

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, November 10, 2021

The House met at 1.30 p.m.

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

[*Cell phone rings*]

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, might I just ask, having regard to what just happened, that all Members take this opportunity to ensure that their devices are on silent.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Hon. Members, I have received correspondence from Mrs. Camille Robinson-Regis MP, Member for Arouca/Maloney seeking leave of absence from today's sitting up until the 13th of November, 2021. The leave which the Member seeks is granted.

**JOINT SELECT COMMITTEES
(CHANGE OF MEMBERSHIP)**

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, correspondence has been received from the President of the Senate dated November 08, 2021, which states as follows:

“Dear Speaker,

Re: Establishment of Joint Select Committees

Reference is made to the subject at caption.

At a sitting held on Friday September 10, 2021, the Senate agreed to the following resolutions.

- (i) *Be it resolved* that the Fisheries Management (No. 2) Bill, 2020 be referred to a Joint Select Committee established to consider and report on the Bill and that this committee be mandated to adopt the work of the Joint Select Committee appointed in the First Session

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(2020/2021) and report by Monday January 31, 2022; and

- (ii) *Be it resolved* that the Shipping Bill, 2020 be referred to a Joint Select Committee established to consider and report on the Bill and that this committee be mandated to adopt the work of the Joint Select Committee appointed in the First Session (2020/2021) and report by Monday January 31, 2022.

Thereafter, at a sitting held on Friday September 17, 2021, the Senate agreed to the following resolution:

Be it resolved that the following six (6) Members be appointed to serve on the following Joint Select Committees with an equal number from the House of Representatives:

- (i) The Joint Select Committee on the Fisheries Management (No. 2) Bill, 2020:

- Mr. Clarence Rambharat
- Ms. Yokymma Bethelmy
- Dr. Muhammad Yunus Ibrahim
- Mr. Anil Roberts
- Dr. Varma Deyalsingh
- Dr. Maria Dillon-Remy.

- (ii) The Joint Select Committee on the Shipping Bill, 2020:

- Mr. Randal Mitchell
- Ms. Paula Gopee-Scoon
- Mr. Rohan Sinanan
- Ms. Jearlean John
- Mr. Deeroop Teemal
- Ms. Charrise Seepersad.

Accordingly, I respectfully request that the House of Representatives be informed of this decision at the earliest convenience please.

Thank you.

Respectfully,

Christine Kangaloo

President of the Senate”

PAPERS LAID

1. Notification of Her Excellency, the President in respect of the nomination of Retired Justice of Appeal Judith Jones, for appointment as a Member of the Police Service Commission. [*The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Esmond Forde)*]
2. Notification of Her Excellency, the President in respect of the nomination of Ms. Maxine Attong, for appointment as a Member of the Police Service Commission. [*Mr. E. Forde*]
3. Notification of Her Excellency, the President in respect of the nomination of Mr. Ian Kevin Ramdhanie, for appointment as a Member of the Police Service Commission. [*Mr. E. Forde*]
4. Notification of Her Excellency, the President in respect of the nomination of Ms. Maxine King, for appointment as a Member of the Police Service Commission. [*Mr. E. Forde*]
5. Notification of Her Excellency, the President in respect of the nomination of Mr. Rajiv Persad, for appointment as a Member of the Police Service Commission [*Mr. E. Forde*]
6. Annual Audited Financial Statements of National Enterprises Limited for the financial year ended March 31, 2021. [*The Minister of Finance (Hon. Colm Imbert)*]

