009. They are running on a very tight time line. They expect to have a 310 kilometre railway fully equipped and functional in just two years.

3.45 p.m.

This train will be running at a speed of 300 kilometres an hour, which is 180 miles an hour, on a double-track formation and the project is expected to cost US $800 million, using best practice from Europe. This works out at US $4 million per mile. Those were some examples.

In other countries, as I said, the cost can be as high as US $25 million per mile. In certain areas such as the London underground, where there are complex utility lines and congestion, the cost can be as high as US $50 million per mile or even higher. It is a widely variable situation. As I said, it depends on land acquisition, congestion, topography, geology and the kind of train system you want to have.

As our investigations continue, we have actually found railway systems in North America, ranging in price between $2 million per mile in Kansas and $50 million per mile in other parts of North America. We are revising our cost estimates because part of our railway system will, of course, be in a congested urban area in the Port of Spain area going up towards the Barataria area. Eventually it will start to free up and there will be less congestion. We are looking at two alignments: one on the bus route, of course, and the other one, along the Churchill Roosevelt Highway. The consultants have preferred—but it is something on which a decision will have to be made because there are advantages
to both alignments—the Churchill Roosevelt alignment, because the road reserve is already there. A railway only needs approximately 8—10 metres in width or 30 feet. That is all you need to have a double-track railway system. If you look at the Churchill Roosevelt Highway and the property setbacks—[Interruption]

**Sen. Seetahal S.C.:** I am not sure what you are saying. Is it that you are going to scrap the bus route? Would you have the train parallel to the Churchill Roosevelt Highway? I am not sure that I am grasping that; perhaps not being an engineer.

**Hon. C. Imbert:** I know I have to be on my Ps and Qs here, but that was not engineering. I said we have two options. We are looking at the bus route option and we are looking at the Churchill Roosevelt option. It is either/or. If you go along the bus route you would have to close the bus route while the project is being built and there will be massive dislocation. If you go along the Churchill Roosevelt Highway you will have to shuttle people from the foothills of the East-West Corridor to the Churchill Roosevelt Highway, but the feasibility is tending towards, in terms of the cost and benefits, putting it along the Churchill Roosevelt Highway and creating a shuttle system and an enhanced park and ride facility so that you would be able to keep the bus route as an alternative transit corridor. You may be able to convert that into a public road in due course when you have fully commissioned the railway system. I am simply giving you information. There is no final decision on that as yet.

The Ministry is now revising its cost estimates and looking at contingencies, inflation, unforeseen events and risks. It appears quite possible to complete the Trinidad and Tobago railway project for an all-inclusive cost of less than US $15 million per mile. We have already revised our unit price downwards by US $10 million. As we go along, we may very well get to below US $10 million as the appropriate unit rate.

All of the elements of a railway system are known. There is a steel track, elevated structures, if necessary, and railway cars. These are all known. There are world market prices for all these things.

As you complete your design, you firm up your price. Based on the preliminary information that we have already, we are able to reduce our notional unit rate from US $25 million per mile, down to US $15 million per mile. [Interruption]

**Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh:** Would you give way to a question?

**Hon. C. Imbert:** Certainly.
Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh: I know the Minister might not be here when we want to ask questions so I take the opportunity to ask him a question now. The US $3 million per mile in China and US $4 million somewhere else is predicated on a labour cost where labour is cheaper. If we are constructing this railway in Trinidad, where labour cost is high, is that factored into the equation and that is why your cost is US $15 million? If you are contracting an international company—you have Chinese and other people building at the waterfront, I think I am right—would the company that you are looking at be bringing foreign labour to reduce your cost, or would you be utilizing only local labour? This is an important question for the nationals, because if you have a large project like that, you will need to utilize your people-skills from Trinidad and Tobago and for reducing cost you may want to import labour. We would like to have an answer on that.

Hon. C. Imbert: The US $15 million unit rate that we have come up with now and which is constantly refined is based on local labour. The US $3 million is based on Chinese labour, obviously. They were able to achieve those very low prices through economies of scale. You are talking about 1,000 kilometres of line and then their labour cost is a fraction of what it is in Trinidad and Tobago. In getting us down to US $15 million per mile, we are assuming local labour. As we go along, there may be a mix. Much of the skills will not be resident in Trinidad and Tobago, in terms of some of the specialist items. [Interruption] Certainly. It will, we expect it to go lower. The US $15 million is all-inclusive: land acquisition, elevated structures, bridges, et cetera. There will be some notional land acquisition; there must be. There are people's entrances and all sorts of issues which we will have to consider when we deal with this.

Let me move on. The consultants have actually measured the distance of the proposed alignment and the total alignment is now 120 kilometres or 72 miles. That is the distance between Diego Martin and Sangre Grande plus Port of Spain and San Fernando. One length is 59 kilometres and the other is 58 kilometres, if I remember correctly. I have rounded it off to 120 kilometres or 72 miles. If you take the US $15 million per mile, which I am sure is still high, and you take 72 miles, which is the actual length of the corridor, this puts the cost at US $1.1 billion, or half of the original budget. I am so happy that I can come down, rather than go up, in terms of price. We are talking about price here, nothing else. The budget target that we have now is in the region of US $1.1 billion. It is US $15 million per mile. That is US $1.08 billion, or TT $6.5 billion, which is barely one-third of the figure that I read for you. Where did they get this figure from?
Hon. Senator: From Wade Mark.

Hon. C. Imbert: Without giving anything away, I can tell Sen. Mark that the price that he quoted yesterday for those assets is a fraction of the true cost; without giving anything away. Dr. Saith is saying 10 times, but I am saying a fraction.

Sen. Ali: Thank you, Minister, I have a simple question to ask. I believe that there are approximately five bidders and the bid closed on August 28, 2006. I am confused as to how this bid will take place? Do they have options of where it is going to be and how are you going to evaluate bid versus bid and place them alongside each other? That is what is not clear to anybody.

I am thankful that you are making some disclosures that we have never heard before.

Sen. Anmolsingh-Mahabir: Before you answer, how many carriages would be carried and how many passengers do you anticipate will use it?

Hon. C. Imbert: I was going to deal with that. I am going to be polite, for now. The figure of US $20 billion that is in the TTMA's document that was also quoted by an Opposition Member in the other place is certainly bogus. That is the best word I can put on it. It is bogus, absurd and wrong.

Let me move on to the operating cost. The international benchmark, in terms of operating cost, is somewhere between 1.8 to 2.5 per cent of the capital cost. That is a rule of thumb that one can use, per year. The annual operating and maintenance cost is usually somewhere in the vicinity of 2 per cent, more or less, of the capital cost. If we have a cost of US $6.5 billion, that would mean—if we use a rough rule of thumb—the operating cost would be approximately TT $130 million per year. I am going to be more precise because, again—in this document, in the other place, other places and letters in the newspapers all over the place—I am seeing the figure of $3 billion and $8 million per day, being preached as gospel. It is being bandied about that the taxpayers of this country will have to pay $3 billion per year for the operation and maintenance of this system.

What I did—this should also address the myth that we are not doing any research—is that I have a spreadsheet which calculates the number of operators and train attendants, supervisors, dispatchers, station managers, fare booth operators, car men—there is no gender bias, that is what they are called—electricians, cleaners, supervisors, regulators, all of the labour elements, materials and supplies, utilities, administrative costs, et cetera. That has been calculated for us by our consultants.
We have used, for the initial purpose, the cost of labour, utilities, supplies and services in Miami. You will appreciate that the cost of labour, energy and utilities in Miami is much higher than Trinidad and Tobago. We have specifically asked the consultants to use North American rates, so that we will get an idea for our top figure so that we could start to come down. The cost calculated on a scientific basis, not a “vaps”, a “vup” or a figure out of a hat like the $3 billion figure. It is US $55 million per year in 2006, or TT $345 million per year. That is everything: parts, labour, electricity, fuel where required, all labour, management, supervision, administration—“toute bagai”, using Miami rates.

I will give you the assumptions, which are that you have 487 employees; 100 railway cars at peak, so that that answers your question; $9 million passenger car miles per annum; 84,000 revenue train hours; and a journey time of 26 minutes on the East-West Corridor and 28 minutes on the North-South Corridor, using Miami rates, where wage rate, services and utilities make up over two-thirds of the operating cost. That, again, is a feature of railway systems all over the world. Railway equipment is designed to have a service life of between 35—40 years in comparison to buses and conventional cars, which may have a service life of 10 years.

4.00 p.m.

The railway equipment has a service life of 35 years, so that when you are operating a railway, two-thirds of your cost is in services and labour. When we adjust the wage rates, services and utility cost for the Trinidad situation, it is much lower. I mean, the cost of wages in Trinidad is about a quarter of what it is in North America. I cannot say what electricity is, but I know it is much less; maybe half of what it is in North America. So the cost then drops to below TT $300 million per year. So this nonsensical figure of $3 billion that is being bandied about is inflated by 1,000 per cent. I would not mind if they inflate it by 50 per cent, but 1,000 per cent! That is 10 times the real figure.

As I said, I was shocked at the gross inaccuracy of this information being put into the system by persons who should know better. I did not respond for five days because I had to go and check myself to see what is going on. I had this which was telling me that it was US $55 million; TT $345 million and they are saying $3 billion. So, I checked a railway in the Dubai, the Dubai Metro, which is going to be completed in a couple months; sometime next year. They have already done all of their estimates and they have posted it on their website. Their operational and maintenance cost is US $150 million per year; TT $1 billion, and this railway in Dubai is estimated to carry 1.2 million passengers per day. So, it could carry the whole population of Trinidad and Tobago every day, and that cost
is less than $1 billion per year, and when you prorate it, in terms of capacity of our system—we know how many tracks we are going to have; we know the length of the tracks; we know how many trains; we know how many train operators, et cetera and when you prorate it and use the Dubai figures, you would get TT $200 million per year. That other railway I referred to, which is the Chinese railway, is operating at a cost of five and a half TT cents per passenger kilometre. It is actually there. You could go and check it out. You could check the Asian Development Bank and you will see that the passenger tariff is five and a half TT cents per passenger kilometer. If you put that to the Trinidad project, you would get an operating cost for our system of TT $100 million per year. Forget all of that. What we did is we actually counted the number of train drivers, operators, mechanics, electricians, managers, supervisors, regulators, car park attendants and cleaners. We have also counted the number of spare parts; we have assessed the electricity requirements; and we have come up with this figure, and when we adjust it for the elements that are cheaper here we came down to below $300 million per year.

Sen. Prof. Deosaran: Thank you very much for giving way. You should not be surprised that all those prices are jacked up. [Laughter] They always put a high markup of about 1,000 per cent on other foodstuffs. What I want to ask you, through you, Mr. Vice-President, is when you bring these heavy loads of passengers into the central cities, do you have any means of disbursing them like a network or a lorry? Secondly, I have spoken to you about this informally and you seem to agree, I believe, in principle. Could you also install a tramcar system around Queen’s Park Savannah as we had about 50 years ago before many of us were born?

Hon. C. Imbert: I am going to deal with that matter in a short while, but there is something that you need to know. Let me just jump now. I hope I have dealt with this $3 billion stupidity. I am sorry to use that word, but it is stupidity. People should be ashamed of themselves when they put that kind of information into the public domain.

Sen. Ali: Hon. Minister, all of this has come about because of the lack of disclosure on this project. This is what has happened. So, you are saying now that these people are talking nonsense, but we never had any information on this project. My colleague asked: When are we going to see the feasibility study to show what is the cost-benefit analysis for this project? In my contribution, I said that I am open, because I did not see a feasibility study. I did not see any results of a feasibility study. I was really talking the first regime which calls for disclosure.
Appropriation Bill (Budget)  
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[SEN. ALI]

Disclosure is the mechanism by which agencies make their procurement activities visible and transparent. [Desk thumping] That is why, if you come and tell us that the Trinidad and Tobago Manufacturers Association (TTMA) is talking nonsense—whoever advised TTMA—I think it is the fault of the system. We certainly want the Ato, if we are going to have a rapid rail system, and it is good for you.

[Laughter]

Hon. C. Imbert: Mr. Vice-President, I do not know if I am going to have the time.

Mr. Vice-President: Hon Senators, I really appreciate the interest being shown in the matter that is being discussed, but I would prefer if you will allow the Minister to get close to the end of his contribution. I am looking at the time. You see, we get up, and instead of asking a question, we make comments, and we actually behave as if we are debating what he is talking about. Please, let us not do it.

Hon. C. Imbert: Mr. Vice-President, thank you. In fact, I was going to ask for injury time. I think I will need about 20 minutes. [Crosstalk] Where is the FIFA man? [Crosstalk] Sen. Ali, I just want to make it clear that when I said people are talking stupidity, I was not referring to anybody in this Senate. I just want to make that clear, and I am going to say it again. I have quoted my source document. It is a position paper circulated by the Trinidad and Tobago Manufactures Association (TTMA). It has had fairly wide circulation. To answer a point that you made, they based it on a statement made by the Association of Professional Engineers of Trinidad and Tobago, who should be ashamed of themselves, because they are engineers. Any engineer could do what I did, and go and work out what the operating cost of a railway is. This is just disgraceful; absolutely disgraceful. There is no question of disclosure. This entire position is based on a spurious document produced by the Association of Professional Engineers of Trinidad and Tobago. I am ashamed of them. As an engineer myself, I am ashamed of them for putting out that kind of information. It is not a question of disclosure.

Mr. Vice-President, you know, I have learnt that you do not just jump out at everything. We have been refining this; we have been dealing with this; we have been studying it; we have been examining its feasibility; we have been working out the alignment; we have been working out the corridor; we have been working out the number of employees; the number of cars; the design of the railway system; and we have now come to the operating and maintenance cost. I would not have been in a position, three months ago, to give a scientific dissertation on
the cost. I could not do it, because I was still in the process of working out how many tracks there would be; how long the corridor would be; how many cars there would be; how many hours they would be operating on a daily basis and so forth. If I had jumped out three months ago, they would have said: “Look at him, he does not know what he is doing. He is just talking about policy on the hoof.” I am just letting you know, Sen. Ali, that we have decided to talk now, because we have reached the point.

For your information, we have also received—and this is another piece of misinformation in the system that the Comprehensive National Transportation Study will not be available until a year from now. I am not saying that you said so. I am saying that it is in the public domain that prominent persons are saying that the Comprehensive National Transportation Study will not be available for another 12 months and, therefore, we should stop everything for another 12 months until we deal with it.

I have some extracts from the draft final report from the Comprehensive National Transportation Study which we received two weeks ago and, for your information, it has endorsed the Trinidad rapid rail project. We now have a process. This is the draft report. I could not bring it today. It is about three times as thick as this. [Minister holds book in hand] I could not walk with it. The point is that we have received the draft and they have given us short-term, medium-term and long-term solutions to our transportation problems in the land sector, air sector and sea sector in Trinidad, in Tobago, between Trinidad and Tobago, in Caricom and in terms of our international transportation linkages.

We are now reviewing the draft with the consultants, and we are going to ask them to enhance and clarify certain issues. When we are finished with this clarification process, we would then have a series of public consultations to get feedback from the public, and a series of news briefings at the end of the various public consultations, so that we can finalize as the Government’s policy, the new Comprehensive National Transportation Study. I already have the draft. This thing that we must wait until we get the study is also invalid.

Let me come now to revenue. I have only spoken about the cost. The cost is going to be less than TT $300 million per year. If you use 50,000 passengers a day, at a fare of $10 one way with 300 operating days for the year, do you know what you would get? You would get $300 million. Okay. So that at conservative estimates of ridership—50,000 persons return is 100,000 by 300 is $300 million by $10. So that conservatively, the cost is going to be zero. That is why I find these figures are scandalous. The cost will be zero!
As I pointed out to you, I think it is the Shenmu-Yanan Railway is already making a profit at a fare of five and a half cents per passenger per kilometre. So much of the information that is in the public domain is just false. I was not ready to jump out, but I am ready now. I would recommend to hon. Senators—this is recommended reading—a paper entitled: Rail Transit in America, A Comprehensive Evaluation of Benefits published on October 25, 2004 by the Victoria Transport Policy Institute of Canada with support from the American Public Transport Association (APTA).

Now, the APTA is the premier transportation organization in North America. They have been advising persons on public transportation since 1882, over 100 years, and 90 per cent of the providers of transit, whether it is bus or rail transit in North America, are members of the APTA. They funded this study which was published in October 2004. I am just going to read the abstract.

This study evaluates rail transit benefits based on a comprehensive analysis of transportation system performance in major US cities. The author’s name, by the way, is Todd Littman.

It finds that cities with large well-developed rail systems have significantly higher per capita transit ridership; lower average per capita vehicle ownership; less traffic congestion; lower traffic death rates; lower consumer expenditures on transportation; and higher transit service cost recoveries than otherwise comparable cities with less or no rail transit service.

I am going to go into a summary of some of the findings that compared rail with bus only cities. Large rail cities have 400 per cent higher per capita ridership, 589 versus 118 annual passenger miles; 887 per cent higher transit commute mode split. In other words, that is a measurement of the choices that people make when they decide to come out of their cars and go into public transit; 13.4 per cent of them use rail and 2.7 per cent of them use the buses; 36 per cent lower per capita traffic facilities; 7.5 traffic fatalities for rail versus 11.7 annual deaths per 100,000 residents per bus only cities; 14 per cent lower per capita consumer transportation expenditure; US $448 average annual savings in transportation cost; 19 per cent smaller budget of household budgets devoted to transportation; 21 per cent lower per capita motor vehicle mileage—they use their cars less; 33 per cent lower transit operating cost per passenger mile; 42 cents for train versus 63 cents for bus—this is a comprehensive study of every major city in the United States of America; and 58 per cent higher transit service cost recovery.
4.15 p.m.

One of the things that I found very interesting in this study, in addition to an analysis, it was a critique of the opponents of rail. I am reading here:

"This study critiques studies which implied that rail transit is ineffective."

I am sure you have seen a lot of that in the newspapers over the last year. I mean there is a guy who writes every week. The study says that:

"It finds that their analysis is often incomplete, inaccurate and biased. It examines various factors that could offset rail transit benefits including the possibility of transit oriented development."

The study indicates that:

"…rail transit is particularly important in large growing cities in North America."

I was intrigued at some of the commentary in this study, because I could apply it to the Trinidad situation and I am quoting.

Mr. Vice President: Hon. Senators, the speaking time of the hon. Minister has expired.

Motion made, That the hon. Minister’s speaking time be extended by 15 minutes. [Hon. Dr. L. Saith]

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. Mark: Mr. Vice-President, through you, I know the Minister has spent his entire hour on the rapid rail system, but there are so many issues like water taxi.

Hon. C. Imbert: We are coming to that.

Sen. Mark: Yes, but you only have 15 minutes again. The PTSC, highways and so on, we want to know. He cannot do that in 15 minutes. He spent a whole 45 minutes on the rapid rail system.

Hon. C. Imbert: I am coming to that.

Mr. Vice-President: Sen. Mark, allow the Minister to finish his contribution, please.

Hon. C. Imbert: You know, Mr. Vice-President, I cannot believe that Sen. Mark would interrupt me; take two minutes of my time to say that he wants me to talk about something else. [Interruption] There is no provision for that, unfortunately. So I am just going to close on the rail with a quote from this study:
"When critics conclude that rail transit is ineffective and wasteful the failure is often in their own analysis, either from ignorance or intention."

Which is what I am seeing in Trinidad; intention. This $3 billion thing is intentional.

"Critics fail to use best practice for transit evaluation. Their analysis tends to be flawed and biased. They ignore the many benefits of rail transit, understate the full cost of travel by other modes; they use inaccurate information. These errors and omissions violate basic evaluation principles and distort results."

As I said, that is precisely what has been taking place in this little minority group of opponents of the railway. They are just wrong; that is the best way I could put it.

Although Sen. Mark does not want to hear me anymore on the rail, I just want to say that in 2003 the Rites Group, which is a government of India enterprise, incorporated in India as a public liability company; a leading consultant with operational experience in over 55 countries in Africa, South East Asia, Middle East and Latin America, with 2,000 staff including over 1,200 specialists of high professional standing in the field of engineering, et cetera, visited Trinidad and Tobago and did a study of our transit situation, which I have already quoted from in the other place, to the same person who seems to have forgotten what I told him several years ago.

What is interesting here—and it deals with a point that Sen. Prof. Deosaran brought up—in 1996 the Ministry of Works consultants, and that was another government, showed that over 215,000 persons travelled into Port of Spain during an average day, between the hours of 6.00 a.m. and 6.00 p.m. In 1996; 215,000 persons were already coming to Port of Spain. So, already Port of Spain is dealing with this absorption of over 200,000 people a day; very inefficiently of course, but it is dealing with it. So that if we have a rail system that can take half of that 200,000, there would not be any tremendous impact on Port of Spain, but of course, we are going to have an "around-d-town" service; we are going to have tramways; we are going to have a system of local transit in Port of Spain to shuttle people to and from and I am certainly looking at the tram around the Savannah. I am just trying to figure out how to do it without affecting the joggers, the cyclists and all the other people who use the Savannah.

The other thing that the Rites Group of India—it is a very reputable group; it is a state company in India—discovered is that the number of persons travelling the peak hour, peak direction person trips—that is a measure of the number of persons that cross a particular point—in 1996 was 21,600 persons, travelling
every hour west of the Uriah Butler Highway, and they had projected by 2005 that would be 23,000 persons and by 2015, 28,000 persons per hour would be travelling into Port of Spain. I am reading from their report:

"Experience has shown that road buses can optimally carry 10,000 persons per hour and in any case, a rail system becomes inescapable if the traffic density on a corridor reaches 20,000 personed hours per direction trip."

And we were at 21,000 in 1996 and probably now at 25,000 or maybe 30,000 in 2006. So we are way over the international threshold where it becomes inescapable that you have to use railways for mass transit. At least that is what the Rites Group of India had to say. I hope that deals with that and let me move now to some other issues in the few minutes available to me.

**Sen. Mark:** The water taxi. What is happening with the water taxi?

**Hon. C. Imbert:** I will come to that in a while, take it easy. I have something on water taxi; take it light. I will tell you in a while. I just wanted, hon. Senators, to let you know that in order to deal with the apparent confusion in the minds of persons in the public domain and I am not talking about anybody in here, Sen. Ali; I am not, I am not, I am just telling you; about when is this project going to start and when is that project going to start; it is not true; it is all a figment of somebody's imagination, et cetera.

I have here a record of the invitations to tender for a number of projects that are being put out by the National Infrastructure Development Company. The first one I want to look at is improvement to the Western Main Road from Morne Coco Road to Tucker Valley Road. For those who are not familiar with those points, Morne Coco Road is where Westmoorings ends and Tucker Valley Road is where Chaguaramas begins. The improvements to the Western Main Road, which is in fact the Cocorite stretch was put out to tender during the week of September 08, 2006 and the deadline for submissions is extended to November 13, 2006. So tenders will be coming in on a design/build solution to extend the dual carriageway from Westmoorings to Chaguaramas. Whether it is going to be by way of a causeway or whether it is going to be along the existing alignment, we will find out, because we have asked people to present options to us in their design/build solution.