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7. Audited Financial Statements of the Tourism Trinidad Limited for the year ended September 30, 2020. [*Hon. C. Imbert*]
8. Consolidated Financial Statements of the National Flour Mills Limited for the year ended December 31, 2020. [*Hon. C. Imbert*]
9. Annual Audited Financial Statements of the Trinidad Nitrogen Company Limited for the financial year ended December 31, 2020. [*Hon. C. Imbert*]
10. Annual Audited Financial Statements of the Point Lisas Industrial Port Development Corporation Limited for the financial year ended December 31, 2020. [*Hon. C. Imbert*]
11. Audited Financial Statements of the National Schools Dietary Services Limited for the financial year ended September 30, 2020. [*Hon. C. Imbert*]
Papers 6 to 11 to be referred to the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee.
12. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the Financial Statements of the Police Complaints Authority for the year ended September 30, 2020. [*Hon. C. Imbert*]
13. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the Statement of Recovery of Expenses of the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries for the year ended December 31, 2020. [*Hon. C. Imbert*]
14. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the Financial Statements of the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago for the year ended September 30, 2010. [*Hon. C. Imbert*]
15. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the Financial Statements of the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago for the year ended September 30, 2011. [*Hon. C. Imbert*]

16. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the Financial Statements of the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago for the year ended September 30, 2012. [*Hon. C. Imbert*]
Papers 12 to 16 to be referred to the Public Accounts Committee.
17. Ministerial Response of the Ministry of Finance to the Follow-up Report of the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee on the Examination of the Audited Financial Statements of the Export-Import Bank of Trinidad and Tobago Limited (EXIMBANK) for the financial years 2012 to 2017. [*Hon. C. Imbert*]
18. Ministerial Response of the Ministry of Finance to the Second Report of the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee on the Examination of the Audited Financial Statements of the Vehicle Management Corporation of Trinidad and Tobago Limited (VMCOTT) for the financial years 2013 to 2014. [*Hon. C. Imbert*]
19. Report on the Sixth Withdrawal in the amount of US\$100,000,000. from the Trinidad and Tobago Heritage and Stabilisation Fund in accordance with Section 15A(3) of the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund Act, Chapter 70:09, as amended for the period July 2021. [*Hon. C. Imbert*]
20. Annual Administrative Report of the InvesTT Limited for the year ended September 30, 2019. [*The Minister of Health (Hon. Terrence Deyalsingh)*]
21. Annual Administrative Report of the National Flour Mills Limited for the year ended December 31, 2019. [*Hon. T. Deyalsingh*]
22. Annual Administrative Report of the Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards for the year ended September 30, 2018. [*Hon. T. Deyalsingh*]
23. Annual Report of the Environmental Management Authority for the year 2017. [*Hon. T. Deyalsingh*]

24. Annual Administrative Report of the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services for the fiscal year 2020. [*Hon. T. Deyalsingh*]
25. Value Added Tax (Amendment to Schedule 2) (No. 2) Order, 2021. [*Hon. C. Imbert*]

JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE REPORTS

(Presentation)

Public Accounts Committee

National Lotteries Control Board (NLCB) for the years 2008 to 2012

Mr. Davendranath Tancoo (*Oropouche West*): Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I have the honour to present the following reports:

First Report of the Public Accounts Committee on an examination of the Follow-up on the Implementation of the Recommendations made in the Twenty-Fifth Report of the Public Accounts Committee on an examination of the Audited Financial Statements and Internal Controls of the National Lotteries Control Board (NLCB) for the years 2008 to 2012.

Report of the Auditor General on the Public Accounts of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

Second Report of the Public Accounts Committee on an examination of the Report of the Auditor General on the Public Accounts of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago for the Financial Year 2020.

Telecommunications Authority of Trinidad and Tobago

Third Report of the Public Accounts Committee on an examination of the Follow-up on the implementation of the recommendations made in the Twenty-Second Report of the Public Accounts Committee on the examination of the Audited Financial Statements of the Telecommunications Authority of Trinidad and Tobago for the Financial Years 2010 to 2016.

Public Administration and Appropriations Committee

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A summary of inquiries undertaken during the Eleventh Parliament

Mr. Lackram Bodoë (*Fyzabad*): Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I have the honour to present the following reports:

First Report of the Public Administration and Appropriations Committee - A summary of inquiries undertaken during the Eleventh Parliament for the period 2015-2020.

Examination of the efficiency of the delivery of services to the public by the Regional Health Authorities

Second Report of the Public Administration and Appropriations Committee on an examination of the efficiency of the delivery of services to the public by the Regional Health Authorities and a follow-up on the implementation of the recommendations presented in the Welch Report.

Examination into the Processing of the payment of Pensions and Gratuities of Retired Public Officers and Contracted Employees

Third Report of the Public Administration and Appropriations Committee on an examination of the Follow-up on the implementation of the recommendations of the Twenty-Fourth Report of the PAAC on the examination into the Processing of the payment of Pensions and Gratuities of Retired Public Officers and Contracted Employees.

Examination of the response of Public Authorities to the COVID-19 pandemic

Interim Report of the Public Administration and Appropriations Committee on an examination of the response of Public Authorities to the COVID-19 pandemic in Trinidad and Tobago.

URGENT QUESTIONS

**Ambulance Service
(Measures to Augment)**

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Dr. Lackram Bodoie (*Fyzabad*): Thank you, Madam Speaker. To the Minister of Health: In light of the reports in the press today of a “crippling ambulance service”, will the Minister indicate what measures are being put in place to augment the complement of ambulances and related human resources in light of the extreme demand occasioned by the current worrying COVID spike?

The Minister of Health (Hon. Terrence Deyalsingh): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and thank you for the question. Madam Speaker, we have taken decisive action since the start of the pandemic to manage the health care system. In the case of the ambulance service where GMRTT has a functioning fleet of 48, we are working with them to bring more of their ambulance fleet into operation.

At the level of the RHAs, which also has a fleet of approximately 50 ambulances, we have pressed into service about 12 out of that 50 for COVID which represents about 24 per cent or more of that. But just as this is a multifactorial problem, the solutions are also to be found not only in ambulances but on how we transfer patients from an ambulance to an A&E. We have stepped up our capacity at the A&E to treat patients who are now delaying coming into our health care facilities and they are coming in severely ill. So we are actually managing some of these patients in our A&Es at an ICU level with ventilators and so on.

What we are doing and have done is separated our A&Es for isolation units so these COVID-19 positive patients could be more quickly transferred from an ambulance into an A&E setting.

In addition, if you look at the whole process mapping from calling ambulance, A&E, ward, ICU, we have also increased our ICU capacity, contrary to what your leader said last night, from 35 to 60, an almost 100 per cent increase. We have done that so that will also help. But what is critical, and the country must

understand this, the solution is not in more resources, more ambulances. The solution is in vaccination and let me give you the figures. At the A&E this morning—

Madam Speaker: Minister—

Hon. T. Deyalsingh: Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Your speaking time is now spent. Member for Fyzabad.

Dr. Bodoë: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Minister, you indicated that GMRTT has 48 ambulances and they intend to commission more ambulances into service. Can you give an indication of how many and perhaps how soon that will happen?

Hon. T. Deyalsingh: Thank you. So at any one time of GMRTT's fleet which they have about 48 to 50 in service, you will have about 18 ambulances, because these are physical assets that need to be maintained down for routine maintenance or unplanned maintenance. So we are working with them and that is why we have pressed into service some of our ambulances in the RHAs.

And as I close, Madam Speaker, the solution in this is not more of this, more of this. Let me give you the statistics; 48 out of 52 persons in our ICU right now are unvaccinated. And that is the solution for vaccinations. Seven in our ICUs, in our A&Es right now this morning, seven waiting for transport are unvaccinated.

So, Madam Speaker, the problems are multifactorial but the solutions are also multifactorial. We are building out more capacity but we must urge the population—that unvaccinated part of the population—to assist us by being vaccinated. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Seecharan: Thank you, Madam Speaker—

Madam Speaker: So, Member for Oropouche East, you no longer wish to ask a question. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Secharan: Thank you. Minister, should an ambulance's oxygen supply be consumed by a response, how long does it take to replenish this supply and get the ambulance back into service?