I also want to confirm that tenders have been invited for the extension of the Solomon Hochoy Highway from Golconda to Debe. These tenders were invited on September 08, 2006; more than one month ago. You know, I see comments in the newspapers about this is all pie in the sky—and “ol' talk” but these ads, I saw
them myself. Big full page ad from NIDCO inviting tenders for the Golconda to Debe Highway; they already had site visits. Ten contractors have picked up documents for the extension of the Solomon Hochoy Highway, which is the first phase going to Point Fortin and the tender invitation has been extended to November 13, 2006 and we expect to make an award in this year, 2006. Therefore that highway should begin towards the end of this year or early January 2007. Just two projects I have called for you.

I also have tender invitation for the Mamoral dam, Caroni improvement, South Trunk Road improvement; about 45 projects here; all tender invitations issued, documents finished, designs done. We are inviting bids from contractors and we expect to get going on all of these in 2007; 45 major projects. [Desk thumping] I often wonder when I hear people saying oh, they heard me talk about a four lane road to Chaguaramas and that is just a "vaps". Did they not see the tender notice in the newspapers, because the people who are making these comments are people in the construction industry? Active practitioners in the construction industry talking this foolishness about it is a "vaps", and the notice in the newspapers one month ago. Let me come now to the water taxis.


Hon. C. Imbert: I know I have five minutes and I cannot disappoint Sen. Mark because he has been on his best behaviour today. I will inform Sen. Mark and other hon. Senators that preliminary test piling was done; not is going to be done; it was done in August 2006 for the berthing facilities for the first phase of the water taxi service from San Fernando to Port of Spain. Preliminary test piling was done in an area called Flat Rock. [Desk thumping] For those of you who know San Fernando; I do not know if you know where Flat Rock is, but it is close to the PTSC compound. That is where the hub is going to be for the water taxi service at Flat Rock in San Fernando. We have already done our test piles.

Yesterday I signed off on the design brief and I authorized the National Infrastructure Development Company to invite proposals so we could get an idea of firm prices for the vessels that would be operating this service, when it is in full operation. I understand there was some question about this, but let me tell you what is conceptualized at this time. Of course, as we implement the system it will be subject to modification. The route that we envisage is from Clifton Hill in Point Fortin to Flat Rock in San Fernando and we may have a stop in La Brea if required. We also have a stop in Waterloo or Orange Valley in the Chaguanaas area. Port of Spain, we have an area already allocated to us right next to the Breakfast Shed.
If you conceptualize the Breakfast Shed in your head; go south of the Breakfast Shed there is a big open area there and we have already reserved that area from the Port Authority and UDeCott. So that is where the terminal will be and there is adequate parking for hundreds of cars. We are already looking at a location at Invaders Bay by the Movie Towne area for another facility down there. We are also looking at a facility in Point Cumana for the deeper Diego Martin service. So this too is not a "vaps" and it is not a "voop" and it is not pie in the sky.

We have already started to do our engineering analysis and we are already looking at a fare of about $15 from San Fernando to Port of Spain and that is without subsidy, so the Government will have to consider whether it intends to subsidize that fare or not and that is for the regular service. Then we have a luxury service, travelling at 40 knots, coming from San Fernando to Port of Spain where we will be charging somewhere in the vicinity—that is what the model is showing—of $25 for the trip between San Fernando and Port of Spain, on a high speed vessel making that trip in under 30 minutes.

Sen. Munro: That is one way or two way?

Hon. C. Imbert: It is one way, under 30 minutes, for $25; that is the luxury service. The regular service without subsidy will be about $15 and with subsidy, I will say $10. Obviously, it is going to be a public utility and what I want to tell hon. Senators is that this is a model.

For example, the Tobago Inter-island Service, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago subsidizes that to the tune of over $200 million per year. The actual cost of carrying somebody to Tobago on a fast ferry is in excess of $300 one way. But the Government of Trinidad and Tobago subsidizes that to the extent of $200 out of that $300 and charges $100; this is all a matter of public policy. The figures I am giving you are the unsubsidized cost and just like electricity and public transportation and the inter-island service, just like gasoline, the Government will make a policy decision in terms of the level of subsidy it will provide on the water taxi service, but I can assure you it will be fast, affordable, pleasant, comfortable and revolutionary. [Desk thumping]

I thank you, Mr. Vice-President.

Mr. Vice-President: Hon. Senators, before we go to tea I would like to recognize in the Chamber, delegates attending the Biennial Conference of the Network of NGOs for the Advancement of Women; it is an international body. Ms. Brown and company, we welcome you. [Desk thumping] I would like us to recognize amongst those ladies, Member of Parliament from Antigua, Dr. Jackie
Quinn-Lee Andrew. She is not only the Minister of Labour in Antigua/Barbuda; she also has the distinction of being the first woman ever elected to government there. [*Desk thumping*]

Among those ladies also, we have Ms. Monique Fernandez, who is from the Coalition Government of Suriname [*Desk thumping*] and we have Ms. Rosaline O’Connell, who is a member of the National Women's Political Caucus of the USA. [*Desk thumping*] Welcome to Trinidad and Tobago and we do hope that your stay here is a wonderful one.

Hon. Senators, the Senate will now be suspended for tea. We shall return at 5.05 p.m.

4.35 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

5.05 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

**Sen. Raziah Ahmed:** Mr. Vice-President, the budget for fiscal year 2007 is a pretentious and feeble attempt to justify the mass extraction of our gas and natural resources to fuel economic indicators at the expense of social development. It reveals no incisive policy position for economic stability, neither in the long term nor in the short term, and is sadly empty with respect to filling the social development gaps that have become so glaring. It is a band-aid for a host of acute social problems involving massive wastage and it ignores the best advice of consultations with economists and international experts.

Mr. Vice-President, the World Summit on Social Development established a number of fundamental principles. The second fundamental principle is that sustainable social progress and economic development are mutually interdependent. Having achieved great GDP and per capita income statistics, we expected that if the PNM were truly caring in government it would have soared full throttle into doing everything conceivable to master social development. Instead, the Ministry of Social Development gets a paltry $1.8 billion out of a mass of $38 billion.

I am wondering if the budget speech was another case in point of how to lie with statistics. The budget speech ignores that in this ever changing dynamic global spectrum, we are but a small island state, somewhere in the peripheral vision of the imperial powers, who continue to outsmart us and outmanoeuvre us whenever they can as they exploit our labour supply and our agricultural lands, in their centuries old, unending quest to extract and ship abroad our diminishing natural resources.
The fiscal policy continues to reward them with tax incentives and package deals on prices and labour supply, even as such firms exploit strategies such as transfer pricing and offshoring to further escape paying revenues that are due to other governments. The budget ignores the larger reality; the big picture, that we are in fact standing on one leg, the energy sector when we have been richly blessed with much more human and natural resources than oil and natural gas. So having failed to address in a comprehensive and all-embracing manner the social development challenges, this 2007 fiscal package is an indictment that we will stay under this PNM regime just where we are, almost a sardine in a sea of global multinational corporations and superpower governments who mastermind the world's economy; who effect policy; who rant and rave and drop bombs on the basis of their own agenda.

Mr. Vice-President, imagine a moko jumbie knows that it has to stand on two legs. But picture this; imagine a moko jumbie disobedient to his trainer who is scolding him about his foolhardiness, standing tall on one leg beating his chest high up in the air, so high he could almost board a cruise liner jet and imagine an earthquake, 6.7 on the Richter scale. All the king’s horses and all the king’s men will not put him together again. What is clear is that contrary to all the pre-budget discussions, this 2007 fiscal package provides no hope, no glimmer of real solutions to the many social issues that besiege our communities, our women and our children, and the aged in particular.

In fact, more than anything else, the Social Sector Investment Programme document reflects massive implementation failure and the PSIP reads like a cut and paste document, plagiarized from older versions in circulation since the year 2000. This is an indicator that the PNM Government is in over its head. Indeed, the budget 2007 is a frightening proposition that the Government Ministers and their ministries will continue doing the same things, the same way, even as they promise different results. You cannot get better results if you keep doing things the same way. The PNM Government has lost its way. Mr. Vice-President, it was noted psychiatrist and political analyst, Martinique born Frantz Fanon, writing on the psychology of the colonized who said:

“The living expression of the nation is the moving consciousness of the whole of the people, it is the coherent, enlightened action of men and women. The collective building up of the destiny is the assumption of responsibility on the historical scale, otherwise there is anarchy, repression, and the resurgence of tribal parties and federalism.

The national government, if it wants to be national, ought to govern by the people, and for the people, for the outcasts and by the outcasts. No leader, however valuable he may be, can substitute himself for the popular will.”
Let us therefore speak to the issue of social services as they affect our children and our women and how they are being led down a pathway that perpetuates poverty and marginalization.

The Minister of Finance, the Hon. Sen. Enill, said that the preliminary report by the European Union on the standard of living conditions is that the poverty rate in this country is 17 per cent. I am relying on the documents that they furnished for us with the Appropriation Bill which quotes a figure of 24 per cent. Those documents said that according to a 2005 survey, poverty stood at 24 per cent and that document identified 9 per cent as living in a situation where they do not know where their next meal is coming from; the indigent.

The hon. Senator did not reveal any new statistic with regard to indigents, so I am asking, is it that the whole 17 per cent is indigent, or are we maintaining the 9 per cent indigents? In any event, I can rely on my own commute and every day on the highways and on the byways I see 10 or 12 persons who I feel in my heart do not know where their next mouthful of food will come from and the majority of persons in this bracket are women, children and young boys.

Mr. Vice-President, there is an unusually large proportion of single-parent households in this country, in which the head of household is female, but for the vast majority of these citizens, there is more month to the money; the money “done” long before the end of the month reaches. What is worse, of all the disadvantaged groups, more women and children are likely to fall into poverty in the next year as if it were a natural course. If a few more women have entered the workplace in recent times, then a few more children are under supervision by others for the first time or under no supervision at all, and a few more children have entered the data for children at risk.

An analysis shows that although the European Union gave two million euros to finance a comprehensive poverty eradication programme the midterm review by the European Union in 2006 described us, based on their review 2006, as having an unacceptable level of deprivation for a middle income country. In fact, they highlight that despite financing, there remained—and this is in their report—the absence of a coherent policy agenda and institutional framework to use the funding, among other things.

The European Union financed the implementation of the micro project fund with a micro credit fund for a further 0.8 million euros but it noted in its midterm review that between 2001 and 2006, only 56 projects were started, when in fact the financing required a minimum of 500 micro projects to assist the disadvantaged poor to overcome poverty. The lack of coherent policy reeks of a paucity of ideas. In other words, they have lost their way; they have the money and they do not know what to do with it.
Further, of the 56 projects started, the general delivery standard was described as poor by respondents or unsatisfactory, in a national survey of the public sector which delivers these social services, and this is in their Social Sector Investment Programme report. The alarming statistic is that the goal, the end result, the greatest return of the poverty reduction initiative of the PNM government is not a multi-pronged attack on the social inequity that perpetuates poverty, but their stated goal is to simply hope to deal with the indigent, that 9 per cent of the poor, who do not have a meal set out for them later.

Their policy therefore lacks project management and substance and since there is no real long-term vision to work on their problems in a determined fashion to lift them out of poverty for once and for all, I have to wonder if there is some measure of contempt for our poor women; the heads of single-parent households and their children. I believe that the PNM Government has failed to formulate, much less implement any significant programme of concerted action to lift the burden of the poor, and to empower women as a group in real measure.

5.20 p.m.

Those in poverty, together with those about to fall into poverty, may assume alarming proportions, and we have an obligation to change their circumstances. A UNC in government will implement programmes that are sustainable and equitable, to allow for income redistribution of the wealth of this country, so that our poor and indigent may experience a better and sustainable standard of living. [Desk thumping]

Mr. Vice-President, in response to Sen. Montano's explanation for the change of the name from old age pension to senior citizens grant—and this is something that affects our elderly people, a considerably disadvantaged group in our society, disadvantaged in more ways than financially—I wish to say two things on that: the first is that he said they can no longer call it pension, because a pension is something to which one contributes. I really do not know how to interpret Sen. Montano's statement. In my understanding, Sen. Montano's experience in finance and accounting, surely must have exposed him to the fact that there are thousands of pension plans which are non-contributory. For example, the thousands of public servants who receive pensions in this country; who have worked for many years; and who did not contribute one cent from their salaries towards any pension plan are now the beneficiaries of pensions. So, I am asking, are we now going to rename the public service pension as a senior citizens' grant?

Sen. Sahadeo: I beg your pardon, if she will give way?

Sen. R. Ahmed: No, you will have your chance.
Sen. Sahadeo: I was trying to educate you because your statements are totally inaccurate. [Crosstalk]

Hon. Senator: You cannot give way. You have a chance afterwards.

Sen. R. Ahmed: Could the hon. Senator, so full of damnation for all who allegedly mislead the Senate, himself be guilty? This is what he said yesterday, Mr. Vice-President. This is what he said in this honourable Senate. The second point that I wish to say with respect to that aspect of the name change, this name change comes overnight as it were, and completely betrays that there is no genuine concern for the aged and the elderly in our society on the part of the PNM Government.

I say that because those who care for the aged are acutely sensitive to the fact that any changes in their lifestyle; in their environment, in the things that they use from day-to-day; in the arrangement of their furniture in the room or the house in which they live, can very often lead to some levels of confusion and the older they are, the greater the level of confusion. By the time they get into the 80s, if one of them were to ask you to buy a tube of Colgate toothpaste for them and you were to bring back a different brand, they would probably use it, but two days later they would not recognize it for what it is and they would ask you to go and buy a tube of Colgate toothpaste. That is the reality of dealing with the elderly; people who have attained the grand age in their golden retirement—Sen. Martin Joseph, in their golden retirement—that is the reality. It is no golden hour for them, it is their golden retirement.

Mr. Vice-President, you see, brand switching is not something that the elderly people do. You switch around their stuff, they get confused; they get a little disoriented. So changing the name of the product overnight, is the package colour going to change? Is the envelope going to change? The whole thing is going to change. These people are probably—the oldest set of them are more than likely going to be confused, receive their cheques and put it down and not know it for what it is because it has changed on them. We need to be sensitive, extremely sensitive to the elderly. This propensity on the part of the PNM to spend money to change names and to re-brand, is perhaps not very cost effective.

But I need to talk for just a minute about BWEE. We have been told that the national airline, yesterday, was launched into a new brand, a new airline and I am very concerned that with respect to the London route, at the end of this year, towards the end of December, approximately 200 pilgrims will be leaving this island state and the traditional airline has been BWEE. The majority of these 200 pilgrims are retired people and elderly people. We would like to get the assurance
from the Members on the other side that the landing rights, the licences or whatever alternative arrangements to bring back the pilgrims into this country in January are as smooth as they were when they flew BWEE. And that is a concern that a minority group in this country has; it is a legitimate concern and we have been asking for information. There is no information to date and these are mostly elderly people who need to be assured that whichever airline takes over the route, that they would be able to fly back into Piarco without inconvenience.

Social and community services. The draft estimates for the Development Programme expenditure, shows a gaping hole in the allocation of financial resources to fund the much needed social and community programmes. The document reveals that $40.5 million was allocated, all of which goes into the HIV/AIDS programme and while that by itself is good, there is the blatant and sad neglect of other programmes such as the substance abuse rehabilitation facility; the community micro credit system; the establishment of centres for the socially displaced; the poverty alleviation programme; the centre of empowerment for young women; and the community outreach programmes.

It is as though these programmes once named and read into the reports, are a done deal and require no further injection of funds; no expansion; not even an allocation for maintenance of the programmes.

In the 2006 Review, under the item, social infrastructure, there is a paltry allocation of $315,000 only, allocated to HIV/AIDS again and a single national survey. But what is most interesting, is the evidence from that report of what the term social infrastructure funding means in the PNM fiscal package, as revealed in the PSIP report. That report shows that in 2006, 24 per cent of the funds budgeted for social infrastructure, was spent to move furniture in Jamaica from the High Commissioner’s residence, and over in Washington to refurbish the basement kitchen, not the main kitchen, the basement kitchen, and to install a bar, and basement toilet facilities and maid’s quarters at a cost of $5.5 million. A further $22 million was spent merely to draw plans, invite tenders and construct temporary offices for two or three buildings. That, Mr. Vice-President, is what is in the report under the sub-heading, social infrastructure.

Compare that to the trifling allocation to poverty alleviation and the social services programmes. A measly total of $28 million—$28 million, a little bit of money—has been allocated in fiscal 2007 for the construction of:

1. Social displacement centres—plural word

2. Social services centres—plural word—and about 14 other projects, including the long stalled Children's Authority.
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[SEN. AHMED]

Of these 16 odd projects in the social services arena that have been allocated $28 million, something is drastically wrong with the mathematics. The same report shows that they are spending $35 million to roll out six community centres—$35 million on six community centres. First of all, how does a community centre cost $6 million? Have you ever been in a community centre? Is it not a hall, an open floor plan with a little stage, a toilet and a yard? Six million dollars? Mr. Vice-President, I have been in community centres and that is what I see. As recent as a couple weeks ago, that is what I saw. But they have refurbished a basement kitchen, installed a bar and maid’s quarters in Washington, DC for $5.5 million.

The net reality is that the real social rehabilitative projects that will directly impact and alleviate poverty are allocated paltry sums, and the infrastructure it seems for winning and dining the big boys, getting big sums. Twenty-eight million dollars does not take care of poverty. Have you noticed how the social sector gets these trifling allocations? The deprived in society are most in need of a mega project. They need most to benefit in a substantial way, now [Desk thumping] from the oil and gas “Patrickmoney”, sorry, Mr. Vice-President, [Laughter] patrimony, a slip of the tongue is sometimes no mistake of the mind. What they are giving is mere lip service to social services and social delivery.

Children abusing children is another acute manifestation of the failure of the Government to use the windfall to create meaningful programmes for the poor and the disadvantaged. The list of innocents gets longer and the allocation for community mediation centres gets $100,000 and the roving care givers programme gets $50,000.

5.35 p.m.

The failed World Cup tsunami shelter would be of little use when the fabric of the family, the women and the children fall out of society in deprivation. The long traffic delays cut into homework time, relaxation time, meal time and play time for our children who must commute; that can only lead to further fragmentation of their delicate psyche. Yes, there are a few programmes getting off in the school system, but what about the children who are not in school; who break school; who do not go to school? There is no hope for intervention for that group.

The Draft National Gender Policy is an embarrassment and a highly controversial document that has been disowned by the PNM Prime Minister, who, in a callous wave of hand, tossed out months of work and consultation with the community and insulted significant stakeholders, leaving them disappointed and empty-handed. The Minister of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs stands accused of playing games with the community. [Desk thumping]

Sen. R. Ahmed: The *Express* newspaper, Sunday, April 02. [Sen. Ahmed raises newspaper] It has been said that the draft was rejected because of the laws regarding abortion. The irony is that somehow morality is a tool of convenience in the mind of Mr. Manning; a swatch here and a swatch there; none here, none there; sometimes he is in, sometimes he is out. What kind of doublespeak is that? Morality is like virginity, either you have it or you do not.

Hon. Senators: Ooh! [Desk thumping] [Laughter] [Crosstalk]

[Mr. Vice-President pounds the gavel]

Sen. Joseph: I wonder what the follow up to that is.

Hon. Beckles: Develop the point, please.

Sen. R. Ahmed: To date, there is no incisive policy to brazen out the current mores on the masculine identity crisis, negative attitudes towards women and those few career women who continually hit the glass ceiling at an alarming rate and eventually walk away unfulfilled and bitter with the systems that keep them down or else systems that favour the prostituting of women on the corporate ladder.

Hon. Senator: What?

Sen. R. Ahmed: There is a polite way of saying what this is: It is a failure in the arena of project management. The inability of the PNM to get projects off the ground is a sad reflection of the token and halfhearted planning typical of the regime and the result of cronyism, where the under-qualified are given top paying jobs.

Since women and children are among the most poor in this country, where are the nutritional programmes targeted to address this need? Yes, children get school lunches in the School Feeding Programme and the hon. Minister of Education herself was a mover and shaker in providing school breakfast; “breakfastes”.

Sen. Mark: Not breakfast, “breakfastes”.

Sen. Manning: We have no problem with it.

Sen. R. Ahmed: What about the programmes to feed starving mothers at home? [ Interruption] [Laughter] While boasting about this oil rich State, the
Government has consistently failed to put meaningful implementable programmes on the agenda in the short term and continues to lay blame on past regimes; meanwhile, the gap between the haves and the have-nots widens. [Desk thumping]

For the benefit of the Minister, Sen. Dumas, that is the bridge that we should be focusing on; that is the bridge we must build.

**Sen. Dumas:** Excuse me? [Crosstalk]

**Sen. R. Ahmed:** The Government's claim to fame is some puny subventions. Last year's fiasco with the withdrawal of funding from Servol and the Coalition Against Domestic Violence is another case in point of an uncaring government.

**Sen. Dumas:** You need glasses to see the bridge.

**Sen. R. Ahmed:** With respect to the smaller non-governmental organizations (NGOs), they need help. They provide a valuable service in our country. The fact of the matter is that these NGOs are run by volunteers; staffed by underpaid or unpaid persons who are mostly females. Many of the smaller NGOs are unable to access what little state funding is available to them, often because they do not have the wherewithal to produce accurate and timely financial or annual reports, which is a requirement for state funding.

A UNC in government, as a matter of urgency, recommends that a micro fund for the paying of accounting firms to assist these NGOs to generate accurate and timely financial reports is very necessary. This would allow them to submit their documents to the funding ministries and they would not be thwarted and frustrated by the endless stream of paperwork requirements. In addition, there needs to be the removal of bias in the distribution of these resources, because when you examine the reports, certain NGOs get the bulk of the funding and the smaller ones get almost negligible amounts.

Regarding domestic violence, there are thousands of phone calls to the various hotlines every month and there are five or six referrals to most shelters every week. A number of halfway houses and shelters are filled to capacity and there are, actually, chronic domestic violence victims in this country who have to make the rounds to various shelters when their maximum time at any one shelter has expired. That is the reality; I know some of them. Yet, there are no plans to expand these facilities or extra subventions to innovate the service delivery; no real rehabilitation support for the battered and abused in society.

Mr. Vice-President, in the last page of the Public Sector Investment Programme (PSIP) report, there is a statistic which says that 1.2 per cent of the budget has been allocated to poverty alleviation and social services. On page 68
of the same report, that amount is $75.5 million for the implementation of programmes, poverty alleviation and social services. There are no new innovative programmes that address the evolving societal needs of the child of the present generation. Yet the old child welfare programmes continue without any kind of redirection, refocusing and awareness of the current reality.