Madam Speaker: Minister of Health.

Hon. T. Deyalsingh: Thank you. So let me state categorically because the Opposition has this way of whipping this oxygen matter. Trinidad and Tobago has never, ever, ever, run out of oxygen at any time in this global pandemic. [*Desk thumping*] But the Opposition keeps whipping this up. Whether it is in an ambulance, on an A&E, in a ward, there has never been any delay. The ambulance turnaround time, which is mainly predicated on sanitization, is anywhere from 30 minutes to two hours depending on the type of response they made. And that applies to all consumables inclusive of oxygen. And let me say again, Trinidad and Tobago has never, ever come even remotely close to running out of oxygen. Thank you very much.

Point Lisas Industrial Estate Fire Station

(Details of Equipment)

Mr. Rudranath Indarsingh (*Couva South*): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. To the Minister of National Security: In light of the recent fire in the Point Lisas Industrial Estate, will the Minister inform this House whether there is only one functional fire tender and a non-functional Hazardous Materials truck housed in the Couva South/Savonetta Fire Station?

The Minister of National Security (Hon. Fitzgerald Hinds): Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I am able to accurately advise this honourable House that two appliances, a fire tender and the hazardous material truck with appropriate personnel led by the Chief Fire Officer were at the scene of the fire referred to by my learned friend. However, there was no need as determined by these professionals to apply or to use the hazardous material fire tender. And I am

presently awaiting a more fulsome report on the entire incident from the Chief Fire Officer. I thank you.

Madam Speaker: Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Whilst the Minister waits on this fulsome report, could the Minister inform this House if the fire officers who responded to this particular fire did not have any breathing apparatus suits and fully encapsulated suits when they arrived on the scene?

Madam Speaker: Minister of National Security.

Hon. F. Hinds: I had the report—I have just read from the Chief Fire Officer, the authority under our law to deal with this matter, and he reported no such thing. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Minister, could you inform this House, given that there are over 103 companies on the estate involved in the production of petrochemicals, that if you have been advised by the Fire Service Association that there should be no less than five appliances, inclusive of two hazardous material trucks, one water tender, one emergency tender, and as I said, fully encapsulated suits and breathing apparatus for crews responding to fires on the estate? [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker: Minister of National Security.

Hon. F. Hinds: Madam Speaker, while for good and obvious reasons, we work cordially with the Fire Service Association I take directions and collaborate on these matters with the Chief Fire Officer and I am satisfied that my friend's submission is outside of the pale, perhaps the workings of his mind. No such thing was reported.

**Tobago House of Assembly
(Forensic Audit into Blank Food Cards)**

Mr. Rudranath Indarsingh (*Couva South*): Thank you very much, Madam

Speaker. To the Minister of Social Development and Family Services: In light of recent reports that thousands of blank food card forms are being signed by Secretaries of the Tobago House of Assembly (THA) without the established guidelines, will the Minister inform this House if a forensic audit will be launched into such action.

The Minister of Social Development and Family Services (Sen. The Hon. Donna Cox): Madam Speaker, this is a matter for the THA. The Ministry of Social Development and Family Services has nothing to do with this.

Madam Speaker: Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Minister, so you are telling this House that the THA, which get its financial support from the central government of Trinidad and Tobago, of which you are the line Minister as it relates to the distribution of food cards, you are not concerned about the wanton abuse and wastage of taxpayers' money. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker: Member, that question is out of order. It did not flow from the question and the answer.

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

The Minister of Health (Hon. Terrence Deyalsingh): Thank you. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, there are six questions for oral answer. I believe two have been withdrawn, that leaves four for oral answer. They will all be answered. There are five questions for written reply. The answers have been laid with the Clerk and will be circulated. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: So just to advise Members, questions 14 and 15 have been withdrawn by the Member for Naparima.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Disaster Response Management Capacity (Steps Taken)

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6. **Mr. Rushton Paray** (*Mayaro*) asked the hon. Minister of National Security:
Could the Minister indicate what concrete steps have been taken to improve the Disaster Response Management Capacity in Trinidad and Tobago?

**Small, Micro and Medium Enterprises
(Steps Taken to Increase Participation)**

8. **Mr. Rushton Paray** (*Mayaro*) asked the hon. Minister of Trade and Industry:

Could the Minister explain the initiatives by the Government to increase the participation in e-commerce by Small, Micro and Medium Enterprises (SMMEs) in Trinidad and Tobago?

**2024 Paris Olympics
(Athletes' Participation)**

12. **Mr. Rodney Charles** (*Naparima*) asked the hon. Minister of Sport and Community Development:

Will the Minister state what specific measures are being implemented to support our athletes to improve this country's performance at the 2024 Paris Olympics?

**Unemployment and Informal Occupations
(Measures to Promote Job Opportunities)**

16. **Mr. Rodney Charles** (*Naparima*) asked the hon. Minister of Labour:

In light of a recently published International Labour Organisation (ILO) report, which stated that the Latin American and Caribbean region is set to be characterised by high unemployment and informal occupations, will the Minister state what specific measures will be effected to promote sustainable job opportunities?

**State Positions and Remuneration Packages
(Details of)**

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

Will the Minister list all State positions held, and the remuneration packages associated with each position for the following persons:

1. Noel Garcia – for the years 2018 to present;
2. Gerry Brooks - for the years 2018 to present;
3. Newman George - for the years 2018 to present; and
4. Kerwyn Garcia – for the years 2020 to present?

Vide end of sitting for written answers.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

The following questions stood on the Order Paper in the name of Mr.

Rodney Charles (Naparima):

Paris Agreement Ratification (Measures taken to Achieve Commitment)

14. Given this country's ratification of the Paris Agreement in February 2018, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 15% in several key sectors, will the Minister indicate what specific measures will be taken to achieve this commitment by 2030?

TT CO2 Emissions (Measures to Increase Citizens' Awareness of)

15. Given that this country has become the second largest emitter of CO2 per capita worldwide, will the Minister indicate what specific measures will be taken to increase awareness among our citizens to address this burning issue?

Questions, by leave, withdrawn

Economic and Financial Challenges (Measures Implemented to Navigate "New Normal")

1. **Mr. Rushton Paray** (*Mayaro*) asked the hon. Minister of Finance:
In light of the worsening economic and financial challenges facing most businesses in Trinidad and Tobago, will the Minister inform the House what

specific measures will be implemented to assist these entities in navigating the so-called “new normal”?

The Minister of Finance (Hon. Colm Imbert): Thank you, Madam Speaker. Economies across the world continue to face severe economic and financial challenges as a result of COVID-19. Trinidad and Tobago, like every other country in the world, has been negatively impacted and the Government adopted measures to contain the spread of this deadly virus while simultaneously establishing a safety net for the most vulnerable households and businesses.

It is understood that the public health measures would have had some negative social, financial and economic effects and therefore in the 2022 budget presentation the following measures were outlined which will be implemented to assist the business community.

Firstly, the recapitalization of the Eximbank to improve the manufacturing sectors’ access to foreign exchange and the establishment of a catalytic fund for export-oriented manufacturing and services sector companies.

Secondly, the facilitation of timely releases of VAT refunds to address and improve businesses’ liquidity and cash-flow challenges.

Thirdly, an enhancement of the micro and small—medium and small enterprise loan guarantee programme with the Government guaranteeing 100 per cent of the principal borrowed, extending coverage for the purchase of fixed assets including purchase of a variety of assets but excluding residential property and financial assets and products, increasing the repayment period from five to seven years and allowing a 24-month moratorium on principal payments. So that is the SME phase two programme.