Further, Mr. Vice-President, the CERP programme is evidence of the disparity in spending. This programme seeks to address poverty alleviation. The programme targeted, according to the report, only four suburban communities, to the neglect of the poor in the rural and, especially, in the non-PNM communities. This further perpetuates marginalization of the disadvantaged and the poor.

Sen. Dumas: We have no such community; there is no non-PNM community in Trinidad.

Sen. R. Ahmed: There is an increasing phenomenon of marginalization in this small country. The advent of gang warfare in the East-West Corridor has led to an insipid marginalization of hundreds of decent and law-abiding citizens in specific areas along the Corridor. The reality is that the whole community, the whole Corridor is being stigmatized and mislabelled, and innocent children are growing up with their backs against the wall in an environment that is continuously pushing them into a corner, where they are constantly defending themselves against the backlash of gang violence and a rapid erosion of norms and values.

Now they are being called ugly names in the school and in the malls and in the cinemas. This has reached Scrooge proportions and law-abiding parents in these marginalized communities are grappling unaided with how to foster self-esteem in their children and how to keep them on the straight and narrow in the light of extreme marginalization that invites them into gang participation.

Where did this thing come from? It is a recent phenomenon; decidedly and emphatically it blossomed under this current administration. [Desk thumping] Prior to that, people in the disadvantaged areas and similar areas on the East-West Corridor were simply hardworking; often in the most menial jobs in the economy, for example, in the La Basse recycling economy. Gang violence has unleashed on the innocent a stigma that now serves to isolate many young children who are already disadvantaged in other ways. There are no intervention programmes for these specific children.

The mere participation in gangs is a manifestation of unmet social needs in the society that has festered and turned into a sore and those who join gangs and perpetuate violence are themselves marginalized. They are the socially isolated and they are crying out for help. To date, the emergence of this phenomenon continues unstemmed.
There is a lot of talk with the elders in some of the communities, and that is very good. The process falls down where the elders are not sufficiently empowered to dispel the injustice and to reposition the youth of their community. So it is a lot of talk; a lot of ideas, but very little or no empowerment.

Mr. Vice-President, we call for an immediate and concrete intervention programme and adequate funding for communities along the East-West Corridor that are disposed towards gang proliferation. Never before have we experienced in this country this form of social deviance. There are people in Trinidad and Tobago who proclaim that they will not go into Laventille. That only marginalizes good people who make up the majority of the residents in these areas.

A UNC government would effect immediate programmes to focus on the psychology of gang formation and gang violence and seek to remove the social discrepancies and fill the gaps that have created these marginalized groups. Giving a man a house and a temporary job does not promote sustainable livelihood. It does not deliver a value system that embraces the work ethic, neither does it foster a value system that restores trust, love and equity among these disadvantaged children.

5.50 p.m.

Mr. Vice-President: Hon. Senators, the speaking time of the hon. Senator has expired.

Motion made, That the hon. Senator’s speaking time be extended by 15 minutes. [Sen. W. Mark]

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. R. Ahmed: I thank the Senators for being so charitable.

To continue, Mr. Vice-President, these are the specific programmes that we would target towards addressing the psychological and emotional needs in these communities.

Apart from that, there are other rural communities that have begun to display some inkling of gang deviance and programmes for intervention must be facilitated for all and sundry, Mr. Vice-President.

Under the current regime, all and sundry does not exist. A case in point, the matter of the broadcast licence will remain forever etched in the psyche of the Hindu people in this country; the denial, the court actions and the Cabinet’s high-
handedness was an attempt to marginalize portions of the Hindu population organized under the Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha; [Desk thumping] to marginalize a whole class of people on cultural and religious lines, and to traumatize their parents and children into submission when the denial was done over and over again so as to run them out of the land of their birth. [Desk thumping]

**Sen. Mark:** Yes.

**Sen. R. Ahmed:** What was the agenda? It is not conceivable how these victims of the PNM Cabinet will outlive the shame and disgrace they face when their children began to ask them if the Hindus were not a legitimate group in the business sector.

**Sen. Dumas:** Remember we have the right of reply.

**Sen. R. Ahmed:** It was decades before Hindu and Muslim marriages were made legal. We had almost forgotten that such discrimination existed, but when the broadcast licence’s denial was hoisted upon that sector of the population, we remembered.

As a result of pioneering work of one of our most brilliant legal minds in the courts, an unprecedented number of cases have been pursued and won in short time against the State. [Desk thumping] Proving, as they say on television—beyond a shadow of a doubt—that there is discrimination in the workplace on the basis of race. There was no apology from anyone in Government.

The social impact of racial discrimination is marginalization and subservience. Are we a free people, Mr. Vice-President, or are some of us just token citizens? There has been no diversity awareness programmes and merely lip service to cultural awareness.

Finally, I was both alarmed and astonished, and I was deeply saddened when I read in the Trinidad Guardian of Thursday, October 12, 2006, a report that said—[By order of the Chair, remarks withdrawn] Is this not testimony? [Interruption] This is what the newspaper report says.

**Sen. Joseph:** Mr. Vice-President, on a point of order. I am not aware of the Minister of National Security referring to any Islamic law as being backward.

**Sen. Mark:** It is a quote.

**Sen. Joseph:** Well, she can quote a newspaper. You know what I am saying, and you know about newspaper, right Dr. Gopeesingh? “And you doh believe everything newspaper says, right?”
Mr. Vice-President: Sen. Joseph. Hon. Senators, let us bring this back to order please?

Sen. Ahmed—

Sen. Mark: She is quoting. [Crosstalk]

Sen. Joseph: The newspaper can say anything.

[Mr. Vice-President pounds his gavel]

Mr. Vice-President: Sen. Mark, Sen. Ahmed said she was alarmed at reading that.

Sen. Mark: Yes.

Mr. Vice-President: I would like her to clarify that she did not feel alarmed at hearing the Minister say that.

Sen. R. Ahmed: Mr. Vice-President, since I read that part out of a prepared text, I would reread it. I was alarmed and saddened, et cetera, when I read in the Trinidad Guardian of Thursday, October 12, 2006 a report which said—[By order of the Chair, remarks withdrawn]

This is the clipping, and with your permission, I would read it. Thursday, October 12, 2006, page 13 of the Trinidad Guardian under the headline:

“Joseph scoffs at call for Islamic laws, bounty hunters

“National Security Minister Martin Joseph has described as backward calls for Islamic laws and the introduction of bounty hunters to combat…”

Hon. Senator: That is totally different.

Sen. Joseph: Mr. Vice-President, can I, on a point of order—you see, she brought two things together. The Minister of National Security in fact, did say about bounty hunting as being backward, a step backward. She mixed up that with Islamic law. [Crosstalk]

Mr. Vice-President: Sen. Mark, I am on my feet.

Sen. Mark: Okay.

Mr. Vice-President: If the two matters are mixed up, Sen. Ahmed, I would like you to clarify what is what.

Sen. Mark: She is quoting, it is in the newspapers.

Hon. Beckles: The newspaper never said that.
Sen. R. Ahmed: Mr. Vice-President, permit me to ask for your guidance. I have been in this—

Sen. Dumas: “The same way you doh want people to say that people tief...know when to be sensitive.”

Sen. R. Ahmed:—Chamber on several occasions when newspaper reports were quoted, used over and over again, and there has never been an attempt by anybody to stop the reading of what is carried in a newspaper article once it is properly referenced. Why am I being stopped now?

Mr. Vice-President: Sen. Ahmed, what is the guidance you are seeking?

Sen. Mark: “Well, she wants to know why she can’t quote ‘De Guardian’.”

Sen. R. Ahmed: Why am I being stopped, when others have done it on every occasion? [Crosstalk]

Mr. Vice-President: Sen. Ahmed, what is causing the confusion is what was said as opposed to what was reported and the apparent mix up between what was said and what is being stated here this evening. I suggest that you move on because you only have four minutes.

Sen. Dumas: You are trying to raise racial and ethnic division in this country.

[Sen. R. Ahmed on her feet]

Sen. Montano: Mr. Vice-President, on a point of order, the Senator must withdraw that statement because it is grossly inaccurate. [Desk thumping]

Mr. Vice-President, under Standing Order No. 84—the Senator should sit by the way—she cannot do that and if she is going to leave that on the record, then somebody is going to take her somewhere where she is going to be disciplined.

She cannot leave that on the record because what she read from the newspaper is not what she read from her speech and she must withdraw the comment that was in her speech.

Hon. Beckles: Because it is not in the newspapers.

Sen. Mark: She quoted the newspaper.

Sen. R. Ahmed: May I move on Mr. Vice-President—

Hon. Senators: Nooo.

Sen. R. Ahmed:—and quote directly? I did not say that.

Sen. Montano: No, withdraw it.
Mr. Vice-President: Sen. Ahmed, there is clearly a case of great misunderstanding here. And I would like to ask that you strike that off the record please? I am asking you for the second time to move on.

Sen. Mark: Strike what out?

Mr. Vice-President: The statement that the Minister said that Islamic laws are backward.

Sen. Montano: She must withdraw it.

Sen. R. Ahmed: I read it from the newspaper.

Sen. Dumas: It is how you link it.

Mr. Vice-President: Sen. Ahmed, could you please move on from there?

Sen. Montano: Mr. Vice-President, she must withdraw it. She must withdraw the statement, not just that it be removed from the Hansard. The Senator must withdraw the statement, it is grossly inaccurate.

Sen. Mark: She is not withdrawing it.

[Both Sen. Mark and Sen. Montano on their feet]

Sen. Montano: You have no manners, you know.

Sen. Mark: I say she is not withdrawing it.

Sen. Montano: You have no manners.

Mr. Vice-President: Hon. Senators, we have had a good day so far.

Sen. Mark: “Yuh think we on a plantation?”

Mr. Vice-President: Sen. Mark! I have requested that the statement be withdrawn, it be struck off the records and I have asked the Senator to continue, just move on. I would like that done, please?

Sen. Manning: Her time is up.

Sen. Mark: Continue Raziah.

Sen. Dumas: “Argue politics, doh argue race, ethnicity and religion.”

Hon. Senator: She has nothing to talk about.

Sen. Dumas: Stay away from race, ethnicity and religion.
Hon. Senator: Yes, she should stick to the issues, not people. [Crosstalk]

Sen. Munro: “Doh go there. Let her move on. Doh go there.”

Sen. R. Ahmed: Mr. Vice-President, earlier—

Sen. Montano: Several of her statements are racial and inflammatory; we have to put you out of the Senate.

Sen. Mark: No man, put out who?

Hon Senator: Excuse me?

[Gross confusion]

[Mr. Vice-President pounds gavel]

Sen. Mark: “He can’t put out anybody.” He has no authority to say that.

Mr. Vice-President: Senators Mark and Montano.

Sen. Mark: This man believes that he owns the Senate.

Mr. Vice-President: Sen. Mark!

Sen. Mark: You cannot say that!

Mr. Vice-President: Sen. Mark!

Sen. Montano: I can say that; it is racial and inflammatory. She should be put out for that.

[Mr. Vice-President pounds gavel]

Sen. Mark: You cannot say that, you are out of place, totally out of place.

Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh: [Inaudible] …disrespect here.

Mr. Vice-President: Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh, for God’s own sake, avoid adding fuel to a flame. There is absolutely no need for bringing the level of the debate down to what it is coming to now.

Sen. Ahmed, I asked you to continue. Please wind up.

Sen. Mark: She has four more minutes

6.05 p.m.

Sen. R. Ahmed: Mr. Vice-President, I have been trying to continue, but I am being disturbed all the time. However, let me continue. Earlier today I sat in this honourable Senate and when my colleague referenced some Islamic laws in an
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[SEN. AHMED]

Islamic country, I witnessed the snickering and the sneering of the Members on that side, and I will close by saying in this honourable Senate that I have never felt more marginalized in this country as I feel now. [Crosstalk] Again, they are scoffing and laughing at Islamic laws.

Sen. Dumas: So you want to bring “cut-off hand” laws here?

Sen. Munro: It is the principle. [Crosstalk]

Mr. Vice-President: Members, allow Sen. Ahmed to wind up her contribution.

Sen. Dumas: Stay away from religion.

Sen. R. Ahmed: Mr. Vice-President, I was saying that I have never felt more marginalized in this country as I feel now, but we, the citizens of this country, the Members of this honourable Senate, have an obligation to peacefully coexist; we have an obligation to love all our neighbours; we have an obligation to respect our diversity, to help the disadvantaged, to nurture all of our children and to share this beautiful land of our birth with justice and equity.

Mr. Vice-President, I thank you. [Desk thumping]

Mr. Vice-President: Minister Beckles.

Sen. Seetahal, S.C.: I am supposed to be next. Am I not supposed to be next?

Sen. Mark: We have a schedule.

Mr. Vice-President: Sen. Mark—

Sen. Dr. Saith: Mr. Vice-President, I worked out a schedule with all sides of the Senate where we would debate one against one—one from the Government, one from the Opposition, one from the Government, one from the Independents. The only exception we made was at the start of the sittings where we have an Opposition and an Independent following each other. There are 15 of us on this side and a debate really means one and one. So the Opposition having spoken now, we would have the Government, then an Independent, then the Government.

Sen. Seetahal, S.C.: Let me apologize if that is so, but my understanding is that I was to speak next in light of the fact that I have a trial going on and I was given special leave to come here. That is my understanding. I was shown the list and this is why I stood up.

Sen. Dr. Mc Kenzie: Mr. Vice-President I thought it would have been, because I did say I would switch with Sen. Seetahal, S.C. whenever she came. So I thought it was Sen. Seetahal, S.C. then both people from that side and I would be last. I thought it would have been Minister Beckles, Sen. Chin Lee and then me. Obviously, it is a misunderstanding.
Sen. Dr. Saith: Mr. Vice-President, if, in fact, the Senator has to go to a trial—the court now?


Sen. Dr. Saith: I wondered if she was going to night court. I would prefer, rather than have two speakers here back-to-back, that we end up with one from our side, one from there, one from here and one from there. Since you no longer have to go to court, I do not think you would mind gracing us with your presence for the rest of the debate.

Sen. Dr. McKenzie: Talking about two speakers back-to-back, you are doing the same thing—

The Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment (Hon. Pennelope Beckles): Thank you very much, Mr. Vice-President. Let me say that I am very pleased to be in the Senate to make my contribution. Of course, since I have been here I had the benefit of looking at the schedule agreed upon, but it appears, as they said, that there was some misunderstanding. But nonetheless, for the time that I have to make my contribution, I would like to, first of all, make it abundantly clear that Eid would be celebrated in this country very soon; as a matter of fact, next Tuesday, and this Government and this party has always had the highest regard for the Muslim community. [Desk thumping] Therefore, no one in this Senate is going to give the impression to the Muslim community, or the national community, that this PNM does not have regard for the Muslim community. [Desk thumping] And people should not come to this Senate and use whatever time that is allocated, when we are debating a very serious matter—our budget—to voice their own personal concerns—

Sen. Mark: You are a guest. Do not lecture us here. You are our guest.

Hon. P. Beckles: Do not tell me who to lecture! You would have your time. I would say what I have to say, because it is not going to be left on the record—

Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh: You are a guest.

Hon. P. Beckles: I am an elected Member of Parliament, elected by 13,000 people. [Desk thumping] Who elected you? Do not tell me anything about any guest! I have 13,000 Arimians that voted for me! “You farse!” [Desk thumping]

Sen. Mark: Let her withdraw that statement. You have to withdraw it.

Hon. P. Beckles: Mr. Vice-President, I have come here very cool and calm to make my contribution, and please ask Sen. Mark not to provoke me. Do not provoke me! [Crosstalk]
Sen. Mark: I take offence to that. I might be aggressive but I am not “farse”.

Mr. Vice-President: Hon. Senators, I made mention of the fact a short while ago that we have had a good debate. You know, I was wondering if this would happen, and even though some people would want to say these things do happen, these things must not happen. Do not say to me, I do not like what was said to me in response to what I said. If we do not disturb; if we do not engage in banter—you cannot tell the Minister: “You are a guest here; you cannot do this; you should not be doing this.” Do not do it. The crosstalk is not necessary. Let us desist from it. Okay? I would like to think that we are mature enough to allow the debate to proceed as it did before. Please, Madam Minister, could you continue? [Desk thumping]

Hon. P. Beckles: Thank you very much, Mr. Vice-President. [Interrupt] Sen. Mark and I are very good friends, you know, but he likes to provoke me. I know that it is really because he is seeing so many ladies visiting. [Desk thumping]

But, you know, I sat and listened to the contribution of Sen. Ahmed and I know this is a debate. What I did not hear was any response to the former speaker, Minister Imbert, so I am not sure if things operate a little differently in the Senate. Having said that, there are a couple things Sen. Ahmed said that I need to respond to before I get into my substantive contribution. In the main, Sen. Ahmed said that the PNM has lost its way. But I need to quickly remind her that two days ago the PNM, in convention, with almost 20,000 people present, celebrated 50 years in Government. [Desk thumping] Fifty years and we have lost our way?

Sen. Munro: In policy. [Crosstalk]

Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh: When you were there—[Inaudible] So do not bring up that now.

Hon. P. Beckles: I am responding. You were not here when Sen. Ahmed said that the PNM has lost its way. So I am just responding, because this is a debate, you know. In a debate somebody cannot come and say when a party has been in power and is celebrating 50 years, that it has lost its way. And we are going for 50 more years. [Desk thumping] I want to ask Sen. Ahmed, how many anniversaries has the UNC celebrated?

I just want to go on to some other small points that they have made, because I know some of the things I am going to say will get them a little agitated and I am trying to take your point and keep it a little cool.
Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh: You know we love you.


Hon. P. Beckles: Mr. Vice-President, I know you did not hear Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh say that he loves me, but I prefer to only have just one. [Laughter] I am not into competition. I also do not want to run the risk that it may end up in the newspapers. [Laughter]

As I was saying, on a more serious note, and I am really just attempting that we could just cool it down and come back to being very good.


Hon. P. Beckles: Mr. Vice-President, Sen. Ahmed made some very serious allegations. She said that there are systems that are being put in place to keep women down. She indicated that there is prostituting of women at the corporate ladder and, basically indicated that there are practices and procedures to keep women down in Trinidad and Tobago, and that there are a lot of women and children that are poor and there are no systems, no programmes in place for the benefit of women and children.

I do not want to go into the area of my colleague, the Minister of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs, because there are so many programmes under her Ministry for women and children that Minister Joan Yuille-Williams will probably take more than an hour to speak about those programmes. But it is important for me to make it abundantly clear that the Government has put out a guide to social services, and that guide is comprehensive and informs the members of the public as to what are all the social services that the Government offers. There is a multiplicity of programmes. So that statement is absolutely false.

One of the things I think we need to avoid when we are debating in the Parliament is simply getting up and making statements without any evidence and without doing any research. I know my colleague has not yet spoken and I am sure that she will spend her time dealing with that.

Certain other allegations were made about not providing services for battered women and additional funds for NGOs. She also spoke about the social development, that only $1.8 billion has been allocated under that Ministry for the purposes of social development. If we look in any dictionary or any definition of social development, we would know that it is not just the $1.8 billion that is allocated under that Ministry that will deal with social issues. They would be dealt
with under the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs, the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Local Government, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs. In effect, the entire budget of $38 billion deals with issues relating to social development. [Desk thumping]

6.20 p.m.

I want to get into my substantive contribution and in so doing congratulate the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance for his excellent presentation of the Government’s major initiatives and fiscal measures proposed for 2007. We know that the theme of this year’s budget is “Vision 2020: Moving Forward”.

As it relates to the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment which relates to provisions of infrastructural services and utilities and a sustainable and healthy environmental sector, the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment is committed to implementing policies in those sectors which would have the impact of raising the standard of living and enhancing the quality of life of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. We are doing this through the provision of a safe, affordable and reliable electricity and water supply; reformed postal sector which would be capable of meeting the universal service obligation; the development of the capacity to handle sordid and hazardous waste and waste water; the sustainable utilization of the country’s—

PROCEDURAL MOTION

The Minister of Public Administration and Information and Minister of Energy and Energy Industries (Sen. The Hon. Dr. Lenny Saith): Mr. Vice-President, I beg to move that the Senate continue its sitting until the completion of the contributions by the hon. Minister, Sen. Dana Seetahal S.C., Sen. The Hon. Howard Chin Lee and Sen. Dr. Eastlyn Mc Kenzie. I would give the order for tomorrow as I close, so we would not have the confusion that we had today.

Question put and agreed to.

APPROPRIATION BILL
(BUDGET)

Hon. P. Beckles: Mr. Vice-President, I continue with the other implementing policies to treat with sustainable management of the environment as adoption of proactive and collaborative approach to disaster preparedness and management; the continued implementation of community-based programmes and the continued implementation of social intervention programmes which target vulnerable families and communities.
I now turn specifically to the electricity sector. I know that Sen. Ali raised a number of questions in his contribution in relation to this particular matter. The focus of the electricity sector in respect of Vision 2020 is the provision of reliable and affordable bulk power sufficient to sustain the residential, industrial and commercial needs of the country. T&TEC has estimated that the demand for electricity for residential, commercial and industrial needs will increase from 1,176 megawatts in 2006 to 1,389 megawatts in 2007, an increase of 213 megawatts. That would be attributed in the main to projected growth in existing residential, commercial and industrial demands, increased demands in the large industrial establishments that the Government is implementing.

To meet this increased demand in December 2005, T&TEC signed a power purchase agreement with PowerGen for the supply of an additional 208 megawatts by 2007, from the Point Lisas Power Station. Plans are in train to establish a new 60 megawatts power station at Cove Estate in Tobago and there are also plans for an additional 210 megawatts of generating capacity at La Brea Industrial Estate. The cost of developing this extra 478 megawatts of generating capacity to meet the country’s electricity demand in 2007, has been estimated at $630 million.

In relation to transmission and distribution, the last major upgrade of the T&TEC transmission system was done in the mid 1980s. Studies done in 2002, show that the existing system is now inadequate, especially the system that supplies power to Port of Spain and the northern part of Trinidad. Moreover, the rapid expansion on the housing and commercial sectors in the east, together with the establishment of the new technological and industrial park at Wallerfield have necessitated the reinforcement and expansion of the east transmission system.

In relation to South Trinidad, this part of the country carries the second largest demand for electricity. The new industrial estates that are being developed at Union in La Brea and Chatham would also necessitate the reinforcement and extension of the existing transmission network in South Trinidad.

In the north, east and south development plans T&TEC has earmarked a series of projects to commence in 2007, which would involve the establishment of tower and overhead lines, cable circuits and the upgrading of substations to improve the transmission and distribution infrastructure in keeping with our growing demands for electricity, so that all customers, residential, commercial and industrial can receive a safe and reliable supply of electricity.
We cannot omit our sister isle Tobago; since in the early 1960s it has been supplied with electricity via 233 KV submarine cables and there is a standby generating plant supplying the island, when there is a loss of supply from Trinidad.

Like Trinidad, Tobago is also experiencing a growing demand for bulk generating capacity, certainly evidence that this part of the country is on a growth path towards developed country status. Tobago’s peak demand is close to 35 megawatts. T&TEC has indicated that this growth would continue in the medium and long-term. T&TEC has also advised that the transmission interface between North Oropouche in Trinidad and Milford Bay in Tobago is proving to be inadequate to the extent that the standby generating plant in Tobago must be operated frequently to ensure power quality and supply capacity. The Tobago development plant has also identified projects to commence in 2007, involving new generating and substation upgrades to address the island’s growing demand for electricity.

Permit me to identify to this honourable Senate the major transmission projects which T&TEC will be commencing in 2007. In North Trinidad, the establishment of the Bamboo to Sea Lots, 132 KV tower line. This is to introduce the supply to Port of Spain and provide for numerous large building projects under construction in the city. The establishment of Sea Lots to gateway 135 KV cable circuit will involve the construction of a 132 KV underground cable system to facilitate the 132 KV volts supply to gateway substation. The term “gateway” is synonymous with the term East-West Corridor. It represents the main 132 transmission connection between the Bamboo substation and the new substation that is to be constructed in Port of Spain.

The establishment of the Bamboo to Mount Hope 2 KV tower line will involve the construction of a 132 kilovolts double circuit tower line to facilitate the 132 KV supply to Mount Hope substation. This is necessary to support the ageing north east sub-transmission wing and then the upgrade of the Bamboo substation.

With respect to East Trinidad, the establishment of the 132 KV volts tower line linking San Rafael to Wallerfield would deal with a supply to the proposed Tamana In Tech Park. The establishment of the 222 123 12 KV substation at Wallerfield would improve system reliability and cater for future growth load which would include the development of the Tamana Park and the University of Trinidad and Tobago. The upgrade of the Pinto Road 66 KV linking Pinto to Wallerfield and the establishment of a new Macoya 66 1/2 KV substation.
In relation to South Trinidad there will also be the establishment of a 220 KV tower line linking Reform to Debe and a tower line linking Debe to Union. These transmission lines are required to reinforce the transmission system in South Trinidad and the establishment of a No. 1 and No. 2 132 KV circuits linking Chatham to Union. These are parts of South Western Transmission Re-enforcement Programmes. There will be new substations at Union, Reform, Brighton and Tarouba. There will be the upgrade of the Galeota and Santa Flora substations.

In relation to Tobago, the establishment of the 66 KV network and the upgrade of the 33 kilovolts network would improve the reliability of supply in the sister isle; cater for future load and facilitate the establishment of the new generating plant at Cove Estate; the establishment of the Cove and Studley Park substations and the upgrade of Milford Bay and Scarborough substations.

One of the concerns of members of the public has been the issue of customer service delivery. In order to treat with that in 2007, T&TEC would be making investments in the sum of $84 million in areas to improve customer service and company responsiveness to customers’ needs. The main areas of investment would be upgrading of the fleet; pole replacement; establishing of call centres and introductions of more convenient payment methods for improved customer management; upgrading and expanding supervisory control data acquisition system; replacement of obsolete microwave radio system to a system that provides more rapid response; customer emergencies; expansion of the fibre optic network to interconnect all its substations to facilitate operating data from the field to make instantaneously available to operators at the system control centre and replacement of existing metering systems with advanced metering infrastructure or AMI system.

I now turn to a programme called the National Social Development Programme, but specifically as it relates to electricity.

**Sen. Anmolsingh-Mahabir:** I want to make one intervention. What is the price to the consumers? I think that there is some concern with regard to the increase in price of T&TEC. I do not know if the Minister may wish to give us some enlightenment on that.

**Hon. P. Beckles:** All these upgrades that the Government and T&TEC are involved in at the end of the day when it is done, it would actually make electricity more affordable and reliable. As it relates to the RIC and the rate determination, that is before Cabinet and very soon you will hear an announcement.
I will focus on the NSIP programme which is a National Social Intervention Programme under the ministry to meet expressed needs of vulnerable communities throughout Trinidad and Tobago. There are two implementing agencies, T&TEC and WASA. For the purpose of 2005 and 2006 the electrification projects dealt with illuminating parks, recreation grounds, installation of street lights and the National Street Lighting Programme. Those are the areas I will treat with now. In relation to 2005/2006, there were 337 projects at a cost of $18.7 million; 668 households benefited. Some of the areas are Caroni Central, Caroni East, Couva North, Naparima, Arima, Princes Town, Tobago East, Tobago West and Siparia.

Under this project we have now developed a new programme, the House Wiring Programme. In this programme, persons who cannot afford to wire their houses, the ministry through NSDP would pay for the cost of wiring them. At the end of September 2006, 350 families had benefited. Some of the areas are Mayaro, Chaguanas, Oropouche, Laventille, Princes Town, Diego Martin, Toco and Arima.

To say a bit about the illumination of parks and recreation grounds, I know that this matter was raised earlier by Sen. Mark. A pilot project was started earlier this year. The first three parks we are looking at are Palmiste, Aranguez and Eddie Hart Ground. We have completed the Eddie Hart Ground which is the smallest of the three, about 794 metres at the cost of $400,000. We have already calculated the cost to complete those in Palmiste and Aranguez. We expect to start those two projects before the close of the fiscal year. Under the NSDP other projects that were completed were: Chatham Park in Oropouche, Yolande Pompei Ground, St. Stephens College Ground in Princes Town, the grounds at Praesto Praesto Youth Camp, Couva, Fort George.

We started a very special project during the Carnival season, the illumination of panyards. Over 101 panyards were lit throughout Trinidad and Tobago. For the fiscal year 2006 to 2007, in relation to new parks that would be lit, we are looking at a cost of $10 million.

6.35 p.m.

Mr. Vice-President, I now would like to go to the National Street-lighting Programme but before I give the specifics of that programme, I will also say that under the NSDP, 13,412 street lights were installed in residential communities. The Government has now moved, under the National Street-Lighting programme to light every city, every town, looking at community centres, looking at play parks, looking at lighting all our highways and major roadways.
This has been an extremely successful programme and the Cabinet approved the installation of some 82,000 new street lights, to improve the quality and level of illumination of streets to meet the First World standards through the upgrade of an estimated 36,000 street lights, from 70 watts to 250 watts; to illuminate 80 kilometres of new primary and secondary roadways; to address the street lighting needs of all housing developments and to ensure that all areas prone to criminal activity are adequately lit so as to contribute to the reduction of crime, and providing a possible deterrent to such activities.

At the end of September, 2006, T&TEC has installed 53,276 new street lights. [Desk thumping] T&TEC has upgraded 19,276 lamps in 93 communities in Trinidad and 43 in Tobago, at the cost of $302 million. [Desk thumping]

Mr. Vice-President, when I was here on the last occasion, the question was asked exactly how applications are made for this project. As I indicated before, MPs, NGOs, community groups, schools have applied. I will quickly give you an idea of some of the areas: Arima, La Horquetta, Guanapo, Malabar, 3,086; Arouca, 1,086; Chaguanas, 1,916; Charlieville, 498; Couva/Preysal, 1,896; Cunupia, 2,902,Debe/Barrackpore, 1,541, Diego Martin, 1,373; Freeport/Chase Village, 2,810; Gulf View, 325; La Brea, 1,253; Laventille, 1,329, Marabella, Gasparillo, Williamsville, Piparo, 3,036; Penal, Siparia, Chatham, 4,602; Point Fortin, 1,788; San Fernando, La Romaine, Corinth, Diamond Village, and Woodland, 2,600. In Tobago, Bagatelle, 114; Bon Accord, 594; Carnbee, 165; Delafo, Milford, 143; Mount Pleasant, 328; Scarborough, 150; Signal Hill, 153, bringing a total of 72,605 upgrading and installed street lights.

I would certainly like to compliment the board, management, staff and employees of T&TEC. [Desk thumping] I know that as we install more lights there are concerns in some areas that the lights are not coming fast enough. I am asking them to be patient with us as the Cabinet decision is to light every pole in the country. While that is a two-year project, Mr. Vice-President, launched in December, 2005 that figure that I have just given you of the almost 73,000 lights have been done in 10 months, so clearly they are going to meet the target before the time and we are going to look at other areas that may have been left out. In fiscal 2007, the Diego Martin Highway, the San Fernando Bypass, the Churchill Roosevelt Highway—from Nestle to Trincity, the Priority Bus Route from Tunapuna to Arima, these projects have been budgeted to cost $81.5 million.

Mr. Vice-President, at some point in time a decision was taken to close down all the trade schools. This Government has taken a decision to reopen all the trade schools. [Desk thumping] The Government has recognized that concomitant with
the heavy capital investment in the electricity sector, there must be an equal emphasis on the investment in the country’s human capital to produce a cadre of trained electrical technicians to sustain these developmental initiatives. Therefore, under the NSDP funds, T&TEC has revived the trade school programme where young persons between the ages of 17 to 25 will be receiving training and that the trade schools at Penal, Port of Spain and Tobago will be reopened. The trade school in Penal is already operational; Tobago and Port of Spain will be opened this year. A total of some 306 students will receive training at the cost of some $2.1 million.

One other important area for a number of rural communities is the rural electrification programme, the first phase was started in 1996 and the second phase will be at a cost of some $10 million. I know that some communities have been concerned that we are taking too long to start that programme. Mr. Vice-President, that programme is through a European Union Grant. I am sure that most of us on the Government, Opposition and Independent Benches know that when these grants are given, it is not the simplest of procedure. They are very meticulous and, therefore, it has taken a little longer than we anticipated. Everything is now completed and 14 projects in East Trinidad are to be started from Tobassa and La Veronica Roads in Caura, Sou Sou Lands in Coryal, Heights of Aripo, Tamana and Carmichael Roads in Guiaco, River Valley and La Retreat in Arima. In central: Bridal Road via Munro Road in Cunupia, St. John’s Extension Trace in Claxton Bay, Coriac Trace in Tortuga. In South Trinidad, 37 projects: Babooram Trace, Moruga; Cumuto Road, Princes Town; Garth Road, Williamsville; Foodcrop Road, Mayaro; Basket Street, St. Mary’s, Moruga; Campbell Trace, Rio Claro. That is insofar as the electricity sector is concerned.

I now move to the postal sector. Mr. Vice-President, in 1999—

Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh: Mr. Vice-President, as I said before when Minister Imbert was here we would not have had the opportunity to ask him any more questions but there are two questions I was waiting for you to complete on the electricity aspect. The first is I would like some statement on the issue of PowerGen and the relationship with the electricity generation because of PowerGen being affected in Jamaica and to some extent, in Trinidad as well. Was this street-lighting programme undertaken by T&TEC in its entirety? Or were sub-contracts given out by T&TEC? What was the nature of the operations in terms of the award of this $302 million investment in new street lighting by T&TEC?
Hon. P. Beckles: I did not quite understand your second question.

Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh: The second question is: Was T&TEC the sole responsible agency for the new street-lighting programme? Or, were they passing it on to other sub-contractors for the distribution?

Hon. P. Beckles: Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh, you would have seen, from time to time, in the newspapers that advertisements would have been placed because T&TEC would not have had all the resources to do that massive amount—82,000 lights—within that space of time. As a matter of fact, when we looked at the figure, T&TEC is celebrating 60 years, and actually in that 60-year period they had not even done 82,000 lights throughout the whole country so to do it we would have gone out. But T&TEC, in essence, as the agency, has responsibility for all the tendering procedures and awarding of contracts.

As it relates to the statement on PowerGen, I imagine what you are raising there is the whole Mirant’s issue. They have been here in Trinidad and they have had meetings with our ministry, the Ministry of Finance and nothing concrete has been decided but as soon as anything is clear I will make an official statement to the Parliament. [Interruption] Well, they have said that but it has not been materialized; they have just been talking and having meetings. [Interruption] That has not been the case here as yet. Of course, as you know, in terms of the contract it gives T&TEC the first option so that whatever decision the Government makes would be officially communicated.

Mr. Vice-President, as I said in relation to TTPost, in 1999 the Government embarked on a postal reform strategy. This was to be achieved through the transformation of the sector by delegating the management and newly formed Postal Corporation, TTPost, to Transcend Worldwide, under what is called the DMA. This DMA was to transform the postal sector from an underperforming government department into a modern postal business, capable of delivering first class postal service.

In December, 2005 the DMA expired at which time the postal sector in Trinidad and Tobago commenced transition from foreign management into local management. By June, 2006 the corporation was fully transitioned to local management and control, with key management positions being filled by locals. In this regard, the management of TTPost undertook an assessment of its existing and future and new organizational structure in keeping with its strategic plan for the period 2006 to 2011, and has now developed a new organizational structure for the corporation.

In relation to the long term arrangement, the DMA is followed by the long term arrangement which sets out and defines the relationship, basically, between the Government and the Trinidad and Tobago Postal Corporation.
Critical for the rollout of the LTA is the development of the postal sector policy which is currently being finalized and should be completed early in this fiscal year. Some of the main areas to be addressed by the policy defining the universal service obligation, is an undertaking by the Government, being a signatory to the Universal Postal Union Agreement to provide the population with a mail service that is reliable, accessible and affordable, determining the regulatory environment, reserve services, service delivery targets, financial structure.

Under the LTA 2, the Government will have to amend existing legislation to provide the appropriate legal and regulatory framework for the postal sector.

In relation to international and regional profiling, the Trinidad and Tobago Postal Corporation has made strides in the global postal area, as well as proven domestic service levels improvement in alignment with Vision 2020.

Trinidad and Tobago has attained recognition in the postal arena at the international and regional levels and this country has been able to secure the prestigious position of Vice-Chair of the Council of Administration of the Universal Postal Union which supervises the work of the union and studies legislative, regulatory and administrative issues affecting some 189 countries.

Trinidad and Tobago has also been elected to the executive council of the Caribbean Postal Union in 2006 and we have been invited by several other countries in the Caribbean: Guyana, Dominica, Grenada and Jamaica, to share our postal transformation programme that has occurred over the last five to six years.

In meeting its mandate to deliver the nation’s mail safely and reliably, TTPost continues to improve service in several key areas as it relates to universal delivery. Mail delivery has reached 96 per cent of the national community, amounting to over 359,000 households. With respect to transit time for local mail, Mr. Vice-President, over 88 per cent of domestic mail is processed and delivered on a next day basis, with over 95 per cent of all letters being delivered within two days.

As it relates to mail security, TTPost has installed a new state-of-the-art security system at the national mail centre. Further intrusion alarm systems were installed at delivery and retail offices.

For fiscal year 2006 and 2007, TTPost is in pursuit of attaining its Vision 2020 goal of sustaining and further enhancing postal services which satisfy the developing business and individual needs at affordable prices in increasingly demanding national and international markets, and will be undertaking the following initiatives: identifying new products and services to expand the product...
mix in order to significantly increase revenues; undertaking a comprehensive review of the retail network in order to improve on customer convenience access and developing strategic alliances with other entities in the postal sector which will contribute to the building of national postal infrastructure.

Mr. Vice-President, I now turn to the water and waste water sector. We are all aware that the water and waste water sector provides critical support for the country’s social and economic development initiatives as we progress towards developed country status. Following the Cabinet-approved water sector strategic plan, the Water and Sewerage Authority’s framework for development now encompasses the development of a comprehensive water and waste water master plan for Trinidad and Tobago for which consultants have been shortlisted and the implementation of a three-year water sector modernization programme at the cost of $1.2 billion.

6.50 pm.

The implementation of that programme which commenced in 2006 has its major components: development of new water sources, distribution expansion, rate detection, pipeline replacement, upgrading sewerage facilities and institutional strengthening. For fiscal 2005/2006, the Government had significant accomplishments in the water and waste water sector and I would like to highlight some of them.

The Water Resources Agency has the mandate to manage and control the use of the country’s water resources and promote conservation, development and protection of these resources in a cost-effective manner. For fiscal 2005/2006 the Water Resources Agency was able to achieve provision of technical support to WASA in areas of water resource, the identification of water supply management, water quality monitoring. They developed a national programme for monitoring and assessing of surface and ground-water resources, publication of the new Water Resources Management Policy, collaborated with WASA in the establishment of the Water Institute, in March 2006.

In the area of water treatment, the Government has spent some $10 million in 2005/2006 for the refurbishment of water treatment facilities. In June 2006, commencement of the Cumuto Water Treatment Plant which is anticipated to be completed in September 2007 and the cost of that would be some $25.8 million. This plant will serve the Wallerfield, Union Estate/La Brea domestic customers both in the east and central as well, and they will benefit from an improved supply of water.
The Water and Sewerage Authority has also awarded contracts for the construction of the Salybia and Matura Water Treatment Plants at an estimated cost of $35 million and $24.6 million, respectively. These facilities are scheduled for completion within 12 months and they would make available to residential consumers in northeast a total of 30 million gallons of water per day. There is also the refurbishment works at a cost of $2 million that were undertaken at the Penal and Las Lomas Water Treatment facilities.

Well developments during 2005/2006 at a cost of $11 million: WASA has awarded contracts for the development of 23 wells throughout the country and work has already started at wells at Cumuto and Wallerfield. In Tobago just a couple months ago we commissioned the Arnos Vale well. Together they have resulted in an additional two million gallons of water per day added to the Courland distribution system and I know there is a concern in the tourism sector as it relates to water having regard to the terrible dry season in 2003. Mr. Vice-President, this particular intervention therefore, should make it much easier if at all a dry season comes to Tobago.

With respect to distribution and expansion, work has commenced on the upgrading of the booster station at Bournes Road, Long Circular; Lady Young Road, Morvant and at Sangre Grande to facilitate improvement in the water supply in those communities and surrounding areas.

In June 2006, WASA commenced construction of the South Oropouche booster station. On completion, this station will improve water supply to the following areas located in South: St. Mary, Avocat, Rousillac, La Brea, Vance River, Point Fortin, Siparia, Erin, Fyzabad, South Oropouche and the Labidco Industrial Estate. A total of $3.5 million was expended on the rehabilitation of the booster pumping stations in 2006.

A total of $7 million was spent under the priority programme in 2005/2006 with the laying of 2.2 kilometres of pipeline in the following areas: Agua Santa, Wallerfield; Thompson Drive, Palmiste; Union Park Extension; Archibald Trace, Fyzabad; Siewlal Branch Trace, Fyzabad; Soodeen Branche Drive Road, Fyzabad.

I would now like to turn to the sewerage facilities. In 2006 a feasibility study was conducted for the East-West Corridor sewerage facility which was completed by the French company, Savage. This study produced a conceptual design for waste water networks, treatment plants and to serve six catchment areas.
Technical specifications for works to be undertaken: The Beetham Waste Water Treatment Plant continues to sustain a high degree of effluent discharge which exceeds international standards. Due to the quantity and quality of the water that is discharged from that plant which approximates to some 20 million gallons per day, we are considering the option of reuse for industrial and firefighting purposes.

With respect to Tobago, arising out of the feasibility study that was conducted by the American Water Service Engineering Incorporated for the collection, treatment and disposal of waste water in south Tobago, WASA has invited tenders for the conduct of an environmental impact assessment, oceanographic studies and economic assessment for the south-west waste water and environmental project in Tobago. I know this is a project that both the Tobago House of Assembly—

Mr. Vice-President: Hon. Senators, the speaking time of the hon. Minister has expired.

Motion made, That the hon. Minister’s speaking time be extend by 15 minutes. [Hon. Dr. L. Saith]

Question put an agreed to.

Hon. P. Beckles: I wish to thank my colleagues for affording me the opportunity to continue my contribution. As I said, as it relates to the fiscal 2005/2006 under the NSDP some 13 new wells were drilled in Trinidad and they are at various stages of implementation.

This will greatly improve the reliability in the pipe-borne water supply to communities that have a history of no supply. During the period 2005/2006, WASA under the NSDP, undertook the installation of eight booster pumping stations at the following locations: Red Hill, Upper Moraldo Street, Maharaj Trace, Gordon Street and Cebero Street in Tobago. Under the NSDP WASA undertook the laying of some 115.8 kilometres of pipelines at a cost of $106 million.

In terms of some social intervention, the Hardship Relief Programme is one of the social intervention programmes being implemented by the ministry. Under this programme financial relief in the form of an annual credit of $70 or $100 is provided to recipients of old age pension, disability grants or public assistance.

To become a beneficiary of this programme, persons must be the owner of one property which must be residential. Beneficiaries who receive a pipe-borne supply in their yards receive a credit on their water bill of $70 per year and beneficiaries who receive an internal supply of water receive a credit on their water bill of $100 a year.
For 2005/2006 the database indicated that there were 10,062 persons and the money spent amounted to $979,360. I want to address some major projections for the water and waste water sector for fiscal year 2006.

The Water and Sewerage Authority is anticipated to spend $75 million to complete the Cumuto Water Treatment Plant and an estimated 100,000 thousand customers will benefit. In relation to the Navet Trunk which is 43 years old, Cabinet has agreed to a sum of $343 million. That project will take some 15 months to be completed and an estimated 18,800 consumers in the following communities will benefit: Rio Claro, Torrib/Tabaquite Road to Naparima/Mayaro Road extended to Funrose Village. There are also plans to utilize the sum of $5 million to update studies for the improvement of the Moruga Water supply. The completed facility is expected to cost some $800 million and would improve the level of service to south-east and south-west distribution network which would service areas like La Romaine, Morouga, Barrackpore, Penal, Siparia, Fyzabad, La Brea to Point Fortin and the industrial estates of Cap-de-Ville.

Mr. Vice-President, in Mayaro, WASA is expected to construct and complete a new water facility along the Ortoire River. The design capacity of the plant is two million gallons. In 2007 WASA will also be focusing on expanding the district metering areas.

As it relates to the San Fernando Waste Water Treatment Plant and the integration of sewerage areas, it is expected to provide some 55,000 customers with an improved waste water service. The project will include the construction of a lift station, the construction of a sewerage facility between Tarouba and San Fernando and the reconstruction of the existing waste-water treatment. Other areas to benefit would be the Borough of Chaguanas particularly the Edinburgh 500 Waste Water Treatment Plant.

The Government has also decided to implement a restructured executive and governance model for WASA and this organization would be restructured along the following lines. The creation of six new divisions to be headed by an executive president who would report to the president and these divisions are water and waste water treatment transmissions, distribution of customer service, infrastructure projects, Tobago, finance and corporate services and human resource services.

At the appropriate time I am going to further develop this issue of the restructuring of WASA because I do not have much time. But it is expected that in doing that much of the concerns that have been raised by the public as it relates to
the delivery of water, I think, everyone has been concerned at times with protests and we are really looking at what is the best method that we can structure WASA so as to deliver affordable and reliable water to the public.

**Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh:** Could you give us some idea of the $1.4 billion that you are spending on WASA, in the context of what the Prime Minister said of a $28 billion headache in terms of you doing a water sector management improvement programme? The Prime Minister spoke about a $28 billion headache with WASA. I know you might not have the time but could you give us some ideas on it, of what are some of the essential problems that he is thinking about?