Fourthly, providing \$50 million in professional services and support to SMEs in the areas of accounting services, record keeping, training, management,

inventory control, health and safety measures, assistance to ensure the meeting of statutory obligations thereby strengthening businesses for growth and to become exporters on the international stage. Acceleration of the implementation of national quality policy for adherence to international standards and technical regulations and the accreditation of testing and certification facilities allowing for improvements in production capacity and the promotion of new and niche exports.

Sixthly, the enhancement of the human resource capacity in the manufacturing sector through the development of a national vocational training strategy modeled along the German vocational education and training system which will create skilled employees for the manufacturing sector.

Additionally, the negotiation and expansion of trade agreements focusing on central and Latin America and the wider Caribbean, the Asian economies and Africa to improve market access and expand export growth to traditional and non-traditional markets.

Additionally, the amendment of the Immigration (Caribbean Community Skilled Nationals) Act to expand the categories eligible for free movement from five to 10 affording nationals the opportunity to seek employment and live in participating Caricom member states and vice versa. The free movement of persons will allow the business community access to skilled and unskilled human resources that are required to fill gaps, expand operational capacity and facilitate post-pandemic innovation and growth.

Additionally, the establishment in collaboration with the University of the West Indies and business entities and innovation incubator projects to provide a space for young entrepreneurs can get advice and help one another to commercialize ideas.

Additionally, the establishment of a special economic zone authority to

regulate economic activity through formulating standards and prescribing codes of practice, developing modern infrastructure to attract direct foreign investment and stimulate domestic investment and promote economic development and advancement of further diversification of the economy.

Additionally, the merger of InvesTT and ExporTT to establish the trade and investment promotion agency for centralizing coordination of trade and foreign direct investment activities and ensuring institutional arrangements are to international best practice standards.

Additionally, establishing a fintech hub to facilitate investment opportunities focused on developing local capabilities for export potential and providing greater opportunities for start-ups and for players to develop and scale their operations. This hub will significantly increase the number of entrepreneurs who will successfully—

Madam Speaker: Minister of Finance—

Hon. C. Imbert: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker:—your time is now spent.

Hon. C. Imbert: Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Member for Mayaro.

Mr. Paray: Thank you. Minister, thank you very much for the response. But there was no mention made on the role of the commercial banks in easing some of that burden of the SMEs. In light of the billion-dollar profits that are being reported by these banks, do you see a role for commercial banks in assisting, easing that burden to the small and medium size business sector in Trinidad and Tobago?

Madam Speaker: Minister of Finance.

Hon. C. Imbert: Madam Speaker, the question specifically asked about the measures that the Government will implement. But I would like to remind hon.

Members opposite that the small and medium enterprise phase two government guaranteed loan programme has an interest rate of zero. It is the softest loan I have ever seen with a seven-year repayment period, a two-year moratorium and a government guarantee of 100 per cent. That is a direct measure being taken by the Government.

In addition, the Central Bank, in collaboration with the Ministry of Finance, continuously looks at the loan portfolios, asked commercial banks to exercise forbearance, has reduced the Repo rate and the requirement for reserves at the Central Bank thus reducing interest rates. And the Government will continue to monitor all of these matters to see what needs to be done and what can be done to assist businesses.

2.00 p.m.

For the last year, we have been having collaborative meetings with the private sector, with the Central Bank, to determine how we can improve access to credit for enterprises, especially small and medium enterprises and we will continue with this focus in the coming year.

Mr. Paray: Minister of Finance, after all of that, that you have just explained, why would you account for the low participation rate of small and micro enterprises in Trinidad and Tobago in these government programmes? What would account for that?

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker: Member for Mayaro, I rule your question out of order—

Mr. Imbert: That is easy to answer. They do not pay their taxes.

Madam Speaker: It does not relate either to the question or the answer. Member for Mayaro.