**Hon. P. Beckles:** Just to say very quickly that one is recurrent and one is capital, but the reason we are doing the water and waste water master plan is WASA has given us an estimate that it will cost us some $28 billion to change some of our aged old mains.

In the case of Port of Spain you are looking at 150 years and San Fernando 120 years. And as you know, this is something that everybody has been talking about and unless we do it, we are losing almost 50 per cent of the water that we produce because those lines are old. That is the estimated cost but the country has never done a water and waste water master plan. Even though they had given us that figure we are commissioning that water and waste water master plan. That is the estimated figure. It may very well be that when that is completed it may be more or less.

To quickly go into an area that is related to disaster preparedness and to say that Cabinet has approved initially in 2005/2006 the sum of $10 million and that is to upgrade and equip emergency operating centres at WASA and T&TEC but overall, for both WASA and T&TEC, we are looking at about $150 plus million to deal with the issue of disaster preparedness.

In the time that I have, I want to deal with the environment and to say that the National Environment Policy has been laid in the Senate. I laid that policy here just a couple months ago, and I know there are some important issues which I would try to deal with very quickly.

The Water Pollution Rules that were initially laid by the UNC at that time, Minister Nanan, are not the same rules that I am going to lay in the Parliament. The rules have been amended to take into concern some other issues that were raised in relation to waste water. The amended rules are before the Legislative Review Committee, and I am expecting that would be dealt with soon, and as soon as they have been addressed I will have them laid before the Parliament.
Likewise with the waste management rules, we know that we have experienced some significant growth in solid waste generation and the EMA continues to work to strengthen those rules.

7.05 p.m.

Another area is that of the air pollution rules. There was a draft that already existed. There were several concerns. That draft did not take into consideration at all concerns raised in relation to smelters and if I had laid them, they would have addressed not only smelters, but some of the other industrial development that is taking place in the country. I thought it wise that we go back out for public comment to ensure that if those rules are developed we would anticipate some of the industrial development taking place in the energy sector and some of the massive industrial development taking place in the country.

You would have seen that that has been published for public comment. It has been completed. The EMA is in the process of finalizing that draft for the air pollution rules, but I also make the point that there has been a debate that if those rules are not passed we cannot treat with some of the concerns raised in the energy sector. There are world health standards that can treat with issues of emission and other air pollution matters.

Just to say very quickly, in relation to two other matters that are normally raised, I want to deal quickly with the Green Fund. The Green Fund now stands at some $800 million. The Fund was established to introduce a tax at a rate of 0.1 per cent on the gross sales of receipts of all companies conducting business in Trinidad and Tobago.

In the public domain many issues have been raised as to the delay in operationalizing the Green Fund. When the Green Fund was initially passed under the UNC, no regulations were made and no legislation was passed for the amendment of the Finance Act to deal properly with the collection of taxes by the Ministry of Finance. The Ministry of Finance has the responsibility as the supervisor. The Ministry of Public Utilities has the responsibility to operationalize the Fund. The Cabinet has approved the setting up of the Green Fund Unit and the coordinator has been appointed. We have signed an agreement with the UNDP, so basically they will help us operationalize the Fund.

I would like to say, as the Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment, that $800 million in the public domain is something that we need to ensure that when we put mechanisms in place it would stand scrutiny. We have reached the stage where Cabinet has approved the finalization of the regulations—it is before
the Attorney General—and that matter should be completed soon. The fact is that everything is in place now to operationalize the Fund.

Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh: [Inaudible]

Hon. P. Beckles: Yes, it is. There are two other areas and that is the National Reforestation and Watershed Management Programme. That programme has been very successful. We have specifically put it in place to ensure the protection and conservation of the environment as we go about our business in the industrial area. There are some 52 community groups involved. It is a 10-year programme that is responsible for reforesting some 33,000 acres. That is one of our success stories.

Yes, we are an industrial country and, when you look at our performance index, you will see that had it not been for the energy sector, our performance would have been much better as it relates to the environment, but that is part of our blessing and part of our bane and we have to learn to manage it. Together with the World Bank, there is a special project that we are looking at in Nariva where we are going to show the possibility that there could be industrial activity and environmental activity together.

As it relates to the new system of waste disposal, there has been, in the public domain, some concerns as they relate to whether or not the Government has already selected a contract. Let me make it abundantly clear that we are going to do all that is in our power—this is a massive project and this is the first time that any government has taken the decision to deal with an issue this massive in the country as it relates to waste. Cabinet has agreed to a new system of waste disposal to close the Beetham landfill and to close other landfills. It has been out in the public domain and by next month we will want to issue a contract. The tenders should be closed and by the end of the year we should officially issue a contract.

The last one is the issue of the Community-based Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme (CEPEP) that is always on the minds of everyone. I want to make it abundantly clear that CEPEP has done a lot of work to improve the environment. [Desk thumping] We have heard many concerns and some of them are quite valid.

The Government has reduced the allocation. From the last fiscal year, there is less allocated to CEPEP, but I do not have the time to go into the successes of many of the contractors. The point is that we have listened to some of the suggestions of the Opposition and Independent Senators, manufacturing companies and,
therefore, we are going to look at restructuring and revising CEPEP and we will consider many of the suggestions made by the public and by others as they relate to the concerns with CEPEP.

Finally, I close by saying thanks to my staff at the Ministry and my agencies, not just for the assistance in terms of my contribution, but certainly the support over the last two years.

Sen. Dana Seetahal, S.C.: Thank you very much, Mr. Vice-President. I know that we are all tired at this time. [Interruption] Okay, then I can go on for an hour and a half and recharge you.

Mr. Vice-President, what I propose is different from what I intended. Since I know 13 Ministers of Government did not get to make their contributions in the other place—and they will and have been coming here and doing so—I will zero in on areas of concern that I have, which I hope they will answer as they go along.

I propose to go through certain areas of the budget statement of October 2002 for the 2003 budget and a little of the 2004 budget statement. I am not going through the entire thing. I will select areas and ask whether or not these plans have materialized at all. I do this not only because we will have the opportunity of having the Ministers all here at some point, but also because it has been said by members of the public, and on many of the talk shows, that the Government is good at planning but poor at implementation. This is something that is said; I am not saying so.

I propose to look at some of the things and ask the questions. Of course, there are times when we will note that certain things have been, but there are other times when they have not been and I would like to find out why this is so.

At the outset of his budget speech in the other place, the hon. Prime Minister claimed several successes over the last years for his Government and it is instructive to note that this Government has been in office for five years, although this administration as it were, for four. Elections were in October 2002. So we now have a fifth budget presentation by this Government since 2002.

It is claimed that in that time the economy has doubled over the last five years; that unemployment is at single digit rates; that we now have consistent balance of payment supplies; that real GDP is projected to grow by 12 per cent this year and so on. That may well be so, Mr. Vice-President, but these are generalizations in my respectful view. I prefer to look at certain items to see what was promised in October 2002 and whether those things have materialized and, if not, what is the reason.
Here goes. Agriculture. The Government said in October 2002 that it recognized that since 1996 agriculture constituted only 3 per cent or less than 3 per cent of the GDP; that it was in a state of decline and at that time only 9 per cent of the population was employed in the industry; that the average was amongst the lowest in the country and it was promised—and I quote:

“We are laying the groundwork that will fully develop the potential of that sector.”

That was four years ago, Mr. Vice-President. I am not aware that we have established in this country sufficient groundwork to develop the potential, nor has there been a development of the sector. In fact, as the Government admitted, there has been a decline in this sector, so much so that food prices have gone up. This may be as a result of the growth in the construction industry.

I happen to be a registered farmer and up to 2003/2004 I had workmen. Since then, I have had none. I had to go back and resurrect someone, who has retired and who is now 70 years old, to assist me in cocoa and citrus and so on. This is an indication of the problem in the agriculture industry. In my view, it suffers from lack of labour and, of course, praedial larceny. My questions will be very short; not any dwelling.

On state enterprises, I would like to know the status of the viable and competitive entity that has replaced NBN. It was said in October 2002:

“We intend to transfer NBN and make it into a viable and competitive entity.”

What do we have to replace NBN? We have Channel 4 and I, like everyone else, like to look at old calypsoes.

Sen. Jeremie: CNMG.

Sen. D. Seetahal, S.C.: Could I just say that in October 2002 it was said that we were going to have a viable and competitive entity. That was four years ago. [Interruption] I do not want to know if it is getting there, Hon. Attorney General. Four years ago, we were supposed to transfer it to a viable and competitive entity and I want to know why it has not been that. Four years is long enough. Five years is usually the term of office for a government and I dare say that much can be accomplished in that time.

Sen. Jeremie: Can I just rise to clarify certain things?

Sen. Jeremie: Thank you. I know that Sen. Seetahal, S.C. will give me this opportunity to speak. It could not have been four years ago that NBN was closed because I was chairman of NBN up to the day I was sworn in and I have not been here for three years. Certainly the maths is off.

Sen. D. Seetahal, S.C.: Thank for the illustration. I am saying that, in the 2002 budget statement for the year 2003, that was the statement made. I think you were not here when I started off by indicating how I planned to go through. [Interruption] The vision was in October 2002, for the year 2003, which was when the Attorney General came to us, having left there. The point is that there was some time and I would like to know whether it is next year sometime.

I just have two things to mention about social services—the old age pension and public assistance. To show that I am not merely criticizing, I have to recognize that the promises made in the 2003 budget statement have been kept as regards the old age pension, which is now renamed by a more dignified name, the senior citizens grant and the public assistance, so that promise has been kept.

7.20 p.m.

In respect of the minimum wage, it was said in October 2002 that in five years, meaning today, it will be $10 an hour. It is $9 an hour and I hope that the Government intends, by the end of this year, to increase the minimum wage to $10, irrespective of any complaints from the business community. [Interruption] It is ridiculous. Everyone knows the cost of living now. You want to tell me that people can still be earning $10 an hour for work? I know that private security guards work for $9 an hour. They work 24-hour and 36-hour shifts and it is ridiculous. Many of them do not pay NIS or anything of the kind. There needs to be something done about that industry.

Hon. Senators: Employers.

Sen. D. Seetahal, S.C.: The Government has to rein them in, corral them, or do something. I know we cannot blame the Government if it rains, but something like this, I expect an action.

I now go to health. In 2003, $1.6 billion was allocated to the Ministry of Health. It was said that the budget aimed at: “providing affordable, quality health care in an efficient and equitable manner.” The Government said that they would train 300 nurses. This is very important; they said that $500 million would be spent in the next five years—October next year is the end of the five years—in all aspects of the campaign against AIDS. I know that there has been some training of
nurses and that there has been some money spent on AIDS. I asked this two years ago about the status and how much. The Minister then did not quite answer me. He came here to answer something else. I think if he borrowed money to make up the $500 million, which we did, from international organizations, and if he plans to spend it, what is the status. I am not saying that it has not been but it seems to me that I have not seen signs of $500 million spent on fighting AIDS. Let us know what the status on something like that is, so that we can know, really and truly, this disease, which is a pandemic throughout the world, is being dealt with here in Trinidad and Tobago.

It is said that the increase is declining, which is levelling off, in terms of people infected with the virus that causes AIDS. I would like to have something. I hope when the Minister comes he will tell me about it, rather than pass it over, as he did on a previous occasion. I am not necessarily criticizing him for that. I know he was here on other business. I think that is sufficiently important. AIDS is something that has been with us for 23 years, I believe. Initially everyone was saying that they would have one partner and that they would go about their business and not engage in other activities and we will all be healthy. People get blasé with time. I think it is not just education again, but some other measures such as legislation.

We had a Bill that was drafted and brought before this Parliament, in terms of the HIV/AIDS law. Perhaps the Attorney General, when his time comes, can tell us where that Bill is languishing. I do not know if he heard me earlier but maybe I should remind him. Maybe he can respond in his contribution about the HIV/AIDS legislation, which was to the Offences Against the Person (Amndt.) (No. 2) Bill, which came here two years ago and is languishing in time. We were supposed to have spent, by next year, $500 million fighting AIDS. Why is that not here like in Barbados, Bermuda and the Bahamas; the more developed countries in this region? If we are going towards 2020 we should join them.

I know the Minister of National Security has made his contribution. There is a list of police stations that were supposed to be built. In 2003 there were five police stations that were supposed to have been built: Manzanilla, Mayaro, Matura, Cumuto and Brasso. In the 2004 budget there were 13 police stations. There were three in the 2003 budget, which were repeated in the 2004 budget. They are obviously not built. In other words, there are 15 police stations that were supposed to have been built in the 2003/2004 budget. I see that seven of them are repeated and provided for in the Infrastructure Development Fund, which means that in four years they have not been built. It is not that I am accusing or saying that there was money allocated and it did not happen but I really want to know if
you promised that you are going to do this—the budget statement is a promise. It is saying this is what we want to do—and you have allocated for that in the budget and if the Government is not to be accused of promising and planning, but lacking in implementation—at least account in a meaningful way as to why this has not happened. Tell us, but do not say that you have put out the tender, you did not put out the tender, or that the money did not come through. That is really lame. I think that we deserve some real answers because it is the Minister of National Security who came here and said that many police officers operate in substandard working conditions and that may account for their attitude.

In respect of national security, we were told that there would be an installation in 2004, of the police computer system to transmit voice, data and video to the police vehicles on pursuit. That is like what we see on the television, where you can stay from the main office and send a picture and information and say: vehicle number so, so, so. I experienced that when I was in Texas. We were able to chase the thing. It was a green bicycle that was stolen. In no time, I was in the police vehicle on a “ride-along” as it is called, so that I could observe the operations. I observed the operations and for a simple thing like the larceny of a bicycle, we were tracing people. There was also a report of somebody hiding in a prostitute house. I would not go into my personal experience. The point I am making is that I have seen how it works and it would be something dramatically enhancing of the police services here. I really thought that this was going to be a great thing. [Interruption] They are not bicycle thieves, of course. They are drug traffickers, murderers, gang leaders and people of that ilk.

If somebody is leaving an area armed and you know he is going to gun down someone; everybody hears about gunning down. You may know somebody who calls in information where somebody is hiding a firearm under a bridge that he stole from his father, who is a police officer—I know of an incident like that—and commits a robbery with it. You can then go because you have quick transmission. We are lacking in that and that is the problem with having effective law enforcement as we would like.

What is the status? Since the Minister of National Security has spoken already, perhaps, the Attorney General, who is interested in these matters, would be able to elucidate and enlighten us when the time comes. I do not know if you heard that, Mr. Attorney General.

Prisons—I think I heard somewhere that there was a Tobago Prison being built. Four years ago we were promised a new medium correctional facility for Tobago, which would have commenced in 2004. I do not see Sen. Dumas. I know he would have remembered. What is the status of that?
In 1990, I attended a conference on parole in Canada, and subsequent to that we presented a report on the introduction of parole to the government in 1991—I cannot remember if it was the NAR or the PNM government. I was pleased to see in the 2003 budget statement: “The Government is looking at the introduction of the parole system.” How long do you look at the introduction of it? Come on, that is enough time to look at it. There is a report somewhere there and there are enough of us who know about parole. If you want it, do it. If you do not want it say: remission and forget about parole. Do not have a *vaille que vaille* kind of position. [Interruption]

It also spoke of resources to the correctional system to embark on internal rehabilitation programmes. That was allocated and I want to know what the status is. I have had a question and a Motion on the debate on the prison system and I have written about it. I have talked about the dark hole of Calcutta in the Remand Yard and I really find that it is about time I get some answers.

The Commissioner of Prisons has told me personally and wrote a letter in the newspapers to something I have said; that they have started one programme on drug rehabilitation in the prison. This has only been started recently from 2005 and it was actually implemented this year. When we talk about a prison population—I do not know if anyone here knows how many—there are 4,000 people. I would think, if you are talking about a prison population where 1,000 of those 4,000 are there for drug possession or trafficking alone and out of the balance of 3,000—these are facts that can be checked—1,500 are actually users or addicts—this is information from the prisons itself—then I would think that you should be moving on to get some proper system in place. Do not tell me about one programme. I know the commissioner is trying to do a lot. In-between seizing cellphones and tracking officers who are selling drugs in the prison, which is now coming out, let us have some programmes other than dealing with people who are rapists or sexual offenders. They have their programmes. I want programmes for the drug users.

I am moving along really quickly. I am nearly finished. Under that Ministry, in 2003, we were told that there would be diversion programmes such as Military-Led Academic Training Programme (MLAT)—I do not know if the Government remembers that word—and Military-Led Youth Programme for Apprenticeship and Reorientation (MYPART) and the National Service Programme. The most I heard of that was I saw a van one day marked MILAT and that was it. I asked about it and I was told that the youths were not interested. I find that very strange, because many people in this country, the young men, like to go around with a
gun. I would have thought if they got the opportunity to do it legally and probably be trained in it, they might seize the opportunity. The fact of the matter is that these are diversion programmes and it was said to take youths off the street. I do not know why it has not developed as it should, but it fell under the Ministry of National Security, along with the Ministry of Social Services.

For three years it has been repeated in the budget and I have had no reasonable explanation. This is the last budget, presumably, before the election and I think it is a good time to account—I said presumably; there could only be one more, constitutionally.

7.35 p.m

Mr. Vice-President, in my first budget contribution on October 28, 2002, I made the point that when young men are let out of the St. Mary’s Home—you know, there is where they send these orphans or persons who have only one parent who does not want to be bothered with them—when they are 18 years old, they are just ejected into the streets. Many of them “hang out” by the Tacarigua bridge and they do a little snatch and grab on the side to survive. This matter was raised then. They do not really want to be crooks. I know that and I think many people here know it, but they did not have much to do. So, the matter was raised. The next year, when I saw a halfway house for male ex-prisoners and for youths who have nowhere to go to be established for persons who cannot go out, I thought this was a step in the right direction; not only for those boys who did a little crime, but for others. Maybe it is there, but I just did not hear of it.

The point is that I think there should be some response. This is what a budget is. You have one last year and you come the next year and say, here is where we are, and do not just repeat the same things. Do not give me generalizations. I can take them, but I think that is a little too vague.

Finally, on the Ministry of National Security is the DNA legislation. I know the Minister said something about this matter today, but I want to put on the record that I asked a question in January 2004 and, at that time, the Minister said that by March everything will be fine. In April there was a headline in the newspapers: “DNA by April”. Everybody was saying that we are going to have DNA. There were all kinds of articles in the newspaper and people were getting excited. The point is that it did not come. In October of that year, again, I asked the question, and we were told by the end of the year. Mr. Vice-President, everybody knows how important this legislation is. There are no two ways about it. So, you are telling me that it is bad legislation and so forth, but I could even accept that.
I went to a meeting which was called by the Minister of State in the Ministry of National Security—I know there is no junior Minister—and he introduced us to a team. This is more than a year and a half ago. The people from England were saying why the legislation was not going to be used. They said you cannot force people to give a sperm sample and so forth. I do not see why not, but the point is that they did not want to do that. That is a year and a half ago, and when you tell me today that the legislation is coming soon, you could understand that I really do not have any faith. You cannot say: “Oh ye of little faith”. After two years and 10 months, I think that there should be some real accountability for this Act. It is something that has been put off. It is either laziness or something else.

Mr. Vice-President, I come now to something that has been occupying the national community, and that is the question of gaming/gambling. In the budget statement of 2004, this is what was said.

“…the gaming industry continues to thrive in Trinidad and Tobago, and we have seen a proliferation of new devices in particular slot machines.”

This was said three years ago. Again, in October, exactly three years ago. It says:

“These devices had attracted a tax of $2,000 per annum whereas tax rates on the more traditional tables ranged…”

This is what was said:

“The Government proposes to increase the fee on slot machines from $2,000 per annum to $10,000 per annum.”

Each slot machine would pay $10,000.

“The fee for regular poker tables from $8,000 per annum to $20,000 per annum and with the exception of pool tables.”

Other devices $15,000.

“Fees in respect of all other specified tables, such as baccarat and roulette tables, will be increased by 25 per cent.”

Mr. Vice-President, here we are talking about slot machines, poker, roulette, pool and baccarat. Now, if it is that the Government was properly advised in 2004 by an Attorney General, who is the Government’s legal advisor to make all of those statements and collect those taxes—slot machines in particular—it would seem to me that the Government was sanctioning what they call gaming activities; not like cock fighting, but gaming in this way. You see, it is not like prostitution, for example, which is against the law, and you do not tax. Although in some
countries like the Netherlands they do, but how do they do it, Mr. Attorney General, through you, Mr. Vice-President? By legalizing it and then they admit that it is legalized. These persons are sex “something” providers.

Hon. Senator: Sex services providers.

Sen. D. Seetahal S.C.: I am told from the bench in the front that they are sex services providers. [Laughter] It is a known and accepted industry. In like vein, in 2004 the gaming industry included slot machines, baccarat, roulette and so forth which was taxed $10,000 a table.

Mr. Vice-President, we come to the budget statement of 2006, a mere three years later, and this is what the Government has to say, and I quote:

“The Government is totally against the operation of casinos and all casino type establishments…

The Government is strongly against the proliferation of these casino-type establishments…

As a result, the Government proposes to enforce the law so that...must operate within the confines and original intent…

We also propose to ban the importation and use of all slot machines. These measures will take place with immediate effect.”

Mr. Vice-President, the point is, as a responsible Government, one cannot operate in a vaille que vaille fashion, and that is an acceptable word in the dictionary of Trinidad and Tobago. The Government is operating vaille que vaille. The Government encouraged people—encouraged by sanctioning to import slot machines and these poker tables and so forth, and they taxed them properly. They increase the tax which is a condonation of a higher kind, and then you tell them tomorrow that you are against it. This is like a parent who has allowed his or her daughter to date, and then you come with no excuse and say: “Stop it! I do not want to see you going out with any man tomorrow.” This is ridiculous!

There is something called legitimate expectation for the information of the hon. Minister of Public Administration and Information and Minister of Energy and Energy Industries. One cannot stop something just like that; not only without notice, but when people have expended millions of dollars. It is not a question of what you think is morally right and whether or not your personal views and values are offended. You have to take into account people's rights; what moneys people have expended. They have enlarged their establishments in the sure expectation
that the Government that imposed the taxes and that increased the taxes, and that acknowledged all of this, and knew what was going on, and everything was all right and everything was hunky-dory in the State of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Vice-President, an added note here is that in the *Review of the Economy*, on page 15 to be exact, the Government acknowledged that most of the jobs—this is apart from NEDCO that Sen. Montano referred to—created were from the services industry, and the construction industry. We know what will happen with the construction industry when construction finishes, never mind Minister Imbert’s 45 projects. Many of those jobs are in the services industry which include entertainment, waitresses, car park attendants, security and so forth. All of these things are included in the entertainment industry. So, when you have a whole industry like that, and you want to shut it down tomorrow with the bang of a gavel, it is illegal; not the industry itself, but doing it in that way, the Government should be well advised to seek proper and full legal advice, as I know they can, when they choose to embark in an arbitrary fashion like this—without notice to do something that they have encouraged, sanctioned and condoned for over three years without a whisper of protest.

I have been asked by people I know to mention—and I am going to do so on their behalf, seeing that I am an Independent Senator, I have no party or anything—that the action by the Government offends their right of choice. We are not talking here about choice in abortion which is another entire matter. We are talking about a choice in doing what they want with their lives, and doing it reasonably within the law. It is not that they are going to murder anyone or do anything like that. If some people like horse racing or some people like to drink and smoke which is still not against the law, let them do what they choose to do. [Interruption] I said that is illegal, Dr. Saith. Well, the Government did not know that three years ago, and I hardly think it is time for them to wise up in this arbitrary way. I hope the Government is going to learn that it cannot act on whims; it cannot act on “vaps” and encourage people to spend millions of dollars, and then wake up overnight and realize that it offends one’s religious beliefs; anyone’s personal beliefs will not be relevant. Render unto Caesar things that are Caesar’s and unto the church things that are of the church and never the two shall meet.

**Sen. Mark:** He said he wants to be a preacher when he retires.

**Sen. D. Seetahal S.C.:** Mr. Vice-President, I heard somebody talk about preaching, and that is something a lot of people seem to do in their years of retirement, but is it something to be involved in when you are running a country.

Moving on to the Judiciary; Mr. Vice-President, I dare say—I know at least one judge is waiting for me to say this under threat that I will not be able to leave his court earlier to come to the Senate, if I do not. Let me say at the outset, in
2003 or in 2004, in any case, it was more than three years ago, the number of judges under the Supreme Court of Judicature Act was increased to 23 and that is three years ago. Well, actually it was under this Government, so it was three years ago, and prior to that it was increased to 20. Since then the work in the courts, I would say, has gone up by about 50 per cent, because the new large Family Court that is being expanded—$17 million has been voted in for development—takes up at least three judges alone.

We have criminal matters. I do not know if the Attorney General is not doing criminal law or having done it—although I know he has this great interest in it now, and he has boasted as the Attorney General and, rightly so, it is the only exciting area in the law, in my view. The point I am making is that the criminal courts are suffering from a lack of physical courts. When I say the criminal court, I mean in general.

We have murders that have been down for two or three years and they have to go on a court list—for those of you who know, it is the list to fix a date—and we are not going to get a hearing until April. When I say “we”, I mean the accused or the prosecution. That is a very serious thing for a Government that has also said that it will deny bail to people who are charged with kidnapping; by the way, not kidnappers. You are not a kidnapper until you are convicted. A person who is charged with kidnapping for 60 days in anticipation, you are going to get a hearing. It is ridiculous if people cannot get a hearing for two or three years. One of the reasons for that is that we do not have sufficient judges to man the courts. That is the point.

If you send a judge to Tobago, out of the six criminal courts we have here, five are manned—you only have six men or women. In terms of judges, it is women and men. There is no question of a glass ceiling there that could give rise to bitterness when it comes to the selection of persons to the Judiciary.

7.50 p.m.

The point though is, we in the legal profession need to have the number increased and I would suggest 30. I had suggested to the then Attorney General that we should make it 28 and when the need arose we just fill and allocate money, but the then Attorney General did not agree with me. I hope this Attorney General is more farsighted than or as farsighted as I am and could see that we need to have 30 at least. Magistrates as well—

Sen. Jeremie: Could you give way?
Sen. D. Seetahal, S.C.: If you are going to agree with me I would give way, but if you are not going to agree with me I would not. Okay, I have a few minutes.

Sen. Jeremie: I have had a discussion with the Chief Justice and he has given me a list of what his requirements are. I do not think they amount to 30 downstairs.

Sen. D. Seetahal, S.C.: I understand that including the family courts, I do not know if you left out the family courts, Attorney General, they amount to 30.

Sen. Jeremie: No, no, no I would not do such a thing.

Sen. D. Seetahal, S.C.: Anyway, maybe you could check again. So 30 and the magistrates as well, because the Arima Magistrates’ Court where I have to go regularly, I have been told by the magistrate that two more magistrates are needed; I am just giving you examples. The point is we need to look at that in the fight against crime. I am so glad that the Minister of National Security is here, I missed him; I missed him because—


Sen. D. Seetahal, S.C.: Well, look at that, we miss each other when we are not here and I apologize for not being here, but I was in court assisting in the enforcement of your Ministry's work at one level.

In any event, I have raised the question of the Special Anti-Crime Unit of Trinidad and Tobago (SAUTT) and you know that this was established in 2004, and I quote the reason was, in case the Minister forgot:

"Lawlessness will not be tolerated from either the criminals or any other person who wish to disrupt the society."

Well, I do not know, if you are a person who wants to disrupt I guess it would be a criminal. In any event, in pursuit of that aim, SAUTT was created; tough words, tough stance. SAUTT is a unit combining people from the defence force, the police, a few civilians, I am told, and that kind of people. The problem arose; the Prime Minister said we would bring legislation. Where is the legislation after three years?

Sen. Joseph: May I?

Sen. D. Seetahal, S.C.: Let me just finish this then you can inform me. The point is the Commissioner of Police under regulations could create a unit. The Defence Force head under regulations could create a unit; each unit responds to orders from the top. As the SAUTT stands, you have Brigadier Joseph—I do not
know if I am pronouncing brigadier right, but you know who I mean, Peter Joseph—police, defence force and you have a few other experts. Who is taking instructions from whom? If it is the police officers are taking instructions from the brigadier, they could be disciplined for that, because they are not supposed to do that. This is not mainly technical, this is the law that we are enforcing and this is as it should be.

For three years, I have been told when I raised it with persons in power that you know what happens is the brigadier and the head police officer would discuss things and then he would pass on the instructions. A farce! It is a farce! Do the thing properly, pass the legislation and tell me when you are going to pass it.

**Sen. Joseph:** The legislation is intended to be in this Parliament before the end of the year.

**Sen. D. Seetahal, S.C.:** Hmm, you know Minister, thank you very much but, through you, Mr. Vice-President, you said that to me in 2004 about DNA; I know you know, but I am just—

A final point for the Attorney General and his Ministry; this is his final one point. In the 2003 budget it was said that—I want to get this point made—that there would be training—

**Mr. Vice-President:** Are you going to be more than five minutes?

**Sen. D. Seetahal, S.C.:** Actually, I have reached my last point now. That there would be training for the members of the Anti-corruption Bureau and officers of the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP); that was promised in 2004. I know that there was a training session of the DPP; I do not know what happened with the training of the Anti-corruption Bureau, but I would like the Attorney General to tell me about the training for the DPP officers and whether and why that has not been implemented. Also, there was a building allocated to the DPP's office—

**Sen. Jeremie:** Where and why it has not been implemented? That is wrong.

**Sen. D. Seetahal, S.C.:** My understanding is that it has not been, so you can tell me that tomorrow, I will come for it. Finally, Mr. Vice-President, $6 million has been allocated for the construction of the new office to replace the office of the DPP. The DPP rents at present; there was a new building for the DPP office, it went to the CCJ and so they are homeless.
You have $6 million allocated to them but $12 million allocated to the office in south. It seems reasonable if it cost $12 million for the south office, then it should cost more than $6 million to have a new office in Port of Spain. So it would be of much interest to members of the Department of Criminal Law and nobody put me up to ask this, but I am asking as to the status of their building.

**Sen. Jeremie:** May I?

**Sen. D. Seetahal, S.C.:** Yes, go ahead, I have one minute. I always give way to the Attorney General.

**Sen. Jeremie:** Thank you. The money which was allocated to the use of the facility in the north is $6 million because less work is required. The Winsure building is already there, it used to house the offices of the Attorney General, so what we are looking at is really the inside works to that building, and that work was supposed to have been done at some point in time. That is the reason for the differential. I did not want to have to come back to that building.

**Sen. D. Seetahal, S.C.:** In case you forgot. That is the thing with labour shortages, we do not get work done as it should; we need to import Chinese labour maybe.

Finally, I have made my points. In reading this budget analysis Ernst & Young says that we are at a crossroad in Trinidad and Tobago; looking at high inflation on the one hand increased GDP, but a situation where agriculture is dying and we have an over reliance—and everybody knows this, you know—the energy sector, but we have a lot of money floating around.

The point is, if we do not move and do it properly now we would really have the country go down in a decline in things that matter. We would not have used the money; we would not have planned properly; all of these nice sounding plans will go to waste. At this time, I think the Government needs to go back to some of the things it intended, come up with an explanation why it has not and move on in a positive way with some firm plans in mind and some actual implementation. A year after this let us look and see, have you accomplished what you said you were going to do in 2006 and hopefully it would be better than what I have just looked at. Oh, I meant to say that there is one area that the Government did score; that was it. [Desk thumping] I turned the page when I was talking to the Attorney General.

Thank you very much.
Mr. Vice-President: Hon. Senators, we shall suspend now for the dinner break and return at 8.30 p.m.

8.00 p.m.: Sitting suspended.

8.30 p.m.: Sitting resumed.

The Minister of Tourism (Sen. The Hon. Howard Chin Lee): Thank you very much, Mr. Vice-President. Today in the Parliament and on national television I would like to give an account for my Ministry, the Ministry of Tourism. I would like to speak about the tourism industry and all of the successes and accomplishments that we have had over the last year 2005/2006. I will also like to talk about the Ministry continuing in its efforts in stimulating the growth of this industry through the increased focus on developing the product through increased marketing of the destination, both regionally and internationally.

But before doing so, I would just like to edify the Senate with some information on what is happening today in tourism. In fact, within the last five to ten years we have seen a change, a new birth of an industry that is now dependent on other markets and other types of technologies. It is also an industry where $11.9 billion is generated worldwide and contributes some 13.8 per cent to the world's GDP. In fact, they say that every one out of 11 jobs are created in the tourism industry. So we are dealing with an industry that today in the world is the fastest growing industry, and of course, Trinidad and Tobago is and will be part of that growing economy.

Why is it changing? Why is today the world of tourism different to 15 years or 20 years ago? It is said that the greatest revolution in the travel and tourism industry was the jet, but today and I am quoting David Neeleman in a book called Jet Blue. He said:

"That the greatest revolution in the world of travel and tourism today is the Internet. The ability to use the Internet for bookings; the ability to use the Internet for travelling and the ability to use the Internet for basic information about destinations."

A lot of information was gathered in the past about destinations from travel agents, tour operators and brochures, but today most of the information that is acquired in the tourism industry is now found over the Internet. So we must find a way of ensuring and making sure that any information that is being sent out is being used over the Internet.

Also, the industry of the no frills carrier, which is a whole new way of the airline service developing in the last five or ten years, we have seen the birth of the no frills carriers, airlines such as Jet Blue, West Jets, Ryan Air and Easy Jet, all of which pioneered the use of the Internet and the ability to book airline seats
over the Internet. In fact, it is said that many of these airlines today, almost 50 per cent of their bookings are now over the Internet, they are cutting out the middle-man which is the travel agent and the tour operator and they are now reducing the cost of travel by having Internet bookings, payments paid over the Internet. As a result of having so much influence in the tourism industry over the Internet you have agencies, websites that are now controlling the industry. You have websites such as Hotel.com, Expedia, Travellocity and Orbitz.

8.35 p.m.

It was once said to one of my peers in the Caribbean that if they wished to stop travel to your country or your island, a simple click of a switch can turn you off, by diverting all of the bookings to another destination. What I am saying, Mr. Vice-President, is that, the world, the environment, the tourism industry has changed and continues to change at a rapid rate because of the Internet. If we in Trinidad and Tobago are not part of that change we would be left behind.

For those reasons in the month of April, 2005 it was the intention of the Government to form a new agency; an authority to have persons or personnel that are responsible for it, to hire people, whether, it is a president or the director of tourism with the understanding of all of these changes in the industry and to ensure that Trinidad and Tobago will be part of this 21st Century.

Also, there is a website named tripadvisors.com, which one can go to and review blogs or information on the standards of hotels. So no longer where hotels in the past could get away by advertising misinformation on brochures and having the market go and have a bad experience. With these new Internet websites, reviews on standards are now being maintained and this is done to ensure that people are not, according to the Americans, “jiped” as they go to the island and the delivery of the product is not as they anticipated.

So today I will talk about the world tourism and bring it in the context of Trinidad and Tobago. We shall also review all of the marketing efforts by the Tourism Development Company between 2005 and 2006. I will also like to talk a bit about what Sen. Boldon spoke about, which is sports and how it not only impacted on galvanizing a society, but how it also impacted on branding a country. I will talk about what the TDC and the Ministry of Tourism did to ensure that we took full advantage of the opportunity of having the Soca Warriors perform in Germany and all that we had done behind the scenes to ensure that we got full publicity out of that event.

I will also like to talk about our increased presence in markets, such as, Germany, Holland and Scandinavia; which is the largest market for Tobago because as many people are aware the market for Trinidad is very different from...
the market in Tobago. In fact, the arrivals for Tobago are mainly out of the United Kingdom primarily, secondly out of Germany and then Europe; whereas in Trinidad our primary market is out of the United States, then Canada and the rest of the region.

So I would talk about the differentiation between the two products and how we have aligned both of them differently in our marketing strategies. I would also like to give an overview to the Senate about some of our special projects that we embarked upon. We had a culinary festival “Taste T&T” which was extremely successful and following that about a month later we had the Tourism Park which was at the Centre of Excellence.

**Sen. Mark:** Howard, sorry I could not attend the culinary.

**Sen. The Hon. H. Chin Lee:** Minister! [Laughter] [Desk thumping]

**Sen. Mark:** But I wanted to be there; I am sorry.

**Sen. The Hon. H. Chin Lee:** You were not missed. [Laughter]

**Hon. Senator:** Oh my God. [Laughter] [Desk thumping]

**Sen. The Hon. H. Chin Lee:** I would also like to, as part of my contribution [Interruption] speak of the infrastructure, because part of our development is improving the infrastructure; our beaches at Maracas, Vessigny and Las Cuevas. We are also looking at redoing the Emperor Valley Zoo which is now under the Ministry of Tourism, and I would talk a bit about what we are doing in that area. Also, I would like to talk about Maracas Beach and the plans that we have, starting in 2007 to revamp the entire facility and make it a world-class facility that all citizens of Trinidad and Tobago would be very proud of. [Desk thumping]

I would also like to talk about the lifeguard services, what we have done within the last year to revamp the lifeguard services, and then, in closing, we only have a success story to tell. I will talk about the increase as a result of all of the work that the TDC has done; the increase in investments in hotels and of course, our increase in arrivals. And then, I would give an overview of the airlift and the increase airlift that we have had between the European countries, between Tobago, between the United States and Trinidad, and of course, the inter-link between Trinidad and Tobago via the fast ferry.

Before doing all of that, Mr. Vice-President, there is an issue that I wanted to deal with before I start my contribution and that is a comment made by the Leader of the Opposition, because I was listening very closely to her debate and I was
wondering what she would say about tourism. Obviously, there is nothing to say but good things, but she said something and I will just read from the *Newsday*, page 22—a very good newspaper.

**Sen. Mark:** But of course, you own it, so it is bound to be good. [*Laughter*]

**Sen. The Hon. H. Chin Lee:** It says, Mr. Vice-President, this is a quote from the Opposition Leader’s response to the Trinidad and Tobago budget 2006/2007. I thought I was reading this thing wrongly because I just do not understand what she meant.

She speaks of travel and who travels the most. I heard Sen. Prof. Deosaran speak of—he insinuated about a high-flyer, but let me correct that. It said at the top of the list in terms of travel—“eh Wade”—it says, that the Minister of Tourism—$61 million to travel; with $60 million to be spent on overseas travel. I thought I was going mad; I thought something was wrong—$60 million—so I asked my people just to check and find out how much I spent last year on travel and how much we got in our vote for travel. I have a printout of our estimated expenditure and it says: The official travel, the estimate for 2007 is $650,000, so I think what the Leader of the Opposition did was to add a zero onto it and said $65 million. I do not know whether she was having a drink or something, [*Interruption*] but there is no way that you could spend $60 million on travel.

**Sen. Munro:** That drink was not called for. [*Crosstalk*]

**Sen. The Hon. H. Chin Lee:** I just wanted to correct that because there is no correlation between $650,000 and $60 million.

**Sen. Montano:** Wade Mark wrote that part of the speech. [*Laughter*]

**Sen. The Hon. H. Chin Lee:** Again, an exaggeration from the other side. I just want to correct that, Senator. It is not $60 million on travel, it is $650,000. I just want to review and recap to the population that I am not a high-flyer; I know that my Ministry of Tourism is flying high but I am not a high-flyer. [*Desk thumping*]

Personally, I made four trips for the year, Mr. Vice-President. I attended a conference at the US Virgin Islands, the Caribbean Tourism Organization—

**Sen. Mark:** You do not fly; you have a boat.

**Sen. The Hon. H. Chin Lee:**—the 28th Annual Conference where discussions on tourism in the business of the Caribbean, where at these CTO conferences it represents all of the Ministers of Tourism in the region. We meet
three or four times yearly and issues on the Caribbean are discussed. Issues such as the passport issue about which many Caribbean islands are now extremely concerned.

That passport issue deals with—there will be a restriction from January 08, 2007 by Americans travelling to the Caribbean, they must have a passport after that date. I remembered the General Secretary of the CTO, Mr. Vincent Vanderpool Wallace likening this restriction to a tsunami; he said that this will destroy tourism. Whereas before, what was required, was that Americans could travel to certain parts of the Caribbean with a birth certificate or they can travel with a drivers licence or a voters registration card, today, or after January 08, 2007 they will be required to travel with a passport.

Just to give an idea to the Senate of how many Americans at the moment have passports, it is less than 25 per cent, so it would be a devastation for those islands that have allowed people to enter their countries without a passport. Fortunately for Trinidad and Tobago, we have always had a requirement that a passport is required for anyone visiting, and that has not changed. There were moves at one time to change it but that was never changed, so therefore it would not affect us in any way as it would affect other islands. So these matters are what we discussed at the CTO 28th annual conference.

I also attended during November 13 to 17, the World Travel Market which was held in London and there we discussed with the airlines that travel mainly to Tobago, airlines such as Condor, British Airways, Virgin Atlantic, and ensured that our marketing support for these airlines is given to ensure that they are happy with whatever arrangements that are made between the airlift, the TDC and the Ministry of Tourism. I am pleased to say that they are all very happy, and in fact, they are so happy that they would be increasing airlift this year to both Tobago and Trinidad. [Desk thumping]

My third travel, Mr. Vice-President, for this $60 million, [Laughter] was the Caribbean marketplace in Puerto Rico and that is where all of the stakeholders, the tour operators, the travel packets; they all come together and discuss with one another and exchange ideas. We were present there and we had a team very present. And of course, the only other travel that I had was to New York to the third CTO Caribbean Week; that was to provide service information needed for member countries for sustainable development of their countries. Also discussed was the Cricket World Cup and then marketing of the Caribbean. What the CTO has recognized is that the Caribbean competes with Asia; competes with Europe; it is not just about Barbados, Antigua, Tobago or Trinidad; it is about the region, so that collectively the CTO markets the region.
So, Mr. Vice-President, I have travelled to four locations in one year. I have spent a total of $133,935.83. I am probably the least flying Minister. [Interruption] So that the information that is provided for, [Interruption] where $60 million is spent is totally incorrect.

**Sen. Mark:** Howard Chin Lee.

**Sen. The Hon. H. Chin Lee:** I would finish my contribution. Just allow me to finish and then you can ask questions.

Mr. Vice-President, consequently as a result of the changes in the world tourism [Interruption] we have formed an entity called the Tourism Development Company and the purpose of this entity—its purpose is to aggressively market Trinidad and Tobago now; to develop a promotional campaign, to work on the tourism infrastructure and to increase the amount of investments that we have in Trinidad and Tobago. What we also did in 2005, is we increased the marketing budget to about $60 million to ensure that we capture all of our source markets in America.

**Sen. Mark:** That is it! That is the $60 million.

**Sen. The Hon. H. Chin Lee:** You see they mix things. Mixing up marketing with travel, that is why she needs to look—[Interruption] You need to look at the vote.

**Sen. Mark:** Sixty million for marketing.

**Sen. The Hon. H. Chin Lee:** If you look at the Estimates of Expenditures they are very far apart in terms of official overseas travel and promotion, publicity and printing. [Interruption] It is about seven lines below so I suggest you either get glasses or really learn how to read these documents.

**Sen. Dumas:** She had a bad research officer for marketing.

**Sen. Mark:** For marketing.

**Sen. The Hon. H. Chin Lee:** Mr. Vice-President, part of the development was to get someone, as the President of the Tourism Development Company who has an understanding and an awareness of tourism, someone with the experience in the other islands. Seeing that we are fairly new to the industry, we got someone who has worked in the British Tourist Authority in 1973; who has worked in the Ministry of Tourism in the Bahamas between 1983 to 1989. Someone who was the Vice-President of Marketing in Thrust House-40 between 1989 to 1991;
someone who also worked in Curacao as the Director of Tourism between 2001 and 2005 and is now the Director of Tourism for Trinidad and Tobago in 2005. And that is, of course, Dr. Hepple who has brought some of that knowledge and experience to Trinidad and Tobago.

Added to that, I would just like to review some of the initiatives taken by the Tourism Development Company and also initiatives taken by the Ministry of Tourism, reinvestments and infrastructure.

8.50 p.m.

At carnival time, the Tourism Development Corporation (TDC) hosted 35 members during that period from a wide range of media houses from the United States, Europe and Latin America. This gave Trinidad and Tobago tremendous coverage in international newspapers and magazines. Also during this time, the ministry seized the opportunity to conclude agreements with Television House, BET, in respect of shooting two magazine show series based on Trinidad and Tobago's culture. The titles were: Trinidad and Tobago Today and Trini Rhythms, featured internationally, and reached a massive number of households contributing significantly to efforts at showcasing the Trinidad and Tobago tourism product in targeted markets.

Mr. Vice-President, I just wanted to talk about the ministry. The ministry continued its efforts at building awareness of the tourism product amongst the domestic population and of making the public more aware of the benefits of tourism and the opportunities offered by this sector. It is important for the population to understand and to be aware of the benefits derived in order to increase this industry and we did so, through several projects which I would outline later on; one being the Tourism Park. Did you attend that one?

Sen. Mark: No.

Sen. The Hon. H. Chin Lee: You were not missed at that one either. Also, there were various public awareness programmes in the area of tourism investment incentives in the accommodation, in the restaurant sector and in transportation. The aim of these programmes was to make all tourism stakeholders aware of the investment incentives available under the Tourism Development Act, 2002 and all of its amendments.

Mr. Vice-President, many people in Trinidad and Tobago up till today, will come to me and ask me: “How do I get incentives for my project”? I said, are you aware of the Act, because a lot of people think it is hotels alone that get the
benefit. But there are other projects under Schedule VII that can get these benefits and they are all listed. We had a programme to edify and educate persons who are interested in the sector for them to understand some of these incentives. That was part of the TDC's programme for 2005.