**Shortage of Foreign Exchange
(Measures Taken)**

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2. **Mr. Rushton Paray** (*Mayaro*) asked the hon. Minister of Finance:

Will the Minister inform the House what measures will be taken to rectify the growing foreign exchange shortage, in time for the upcoming peak commercial periods?

The Minister of Finance (Hon. Colm Imbert): Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Government monitors the market for foreign exchange on a regular basis and takes appropriate action as and when required. In this context, three new special purpose windows for foreign exchange have been established by the Government within recent years. In the first instance, a window has been made available at the Central Bank for state enterprises to meet some of their forex demands to ensure that the supply of essential goods and services to the population is not interrupted. This provides access to forex for entities such as the Water and Sewerage Authority, the Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission, TSTT, Paria Fuel Trading and so on.

In addition, two other special purpose forex windows have been established at the EximBank: one, for the importation of essential goods such as basic foods and pharmaceuticals, and the other, for the importation by export manufacturers of raw materials and equipment. These three facilities provide forex on a targeted and structured basis, and are outside of and in addition to the regular injections of forex by the Central Bank into the commercial banking system. It should be noted that in accordance with sections 5 and 6 of the Exchange Control Act, the Central Bank has adopted the role of maintaining orderly conduct in and stability of the domestic foreign exchange market. To achieve this role, the bank routinely sells foreign exchange to authorized dealers in the market to meet excess demand by covering the net sales gap. Over the period January to October 2021, the net sales gap was US \$843.1 million, representing an 11.9 per cent decline from the previous period.

As such, the Central Bank sales of US 1 billion, 12.1 million to authorized

dealers supported the market over the reference period. I repeat, the net sales gap was 843 million and the Central Bank injected 1.012 billion. This intervention enabled authorized dealers to meet demand as foreign currency sales by authorized dealers to the public rose by 6.5 per cent to US 3.992.9 million over the January to October 2021 period, relative to the same period a year prior. Further, the Central Bank engages in frequent dialogue with authorized dealers with a view to gaining a better understanding of emerging developments in the forex market and improving the effectiveness of its intervention programme.

As mentioned previously, the Government also provides access to forex through three US dollar foreign exchange facilities at the EximBank. And I repeat, this ensures that state enterprises, exporters and importers of essential goods are able to access the required foreign exchange essential for their operations. Access to foreign exchange through these special facilities grew from US 209 million in 2017 to US 575 million in 2020. During the January to October 2021 period, access to this facility or these facilities totalled US 524 million, which led to the total intervention combined of US 1,536,000,000 in the forex market for the first 10 months of this year.

Mr. Paray: Minister, after that exhaustive explanation, I have gotten the impression that there is no shortage of forex. But what would account, Minister, for the fact that non-business clients and business SMEs, they are subjected to no forex at the bank or sometimes 100 to \$200 a day only, impacting business?

Hon. C. Imbert: Madam Speaker, I cannot account for the thought process of the Member opposite. As I indicated, the Government continues to monitor the market and to make forex available on a regular basis. Thank you.

Mr. Paray: Minister, can you say that the commercial banks are purposely—if there is no shortage—purposely stifling the access of US currency to businesses in

this country?

Madam Speaker: Member for Mayaro, I rule your question out of order in accordance with Standing Order 29(6) and (7). Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: [*Inaudible*]

Madam Speaker: Member for Mayaro.

Pharmaceutical Products from India (Procurement of)

3. **Mr. Rushton Paray** (*Mayaro*) asked the hon. Minister of Health:

Will the Minister inform the House whether the Government intends to take measures to procure pharmaceutical products from India to reduce the cost of pharmaceuticals to the consumer?