Also, for the third consecutive year, we had the Tourism Park which was at the Centre of Excellence and that was held over a ten-day period and was organized by both the Ministry of Tourism and the Tourism Development Company. This year, we are pleased to say the park attracted nearly 98,000 people, the largest in the history of any of those events. [Desk thumping] The first year we had it, we attracted 25,000 people; the second year was 71,000, and this year it was 98,000.

Sen. Munro: Very good location.

Sen. The Hon. H. Chin Lee: Product. Added to that, Mr. Vice-President—[Interruption]

Sen. Dumas: That is why COP used it. [Laughter]

Sen. The Hon. H. Chin Lee: But they cannot draw that kind of crowd. Mr. Vice-President, also, as part of the TDC's promotion, they worked on identifying hotel sites, so that when people come to the island to invest, their site will say, you could invest here or there, instead of sending them on this willy-nilly chase. So that the Government and TDC acknowledge that there continues to be a need for new high quality hotel rooms in Port of Spain and has completed extensive studies on potential sites in the city which can be discussed with potential investors and that programme was done about two months ago. As a result of this work, negotiations have already begun with potential developers to bring in additional hotels.

Mr. Vice-President, with respect to marketing, I just want to outline some of the initiatives taken by the TDC with respect to marketing. The TDC implemented marketing campaigns in North America, in Europe, and in the Caribbean. The North American campaign focused on attracting adventure and ecotourists, divers, as well as sophisticated visitors looking for cultural experiences. It also targeted meeting and conference planners, which is something I would go into at a later time as to why conference tourism is the future for Trinidad.

In the UK, marketing activities focused very much on addressing the fallout from the British government’s advisory, warning British tourists about travel to Trinidad and Tobago. The TDC and the THA, together met with tour operators to
inform them of the new measures being put in place in Tobago to address the British government's concerns. And as the Minister of National Security said, there are already discussions at the moment in reducing that advisory.

Marketing activities focused heavily on support for tour operators using direct UK/Tobago airlift, such as British Airways, Excel and Virgin Atlantic. The TDC's marketing activities focused on Germany, Holland and Scandinavia, in support of air service to Tobago from Amsterdam and Frankfurt. The TDC is also working with Trinidad's hotels and guest houses with BW and a newly formed Caribbean Airways. The TDC implemented an aggressive marketing campaign in Barbados, Guyana, Suriname, Grenada and in St. Lucia. And I would just like to add, that by having a new Caribbean airline and in recognizing that the second largest market to Trinidad is from the Caricom, that airline having better links to the other islands would certainly boost tourism in Trinidad and Tobago.

Also, the TDC campaign resulted in increased interest in travel to Trinidad from these five markets and increased business for Trinidad hotels at weekends when they needed the business.

With respect to domestic tourism and local awareness, the TDC implemented a new campaign to encourage Trinidadians and Tobagonians to travel more frequently within their own country. It resulted in much more interest in local hotels, in guest houses, and bed and breakfast establishments in both Trinidad and in Tobago. The TDC implemented a number of programmes designed to increase the local population's knowledge of and understanding of the local tourism sector and this involved extensive newspaper and radio advertising, and of course, the two events, Taste T&T and the Tourism Park. So, I have just outlined some of the marketing efforts made by the TDC within the last year.

What I would like to also talk about, is what we have done in Germany and what we did collectively with the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs and I think had it not been for that, we would not have received the level of publicity that Trinidad and Tobago gained out of this event. [Desk thumping]

The first initiative was coining the phrase, "Small Country, Big Passion", and I am pleased to say that was coined by the Ministry of Tourism [Desk thumping] and that is now being an international saying about our country, "Small Country, Big Passion". That was going to be our tag line in Trinidad and a tag line as we go, not just to Germany, but to the rest of the world.

Mr. Vice-President, the Trinidad and Tobago's Ministry of Tourism, also together with TTFF pioneered the website called socawarriorstt.com. It was quite innovative at the time. There were a lot of naysayers as well, whether the site
could work or it could not work. But what advantage we could get from developing this socawarriorstt.com website was the ability for people who were interested in finding us—because we knew that there would be millions of people around the world now interested in finding out about the Soca Warriors and finding out about Trinidad and Tobago. So we developed a website within a month's time, which featured not only the Soca Warriors. On that site, you could download videos of the team; you could download videos of Trinidad and Tobago against Bahrain highlights; we had highlights of biographies on Russell Latapy, Dwight Yorke and all of the players.

On that site, we also highlighted tourism. It had videos of our beaches; we highlighted our carnival; our Jouvert; and we spoke about the hotel accommodations on the site. On that site, we also included the music of Trinidad and Tobago. You saw videos from Destra, Machel Montano and you saw videos from all our top artistes, all of that was featured on this site. Mr. Vice-President, I did not think that this site would be so successful, because by the end of June, over 132 countries had visited this site. We expected to get about a million hits, but by the end of June, this site got 30 millions hits around the world. [Desk thumping] That is probably the most visited site you have ever seen and the site only cost us $150,000 for that level of marketing. So you see, marketing is not about just spending money, it is about spending it wisely and being innovative as to how you spend the money. [Desk thumping] That is what the PNM is about, we spend wisely.

Added to that—I am not finished yet—the socawarriorstt.com, one would recall at the roundabout at Piarco, we had built these hugh figurines before Carnival, where we had about over 40,000 visitors and these figurines, Sen. Munro, will welcome all visitors to Carnival, the characters at Piarco and it was a colourful display. In fact, I witnessed many people after coming from the airport just stopping and taking pictures. We had a picture of the World Cup football and we got a lot of compliments. So we all added that to the theme of building for the World Cup 2006.

In Berlin, we sponsored the main media centre. They had over 1,400 journalists and many people may not be aware—were you there—

**Hon. Senator:** No.

**Sen. The Hon. H. Chin Lee:**—that we were the sole sponsor in Berlin of the media centre; so that on every computer that was used by the international media, the front page was Trinidad and Tobago. So from the time you go onto the
computer, is Trinidad and Tobago. All the videos that were showing the games live, had three-minute ads on Trinidad and Tobago. So it is called “cognitive dissonance”; that is a term used in advertising. You all know what that means? [Cross talk] Let me explain what that means for the sake of the UNC Senators.

Cognitive dissonance is the ability to subliminally keep a message going, where at the end of the day, it would be remembered whether consciously or unconsciously. And that is what we achieved by having the media centre in Berlin, subliminally speak of Trinidad and Tobago via ads on the big screen; via posters that were around you; and via the use of the website in creating the centre web pages as being Trinidad and Tobago. That cost us about US $150,000 but it was well worth it, because everyone writing about the World Cup, will then remember subliminally about “Small Country, Big Passion”, in Trinidad and Tobago and therefore will write about it and free publicity will be gained from that.

Added to that—we did not stop there—the Ministry of Culture together with ourselves, sponsored a cultural group to go to Germany, about 135 members and we also developed—and I learned this from the World Travel Market, and ITB which is what they have in London, that your presence could be felt by having a booth on site. So, we sent a team up, maybe four or five months before the event; we discussed with the mayors and the LOCs and in Kaiserslautern, and in Dortmund and in Nuremberg about finding the ideal location for having these booths. It is no sense booking a booth, if you are out of Trinidad and they put you in some place 10 miles away from the stadium.

We went there, we located proper sites; we located a proper area for the bands and the cultural groups to perform. Do you know in one city they closed off an entire street for the performances? That did not happen by chance, that happened with early discussions with the mayor, discussions with the LOCs and a lot of preplanning went on to make those events happen. On top of that, the soca caravan which was basically a booth which displayed our trade, displayed our culture, displayed our tourism, was in Germany. As I understand it, it was the most visited booth in Germany [Desk thumping] and it also became the centre and I understand the heartbeat for all of our supporters in Germany. So that served two purposes, one, being a centre for information and knowledge, and the other being the centre for all that represents the Trinidadian and Tobagonian spirit.

So we were very pleased to be part of that. As part of the 135 member cultural team, there were chutney dancers, soca artistes, calypso artistes; we had carnival costumes, moko jumbies, “pan around d neck” and we also even had a film crew
that filmed five-minute infomercials that were sent back to Trinidad on a daily basis and was also on the website which were also viewed by many people around the world.

9.05 p.m.

Mr. Vice-President, not only did we have a presence there physically, but we also had a presence all over the World Wide Web. I got some figures from England and Holland. What they do is add up the quantity of the advertising value through cutouts in newspaper ads. They have their formula for working out columns per centimetre and adding up the value that one gains from any event. I am pleased to say that the newspaper and magazine ads in England were valued at £32 million in advertising value. In Holland they estimated that they were over 820,000 euros in terms of the value. Whatever the investment was, nothing could pay for the sort of advertising we got. I would personally like to congratulate the Soca Warriors and thank them for assisting in branding Trinidad and Tobago.

[ Interruption ]

Mr. Vice-President, apart from that, during the year 2005/2006, the Ministry of Tourism amended the Tourism Development Act. There were two major incentives provided for. I would not go into debate on what they were; I would just give an overview and an idea of what we amended. The first one was the amendment to the dividends paid from approved tourism projects to non-resident shareholders; they would be exempt from taxes. That was all part of the Caribbean Single Market and Economy (CSME) and the COTED agreement.

Prior to that, we also amended where we allowed investors the savings paid on interest on tourism projects retroactive after the completion of the projects. So these amendments were to increase and encourage investments into Trinidad and Tobago. Later I would speak about all the investments we had this year, which is a phenomenal amount. It is almost a record amount and I would list them for the Senate.

Another special event project that the Ministry of Tourism worked on, together with the Tourism Development Company (TDC), was the Tourism Park that I mentioned before. Because everything must have an objective and purpose, the Tourism Park was aimed at providing patrons with tourism-focused interactive experiences so as to build their appreciation for the varying facets of the tourism product. It was called the Seven Wonders of Trinidad and Tobago. Let me just list those seven wonders, because in many instances we do not appreciate what we have. We go abroad and think it is better. What we have right here in Trinidad and Tobago could be regarded as the best.
We highlighted our ecotourism; we highlighted adventure tourism; we highlighted sports tourism; festivals and culture; sights and attractions. We highlighted the business and conference of tourism and career opportunities in tourism. All this was meant to edify the population; to give persons a clearer understanding of what tourism has to offer. It was also for them to understand the various niches and how we could build on those niches. A very popular booth was the one on careers in tourism. There was a long line of young kids just wanting to find out how to get involved.

At the Tourism Park we also intended to highlight the importance of tourism to the economy and to the people. We highlighted the wide array of opportunities available with respect to careers and investments. We tried to say that it was good to visit the sights and attractions across the country and to increase awareness of vacationing at home. How could we sell our country to people outside, if we ourselves do not know about it? So part of the plan was, again, to edify our population so they could also become ambassadors to Trinidad and Tobago.

One of our great accomplishments in doing this was the ability to partner with many members of the private sector. We partnered with the Tour Guides Association and the tour operators. The Public Transport Service Corporation (PTSC) was also part of the whole Tourism Park. The Chaguaramas Development Authority had a booth which highlighted all that Chaguaramas has to offer. We also had the Transport Association. All these became part and parcel of the park, because we recognize that tourism is not only about the Ministry of Tourism or the Tourism Development Company; it is a collective effort by all of the private sector and stakeholders who are part of the process. In so doing, the efforts would be synergized; the strength would be greater and the consequential results would be much better than if it had been done singularly.

The tour operators, after the event, indicated that there was an increase in the demand for their local tours. It was mainly done for the tour operators, because you are dealing with sights and attractions. We hope that this demand could be sustained. Again, we moved from 71,000 to 98,000. We had a record sheet of comments that were made by a large collection of people and all the comments were very positive. In fact, one of the comments I found most flattering was when someone said that we should make it a year round event. Another comment that was most flattering was when we asked persons to identify locations and tourist sights in Trinidad and Tobago. Apart from Maracas, they listed the Tourism Park as a sights and attraction; I found that quite interesting.

Added to that, we had the Culinary Festival. It was the second year and I must say that it was designed to highlight all our gourmet chefs and the indigenous chefs, both from Trinidad and Tobago. This was against the background of
cultural entertainment and chefs. The Culinary Festival, we hope and are assured, would one day mushroom to become an international event; so apart from Carnival, the Culinary Festival would be one mark to put on your calendar of events.

At that particular event last year, we attracted 8,000 persons. This year we used a much larger space; we had more chefs involved; we had more performing groups and we attracted about 10,000 persons; so there was an increase in the number of persons. It shows the level of interest that the population has, both in our culinary, our sights and our attractions. We just have to offer the right product. We just have to package it properly and people will come.

This was almost in an effort to prepare us to market, brand and to ensure that not just the Tourism Park and culinary festivals, but all our sights and attractions could be treated as one big tourism park where, when people come to Trinidad and Tobago, they could have good facilities at Maracas, Las Cuevas, Manzanilla and La Brea. We could have top end facilities. We are moving towards that direction.

In Trinidad and Tobago we have some of the top chefs in the world. I can back that up by a recent competition held in Miami. In this competition, 16 countries in the region participated. I want to congratulate our team; this year they won the best team at the competition. They were awarded and certainly given all the accolades from the Ministry of Tourism. I want us to give them a round of applause. [Desk thumping] This is not just about the Soca Warriors; it is teams like these that brand Trinidad and Tobago internationally; maybe in a different way, on a smaller scale, but they all contribute to making and branding Trinidad and Tobago for what it is today.

Mr. Vice-President, my Ministry took the responsibility of the lifeguard services at the end of 2004. I want, again, to speak about our achievements with respect to these services. In June of 2006, we commissioned into active service one ambulance, a bus, two all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) and two jet skis. Added to that, there were two new tractors to assist in beach cleaning and a transport vehicle to move lifeguards from location to location.

Sen. Munro: Is that a two-two policy to service all the beaches? It makes no sense to buy only two. [Crosstalk]

Sen. The Hon. H. Chin Lee: A what? You are not making sense. If you make a good comment, I would respond to it, but what two-two?

Sen. Dumas: Munro, you would talk after.
Sen. The Hon. H. Chin Lee: Now we have refurbishment of the lifeguards' headquarters at Maracas and Las Cuevas beaches. The Ministry of Tourism also constructed eight new towers at Vessigny, Quinam and Mayaro. I am speaking about lifeguards with a little of my own personal experience, because I am a qualified lifeguard. You could give me a round of applause for that. [Desk thumping] [Laughter] [Interruption]

Mr. Vice-President: Hon. Senators, the speaking time of the hon. Senator has expired.

Motion made, That the hon. Senator's speaking time be extended by 15 minutes. [Hon. Dr. L. Saith]

Question put and agreed to. [Crosstalk]

Sen. The Hon. H. Chin Lee: Thank you, Mr. Vice-President, for giving me an extra 15 minutes to speak. I will try and wrap up quickly, because if I have to finish this whole contribution I would probably need another hour.

From my own experience, lifesaving techniques today are very different to 15 years ago. In my time in the sea scouts we learned the cross chest and under the neck methods of taking persons from a dangerous to a less dangerous situation. Today, the new thinking is the ability to use the buoy, making no physical contact, putting it out for them to grab on to and then bringing them in; that is what the jet ski is about. You pull these buoys and they are used to rescue people in a short time, to get to them and ensure that they can get in safely to the shore much quicker than if they had to swim out.

For part of our lifeguard training, we sent persons abroad to learn some of these techniques. To ensure that staff in the lifeguard services possesses the skills and knowledge for effective water safety, the Ministry facilitated some intensive training of three of our senior lifeguard officers at Galveston Lifeguard Academy in the United States. Believe you me, they brought back a lot of knowledge and experience from Galveston. They were also exposed to the latest techniques in lifeguarding and facilities management and also had some on-hand training in Daytona, Miami. I am pleased to say that by strengthening the lifeguard services, we have seen an increase in the number of rescues on our beaches as well as a reduction of drowning incidents.

This Ministry is also responsible for the Emperor Valley Zoo. Since we took responsibility from December of 2005, the Zoological Society, together with the Ministry, has hired an expert, a consultant. This person has experience in designing 20
zoos all over North America. He is doing about six zoos in China. He is part of Disney World as well, so he is a very well-experienced person and we are pleased to see that there is a master plan now in place to outline an improved zoo.

We want to include an orchid garden where families could walk. Part of the plan is also to have a walking trail right opposite the Savannah. We want to have a children's play area, because part of this Government's policy is to improve family life, so this facility would do just that. There would also be a site called the Tourist Discovery Centre and a much larger parking facility. Very soon we can expect to have an improved zoo. We expect to have a zoo that would be user friendly both to adults and, especially, to children; for young people to understand more and leave the zoo, not only entertained, but educated.

We have seen where Maracas has fallen into disrepair. We have seen where, in many instances, the car park floods. We also have problems with traffic. On a Sunday, anyone who goes to Blanchisseuse would experience an hour or two in traffic. This is unnecessary traffic, backed up all the way as far as Las Cuevas. We are now working on a plan and we are already in the final stages of alleviating all those problems. In fact, part of the plan would be to divert the road behind the car park, so you would not have a gridlock of people on that road between Maracas and the car park. People would now move on the adjacent road, park inside the car park and have an unhindered walk between the car park and Maracas Beach.

There would be a two or three-lane highway coming behind and then a parking facility within an encaptured area. Part of the plan would be to lift the height of the car park, because the problem is that the car park is too low, so when the rain falls, the water floods the car park, the vendors are flooded, sewage overflows and it becomes a very unhealthy scene. Part of the plan is to lift the height of the car park and vending areas. We also intend to improve the vending facility to make it more appealing, more conducive to tourism, our Trinidadians and to provide modern facilities for them.

We would like patrons, the persons who go to enjoy the facilities, to have a shower; to have a place where they could wash their feet, have proper toilet facilities and a proper changing room. That is our simple mandate. Right now we are in the final stages of that project and we intend to bring that to Cabinet very shortly.

9.20 p.m.

Mr. Vice-President, I know I have about 10 more minutes, so let me now talk about the hotel investments in Trinidad and Tobago. As a result of all the good work that the Government has been doing, and as a result of the proactive
measures that the Tourism Development Company (TDC) and the Ministry of Tourism have embarked on, we have seen a boom in investments in hotels particularly here in Trinidad.

Let me just list some of them for you. By January 2007, Trincity would have a new 80-room hotel; it would be the Holiday Inn Express. Also, Cara Suites Airport Hotel plans on building a 150-room hotel with a conference centre near to Piarco. They are hoping to open that by March 2008. Also, there is a planned hotel by the airport for 120 rooms which is to be opened in 2008. The Carlton Savannah Hotel which is in St. Ann’s is another 150-room hotel which is due for completion by mid-2008.

Also Cara Suites in Claxton Bay, there is a 50-room expansion and they intend to expand their conference facilities to have 500 persons at any one time. Of course, the largest investment in the hotel industry is by the Government with the Hyatt Regency Hotel which is on the waterfront, with 428 rooms and one of the largest conference centres in this part of the region, a 50,000 square feet conference centre. [Desk thumping]

Mr. Vice-President, I would not take that information lightly, because when you have a 50,000 square feet conference centre, you now have the ability to host conferences that you were not able to host before. Conferences like the FCCA Conference which I am about to go on, that normally requires seating for 600—700 persons, we could now host that. International Government functions, Caricom meetings, we can host them. IT, talking about the Tamana Estate, we can now host certain conferences right here in Trinidad that we were not able to do before. And when you have conferences like they do in Las Vegas, Orlando or in Chicago—a big part of their trade is in conferencing—when there is a big conference in town, all the restaurants and hotels are filled, all the taxis are working. Everyone from the airline to the charters coming in, together with Caribbean Airways, everyone is doing well. And the intention is to have conferences year round so there is no high season or low season. It will be a high season year round.

So we are very pleased to say that there is already over $2 billion investment in the hotel industry and by the end of 2008, our room stock will be increased by over 60 per cent. That deserves a round of applause. [Desk thumping]

Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh: You have to ask for it.

Mr. Vice-President, I just want to talk quickly about airlifts. If there is no airlift into Trinidad and Tobago, there is no tourism. It was the hon. Prime Minister in 2001, who saved the day in tourism in Tobago and in a way, Trinidad by forming the airlift committee and guaranteeing airlift from Europe to Tobago. At that time I remember occupancy levels were at 10 and 15 per cent. They had the product but no airlift. So the Prime Minister said that we will guarantee the airlift coming in and if we guarantee it, we would reduce the risk to airlines coming. So he did that, and consequently, last year Tobago received some of the highest arrivals in its history and it is because of that airlift commitment. It also encouraged other airlines and created the snowball effect for more and more airlifts.

I am pleased to say that this year, there are a couple of new airlines coming into Tobago: Delta has a Boeing 737 which would now come weekly to Tobago and that would start on February 17. Additionally, in Trinidad, apart from Continental, Delta is also starting its services four times weekly from December 09, 2006 and from Trinidad we would feed to almost anywhere in the United States of America, and as a matter of fact, in the world.

Apart from Delta, there is also Virgin which we are now negotiating for them to put on an additional flight to Tobago, and that is a 448-seater and we are hoping that would come into effect by December. We are also talking with British Airways and that is why we go to the WTM. It is not a free ride; we go to discuss matters and to do business. British Airways, which traditionally has flown twice weekly, we are now negotiating for them to fly three times weekly with a Boeing 777 with 383 seats. So the outlook for the airlift is good. It is now for us to synergize the airlift with marketing with our destination and make sure these packages are sold. The cruise ship industry—

Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh: With the closure of BWIA and the Caribbean Airlines coming in, a number of routes are being lost. How would this affect Tobago?

Sen. Enill: That is not true.

Sen. The Hon. H. Chin Lee: What I would like to say is that an airline is as good as its planes and its seats. We have in the last year, consequently, as a result of Delta, Continental Airlines, American Airlines and Air Canada at present we have enough routes between Trinidad and Tobago, between Canada, between Europe and between the United States of America to sustain our tourism. How it would affect us is that by having Caribbean Airways, and as I mentioned earlier, by having the second largest number of arrivals to Trinidad from the Caribbean
regions, and by having better air links between Trinidad and Grenada, or Trinidad and Barbados, or Trinidad and Saint Lucia, we would now have more Caricom members coming to the region.

Added to that, part of Caribbean Airways’ links is to maintain its main feeds out of Miami and New York and all the other feeds have been picked up through joint arrangements with other airlines. So I am not seeing any drop in terms of the number of arrivals with the change of a name of an airline. In fact, I am seeing positive times ahead with this new airline for the tourism sector. [Desk thumping]

Mr. Vice-President, apart from that, there is Excel which flies weekly to Tobago from Gatwick, and in Trinidad there are about six airlines: Continental; American Airlines; Aeropostal, out of Venezuela; Air Canada; LIAT; Caribbean Star and Travel Span. And, of course, the two fast ferries between Trinidad and Tobago are also assisting in domestic tourism between the islands because when tourists go to Tobago they may want to come to Trinidad for two days or vice versa.

Our arrivals for Trinidad and Tobago, which is probably the best score that we can look at to judge our success, have been on the increase. In 2001, there were 383,101 persons between Trinidad and Tobago and in 2002, it increased to 384,214; in 2003, 409,069; in 2004, 442,555 and in 2005, which was last year, there was a record number of 460,196. [Desk thumping] That contributed—and I know Sen. Prof. Ramchand had asked me how does that redound to money—according to the last WTTC Report, 5.8 per cent of our jobs which is 33,771 direct jobs, it contributed some 4.8 per cent to total GDP.

In wrapping up, Mr. Vice-President, I have gone at some lengths to share with hon. Senators and the public at large some of the activities which the Ministry of Tourism, working in close collaboration with the TDC and other key stakeholders, has been engaged in over the past year. I have also outlined some of the major achievements which have followed from these. Much of the work which we have been pursuing over the last year will continue with increased vigour in fiscal 2007. Tourism remains an industry with considerable potential for economic development and employment generation.

The tourism and travel industry is the single largest industry in the world and also the fastest growing. Notwithstanding the main challenges which the international industry has had to face over the last few years, including the latest one on terrorism on air travel, the industry has survived. Not only has it survived, but it has demonstrated tremendous resilience.
Indeed, world travel and tourism continues to grow and indications are that the appetite for international travel will not be curbed any time soon. The Caribbean region remains an attractive place of choice amongst international travellers and tourism continues to play a vital role in the enrichment of the quality of life of Caribbean people.

Trinidad and Tobago is quite an interesting destination situated in the Southern Caribbean, our twin-island republic is more than a traditional sea, sand and surf Caribbean island destination. Trinidad and Tobago is recognized internationally for its natural resources, its diverse festivals, its abundant wildlife, and its flora and fauna.

The Tobago Main Ridge Forest has been awarded the world’s leading ecotourism destination for three consecutive years. Our rich and diverse cultures and festivals, with our carnival being our number one export are some of the most differentiating products.

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago has increasingly viewed the importance of the development of the local tourism industry as critical to the diversification of the economy and, as a pivotal ingredient in the mix as we strive for sustainable development of Trinidad and Tobago. My ministry will continue to streamline the incentives offered to investors in tourism projects and to put in place the relevant investment guidelines to smoothen the investment process.

The new ruling of the United States of America’s government requiring all US citizens to have a passport for travel abroad does not immediately adversely impact upon Trinidad and Tobago. The Trinidad and Tobago immigration authorities have always required persons entering the country to have a passport. In the medium to long term it may have an impact if it is generally perceived that cruising to the Caribbean is easier than taking a land-based vacation.

A new dawn is rising in respect of our approach to the upkeep and management of our much frequented beaches, a crucial component of our tourism project. The Ministry of Tourism shall, in 2007, continue to develop tourism products to foster the development of human resources within the industry, to lift the standard of customer services offered to visitors as well as locals, to enhance the lifeguard services, to upgrade the Emperor Valley Zoo, and to market Trinidad and Tobago’s destination aggressively and effectively in all our targeted markets.

We shall continue to build upon the relationship we have nurtured with our private sector industry partners, our community groups, and indeed with all the relevant public sector agencies so as to ensure that the benefits are spread to the widest cross section of our population.
Mr. Vice-President, in closing, the theme for the World Tourism Day, 2006 which is “Tourism in riches”: tourism just does not highlight a nation, it builds it; tourism does not just showcase our wildlife, it protects it; and tourism just does not display our culture, it enriches it. May Trinidad and Tobago and all its citizens be enriched by this Government’s efforts towards tourism.

With those few words, I thank you.

9.35 p.m.

Sen. Dr. Eastlyn Mc Kenzie: Thank you very much, Mr. Vice-President. [Desk thumping] As we would say in Tobago, at this unholy hour—

Let me begin by thanking the hon. Minister in the Ministry of Finance, Sen. The Hon. Conrad Enill, for his presentation, and let me also thank all the public servants and the various civil society organizations for their input of work and the ideas that they actually gave towards this budget. I am aware of the public service advisors and those who would have to implement the provisions of the budget. I also would like to thank those people with whom I spoke and got some ideas to put together this contribution. At this point, let me formally welcome my Tobago colleague, Sen. The Hon. Arnold Piggott, to this Senate. [Desk thumping] I was not here when he was sworn in. Welcome, Sir, and I hope you will find the experience challenging.

It baffles me that despite all the money spent over the years, all the efforts put in by the various administrations, so many of our people are still poor. Some are hungry, some are unemployable, some of our communities are still protesting over bad roads and unreliable water supply. We are still turning out illiterate students and we have plenty money. Why and what must we do differently? One of the areas we have to look at would be our archaic bureaucratic structures and processes, especially in the public service. I think we have to mobilize our people outside of politics, to produce. I think we have to speed up our implementation process, make them faster and more efficient, and we have to strive to ensure that we get value for money.

I just want to comment on a few areas in the budget. I know that as a Senate we have no vote; I know that we cannot force the Government to act in any way, but I want to express some concerns, not only personal concerns but of some people who have spoken with me. I want to add that there are Ministers here, Members of the Government, who listen and actually take some suggestions on board. I want to congratulate them and tell them how much I have admired this quality in them.
Let me just start with Tobago. I want to differentiate between the Tobago House of Assembly and Tobago as a whole. The THA asked for $2.7 billion. It got $2.025 billion, which is $675 million less than it requested and $275 million less than in the 2005/2006 budget. The Minister of Finance, when he says the people of Tobago, he is actually putting together the allocation to the THA and the allocation under Schedule 7, which is the CAST allocation coming under the Prime Minister's office. He probably will not realize that when the people of Tobago recognize this, they look at it in a very negative political way and it gives the impression that the central government, despite the fact that you have a THA, still wants to control a certain amount of the development that is taking place in Tobago. Although we know what Schedule 7 says, but again you have to take into consideration how the ordinary people will view this. I am saying in this case the Minister of Finance must make it abundantly clear that he is differentiating between what the Tobago House of Assembly is given, based on its request, and what the Government could afford.

Another point that the hon. Prime Minister—the Minister of Finance—talked about, was this thing of the 5 per cent coming out of the Dispute Resolution Commission. We are saying in Tobago that, yes, there is that provision but, again, he has to remember section 43, which says you look at the needs of Tobago. I think it is not very wise, it might be fair, but it is not very wise of him to harp on this 5 per cent as is allocated from the Dispute Resolution Commission.

I want to talk about the Tobago hospital, and all I would say at this stage, having listened and heard that it would be probably completed in 2007, is that it is a disgrace. I say no more.

I listened to the hon. Minister of National Security and I want to ask him, please, to see that we have a remand yard for our young offenders from Tobago who are sent to Trinidad because we have no remand facility in Tobago.

**Sen. Mark:** He is sleeping.

**Sen. Dr. E. Mc Kenzie:** I know somebody would tell him. It is fair that he is tired.

What has happened is that—and we have traced this—a number of our young offenders—petty, petty things—they are sent on remand to Trinidad; they make friends with hardened criminals here, then you hear of a number of criminal activities in Tobago and, invariably, there is somebody from Trinidad involved in the whole thing, coming together with these young people who have come to Trinidad and actually graduated into hard criminal activity.
The next point I want to talk about is the Aliens Landholding Act which was referred to very favourably in the Prime Minister’s budget presentation. Let me just give a brief rundown to give the Senate and the national community the knowledge that we are not paranoid over the situation in Tobago; we are not making a mountain out of a molehill. In 1990 the NAR repealed the Aliens Landholding Act in favour of the Foreign Investment Act. Since then we have had 482 applications by foreigners for ownership of land in Tobago. I want to give you a breakdown: Americans, we had 66 applications and the total amount of land was 98 acres. I am giving an approximation where we have a small fraction. The British, 195 applicants, 1,177 acres; Canadians, 36 applicants, 51 acres; the Dutch, 11 applicants, 11 acres; the French, four applicants, two acres; the Germans, 87 applicants, 114 acres; Italians, nine applicants, five acres; Norwegians, 11 applicants, two acres; others, 52 applicants, 393 acres. We even had 11 Swiss, six acres.

We are talking about 1,853 acres of land in Tobago, a small island like Tobago, going into foreign hands. The point is that what the Foreign Investment Act was put in place to do, there is evidence of abuse of the privilege. We are saying in Tobago, something has to be done and done very quickly. I note the favourable response to the request from the THA to the hon. Prime Minister and we are just saying we are holding him to his word. Very few of these were for commercial or agricultural purposes. Three hundred and ninety-three applicants were for residential purposes; 73 for commercial and 16 for agricultural purposes. [Interuption] It is foreigners I am talking about. You see, I think that it is something we want to address and we are asking that it be addressed quickly. [Desk thumping]

I want to give congratulations to the Ministry of Legal Affairs because our problems of land acquisition and land titles have begun to be solved. It started long ago; it continued under the former Minister of Legal Affairs, Minister Danny Montano, and it is continuing very, very strenuously and very actively under our present Minister of Legal Affairs, Sen. The Hon. Christine Kangaloo. [Desk thumping]

I also want to give some praise to the officers of the Registrar General’s office. They have been coming to Tobago and meeting with us. The judges have been getting into it; we have a committee set up in Tobago; we have actually done our report and I am very, very encouraged.

I just want to give a little suggestion for those responsible—Sen. The Hon. Abdul-Hamid—for the UTT campus in Tobago. They talked about the campus being engaged in the fishing and marine industries, and so on. I want to suggest to him that there would be need for a stock assessment of our flying fish because I
think that is necessary before you think of developing the industry, especially as you have the campus to be situated in Buccoo. I think you could put heavy emphasis on the marine environment.

I want to hint a little about agriculture. I want to congratulate the Government for the development of ECIAF as part of UWI to turn out degreed farmers.

Mr. Vice-President: UTT.

Sen. Dr. E. McKenzie:—UTT, to turn out degreed farmers—a part of UWI too—and they would be given lands. But I want to add that they be given houses on their lands—on these big farms—because this is part of the process that will cut down on the praedial larceny. You know in Tobago you rear your sheep somewhere else and you live somewhere else, by the time you go back next day, your sheep gone. But if you live on spot with your big dogs, and so on, they would bark and you know somebody is trying to steal your sheep. So I want to encourage the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources, not only to give them lands, but give them the means whereby they could construct their homes or houses on the land so that they would be near to it.

I want to congratulate the Government on the large farm holdings that they are proposing, but, please, for heaven’s sake, do not make them state farms. State farms have never worked. Do not add anymore to the payroll of the Government; let these be handled differently, whether you are going to give the degreed farmers or whoever, please, for heaven’s sake.

I would add, let the local government for the different districts do the infrastructure. I was a little confused earlier today. I remembered on April 05, 2005 the hon. Minister, Dr. Lenny Saith, told us that they had 68,000 acres of Caroni lands for agriculture. Yesterday I heard 42,000 acres. All I want to say, let us not take away bit by bit, little by little, chipping away from our agricultural lands, especially at Caroni. I think that you could find lands. With the modern technology and fertilizers and so on, you could make a desert fertile. So I am saying that we do not need to take away what we have.

In tourism, I want to congratulate the hon. Minister. I think the hon Minister of Tourism has found his right place. [Desk thumping]

9.50 p.m.

I want to encourage him and suggest that he continue to develop local and regional tourism, as you heard. I want him to continue to market our natural, cultural and sport environment. There is a little project in Tobago where students
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[SEN. DR. MC KENZIE]

from Wales have been coming to Tobago every year to do research in marine life. I ask the hon.
Minister to encourage this and see whether he can multiply this in his marketing to encourage the research work that so many of these foreign university students come to Tobago to do, not only in marine life, but we also have a number of them who come to the cultural life within the health sector. They ask some of us to lecture to them on the customs and culture of Tobago and the people.

They are experiencing that with the migration of people into the United States, when a lady goes to make baby and she says, “I do not do this and I do not do that,” and she gone with her baby to clinic with the “wanga” tie on with the pin and so on, they must know that they should not tell the mother take that nonsense off the child. They are now bringing these people to get the lectures to understand the background behind this type of behaviour. You can add these things to your portfolio.

I want to talk about education and I recognize the efforts of the Minister of Education and the work that is going on in the ministry. Madam Minister, you and your staff are trying very hard. I know that there is so much more to be done and to be done quickly. Yes, to the development of pre-schools. Yes to the improvement of primary and secondary schools. Yes, Sen. Abdul-Hamid, for tertiary education. Thank you, Madam Minister for the emphasis and significance you have placed on special schools. Our school in Tobago has been doing fantastic.

You know that we have had children coming from Happy Haven School for mentally challenged children into the main stream primary school. I bring the reports to show you how the children are progressing. Two of them have gone on to secondary school. Sen. Boldon would be happy to know that our Happy Haven School has four places on the national cricket team to go to India in November. Four children from one little school from Tobago because we have had the means from the Government to fund our school and the teachers. When we requested a new bus we got it and we can transport the children to get their training. Our coach does it free, of course, and they are really doing well.

The Tobago House of Assembly (THA) is funding speech therapy for them. We are getting real support. Madam Minister, I say to you, thank you.

The homework centres in schools and the communities are very, very good. This is part of where you can hire people to supervise these children in the work centres in the offices and businesses, et cetera. When I think of it, here we are, we lament the under-achievement of males. We know that a high percentage of the people in the work force are women as teachers and in the banks, and offices, and
yet, we had not catered to put these mothers’ minds at ease, by providing within their working environment the facility whereby a bus can pick up the children whether it is around Port of Spain or wherever the schools are. People are saying, yes, the village schools, but if I am working in Port of Spain and leaving Chaguanas, Diego Martin or wherever I live to get to Port of Spain in time for work and my little child four or five years old or whatever age is there 6 o’clock in the morning has to be in the office with me. There are little children in their pyjamas and sucking their fingers on their pillows outside in their parents’ cars.

We should provide the facility to put the mothers’ minds at ease and lift the productivity level. In the afternoon they have to wonder to pick up the child, to bring the child to the office. “Some of these children, dey so busy; dey stamping the government’s stationery, they doing all sorta tings, dey running all over the offices and dat is what dey should be doing.” They are children. Give a tax incentive to banks and organizations; build a little room and let the parents subscribe towards a little fee to have somebody to supervise and monitor them. You would be surprised.

Sen. Jeremie: Thank you, Sen. Dr. Mc Kenzie. I wonder if I could invite you to visit with me across at the Office of the Attorney General. We have the exact facility which you have outlined.

Sen. Mark: “Is we put that there.”

Sen. Jeremie: We outfitted it and it is completely up and running. [Desk thumping]

Sen. Mark: We put it there. Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj.

Sen. Dr. E. Mc Kenzie: Mr. Vice-President, probably the Attorney General does not know what he has done now. By you having your Parliament Channel, do you know how many businessmen would be looking at you and saying, if the Attorney General’s Office can do that, we would do it too. They would be encouraged to know. Some of these women who are looking would be able to go to their bosses and say these people are doing it. Let me congratulate you. I did not know. Thank you very much. We have started and let us continue. Let us spread the word. Give them bus service. [ Interruption] Wade! [Laughter]

I want to encourage the Minister of Education. In your new schools provide them with lunchrooms. You will be surprised to know the type of grace and elegance that you would bring to these children when they are seated nicely and dine, rather than having this box of food and some “sit down on the floor, some sit down outside on a curb”. Provide lunchrooms for them where they can sit and dine in your new buildings.
I want to advise—to suggest, not advise. I would be out of place to advise. I suggest that you beware of taking away all the responsibilities of parenthood from the parents. Beware! Beware that we do not do so much for children that we leave nothing for parents to do. Let us watch that.

I want to advise and suggest to the Minister of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs, research and history will tell us, look at any country where adult education has been pushed to the fringe of activity, the nation suffers in the way that we are suffering now. I am not talking about the academics. I am talking about the type of public and community education that we did in our time that built communities, parents, homes and families without even directly letting them know that is what we were doing. We used the mobile cinema units. We brought them to the community centres.

You know, Mr. Vice-President, sometimes I feel I could beat up on my good friend, Sen. The Hon. Rennie Dumas. [Laughter] When I tell you, Mr. Vice-President, I would not tell you that I feel like beating on you too, because I would be out of order. I mean to say, people like us worked in the trenches of community development. We knew our people by heart. We knew all our tutors by name; where they lived; their skills and their phone numbers. That is how we knew the communities. We have stopped the whole process of adult education and community development in the way that it was done to build communities. Let us get back to basics. Let us get back to basics! [Desk thumping]

Many of our community development officers have absolutely no knowledge of community development. I remember when Tobago began to change politically; get more aware and people started to talk, former minister Muriel Donawa-McDavidson said to us in community development, in the days of the Paulo Freire the Ivan Illich and those people who worked with the peasants in Brazil and those places, “We da lock every one ah all yuh community development officers up.” You know why? People were alert and aware. That was the type of education. Public education!

Every time you made a law we brought the people to Tobago to lecture. The former Anthony Jacelon and Jerry Hospedales, they said Unit Trust, we say, “Come to Tobago.” From Charlotteville to Crown Point. Registrar General’s Office coming to Tobago, we say, “Who is de man?” Eric Winston Taylor going to be there? Charlotteville to Tobago. “Next morning everybody down by he office with dey pillow case, dey deed, dey will, everything, dey beemax cup, everything that dey have.” Aware! Get back to community development work and that is the way you are going to help to solve it.
I am almost finished. I want to give a little hint to the Minister of Education; I note your concern about sixth form places. I ask you to research how many young people need sixth form places and cannot get. Research that! How many people want to go to sixth form but cannot get a place? Now, with the diversification of tertiary education some people do not want to go to sixth form. They want to go to COSTAATT, Roy Tech and a great number of them are doing SAT. They prefer to do SAT than sixth form. Before you make any big move and invest and start to buy places I want to ask you kindly, please, do that.

I know that we have the local government reform but there is an urgent need for decentralization. I know that you have begun and so let me not push an open door. I congratulate you and I advise you to start to institute now some of the changes. Do not wait for the White Paper to turn green and blue. Do that from now. Do not wait for the finalization.

Wonderful. Minister Colm Imbert was very, lucid and explicit in what he had to say about the train and water ferry. I still say do a survey to find out whether car owners would use the train and leave their cars at home and what effect this would have on the maxi-taxi service. Most importantly, will it solve the transport and traffic jam problem?

Finally, the rum, the cigarettes and the casino. I say you cannot legislate morality. [Desk thumping] You cannot! Some of the hardest smokers we have in the country are doctors and you want to tell me that Minister of Health say “dis on cigarette pack”. Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh, am I wrong?

Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh: No.

Sen. Dr. E. McKenzie: Thank you, Sir.

No matter the price, no matter the health risk, whatever it is, the addicts or those who indulge—yuh know what dey tell me? Dey say doc, man mus die. Leh wha me like kill meh.” [Laughter] You understand what they mean? “Dey say man mus die. Whether yuh tink, people does lick yuh down; people does shoot yuh. People does dis, dat and de odder. Leh wha me like kill meh.” So you understand?

The Minister of Finance has yielded because now he has said that they are going to phase out the thing. Investors preplan. They invest for long-term benefit. So probably now, they would have had some machines coming in already.

10.05 p.m.

Mr. Vice-President, I am saying you need to regularize. You said that you are going to stop the games; you are going to phase them out, but I am saying that you must give a definitive time and say: “The transition is after the next 10 years we will ban;”
whatever it is. You have to give them a time—10 or 15 years. These people have
planned and have invested their moneys for a long time. Some have machines on order
now. What are they going to do? You tell them what to do with the machines! Let us be
fair and honest. You cannot even do that with a suit! You cannot take your cloth to the
tailor and tell him: “Gimme mi suit next five minutes.” You have to give the man time.

I do not gamble—

**Sen. Mark:** [Inaudible]

**Sen. Dr. E. Mc Kenzie:** Mr. Mark!

**Sen. Mark:** Sorry.

**Sen. Dr. E. Mc Kenzie:** I do not play Play Whe; I do not play Lotto. I know
Government has this system in place. You heard Sen. Seetahal, S.C. talk about it. You
have Play Whe, Scratch. I know them. I am in a place like that every day, if I want to. I
have quarrelled that when you go to deposit the money for the National Lotteries
Control Board on a Monday, you have to pay a commission to the bank for taking your
money to give them, and I have argued that in this Senate. When the thing started you
had a few games, now, if you hear games: Donsai, whatever Pot, Scratch Pot, Cash Pot,
Play Whe, Pick Two; name it, they have it! Government-run!

You cannot close down the thing immediately! Listen, some of these people only
play $3 for the day and they are happy. It is a poor man’s fun! When you did that to the
pool tables, those young boys who used to play with one another and vie and those girls
playing—what are their names—Janet Lee; it was for fun. They are not playing for any
money! They are playing for rank! “I could do this and I could do that and I could
win.” You took away the fun from the young people who used to go and shoot pool.
You must ask some of them something.

I congratulate the Government for the increase in old age pension. I
congratulate them for the disability grant. I congratulate them for the tax claim. I
ask the hon. Attorney General not to forget the retired judges and the little
pittance they get. I know you are going to deal with it.

Finally, Mr. Vice-President—the procurement reform, and I chatted privately
with the Attorney General and I know the White Paper was out two years ago. He
has given me the assurance that certain things were being held up because they
wanted to include other aspects in it. I look forward to that and I say no more
because I know action is being taken.

Minister Enill, you know when you will be asked to wind up. Unlike the Minister of
Finance, he did not know when he was going to be asked to wind up. You know!
Therefore, prepare answers for the Senate. Let your Ministers and their technical people
study what Senators have said; what we have asked; what we have queried; what we
have even misunderstood and let them give you the answers so when you come to wind
up, you will give us explanations and a rationale. You will come here with that to the
Senate when you wind up on Thursday. You know when; you have an advantage over
the Minister of Finance. You do not have to go home and sleep; you know when.

Mr. Vice-President, thank you very much. [Desk thumping]

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Public Administration and Information and Minister in the
Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries (Sen. The Hon. Dr. Lenny Saith): Mr.
Vice-President, I beg to move that the Senate be now adjourned to Wednesday, October
18, 2006 at 10.30 a.m. In order to ensure that the Minister of Finance knows when he has
to wind up, let me tell you who the speakers are tomorrow:

Sen. The Hon. Christine Sahadeo
Member of the Opposition
Sen. Prof. Kenneth Ramchand
Sen. The Hon. Hazel Manning
Sen. The Hon. John Jeremie
Member of the Opposition
Hon. Jarrette Narine
Sen. Angela Cropper
Sen. The Hon. Mustapha Abdul-Hamid
Sen. Parvatee Anmolsingh-Mahabir
Sen. The Hon. Christine Kangaloo
If we stick to that, then the Minister will know when he has to wind up.

Question put and agreed to.

Senate adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 10.12 p.m.