The Minister of Health (Hon. Terrence Deyalsingh): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, the question is asking about what the Government is doing to procure pharmaceuticals from India to reduce the cost of pharmaceuticals to the consumer, surprising, because this is based on a false premise. Trinidad and Tobago registered 61969 drugs from India. As at November 08, 2021, there are over 2,000 pharmaceutical items registered from India, accounting for 18 per cent of the total drugs registered in Trinidad and Tobago. So why ask the question? For the fiscal year 2021, 11.52 per cent of the total purchased pharmaceuticals and non-pharmaceuticals came from India at a value of TT \$55.56 million. I must reiterate, Madam Speaker, that India is a major supplier of pharmaceuticals and non-pharmaceuticals within the global market.

In this regard, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago has always taken the approach to obtain the best value for money in the procurement of these items, whether it be from India or any other country. The registration of pharmaceutical items, according to key therapeutic areas, for items imported from India includes

but are not limited to the following therapeutic areas: antihypertensives, antidiabetics, immunosuppressants, antibiotics and anti-infectives, antiasthmatics, antipsychotics depressants, psychotropics used in chemotherapy and oral chemotherapy agents, anti-inflammatory and anaesthetic medicines, cardiovascular medicines, anticoagulants, HIV/AIDS treatment. And may I add, many of these are available free to the consumer via CDAP programme, which is a PNM programme.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Paray: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Minister, many of the drugs that you have called out there, many of them are in short supply. And I wanted just to find out, based on the conversation at the recent trade meeting, where the Minister of Trade and Industry highlighted several opportunities for manufacturers, is there any intention of you and your Government to look at inviting Indian pharmaceutical manufacturers into the country to bring more products to the market and to ease whatever burden that there might be at some point in time? Thank you.

Hon. T. Deyalsingh: Madam Speaker, again, the question is based on a false premise. And you know what is surprising? The Member owns a pharmacy in Mayaro, you know, so he knows all of this.

Hon. Members: [*Inaudible*]

Hon. T. Deyalsingh: You are supposed to declare your interest.

Hon. Members: [*Inaudible*]

Mr. Charles: Answer the question.

Hon. T. Deyalsingh: You own a pharmacy and you know all of this but you would stand here and not declare your interest. So the question has to be, whose interest is the Member for Mayaro pursuing here today by asking this question?

Mr. Charles: That is a serious—[*Inaudible*]

Hon. T. Deyalsingh: That is a serious, serious conflict of interest. And further, any country or manufacturer that wants to do business in Trinidad and Tobago, they could apply to InvesTT, the Ministry of Trade and Industry, and if we have to provide regulatory support and others, we will do that. But it is shocking that this Member who owns a pharmacy is asking me and the Government, what we are doing to bring in drugs from India. Blatant, blatant conflict of interest.

Dr. Moonilal: You are—the Member is telling an untruth.

Madam Speaker: Member for Oropouche East, please contain yourself. Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Is the Minister aware the Minister of Health in Barbados is pursuing discussions with the Government of India to establish pharmaceutical firms in Barbados?

Madam Speaker: Member?

Mr. Charles: And are we doing the same?

Madam Speaker: Member, I rule your question out of order in accordance with Standing Order 29. Member for Mayaro.

Mr. Paray: Madam Speaker, just for the record, the business is a registered as a family business, and I represent pharmacies all over Trinidad and Tobago as a Member of Parliament—their interest, because they are citizens as well, Madam Speaker. Thank you.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Children's Authority Personnel (Recruitment of)

13. Mr. Rodney Charles (*Naparima*) asked the hon. Prime Minister:

Given that an employee of the Children's Authority was recently charged with one count of serious indecency against a teenager, will the Prime

Minister inform the House of the systems put in place by the Authority to ensure the recruitment of suitably qualified and competent personnel?

The Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister (Hon. Ayanna Webster-Roy):

Thank you, Madam Speaker. In order to provide care, protection and rehabilitation to vulnerable children and their families, the Children's Authority of Trinidad and Tobago requires a workforce that is suitably qualified and competent. Therefore, the organization has a recruitment and selection process which seeks to attract candidates who possess the values, knowledge, abilities, attributes and skill-building potential to work with children and their families.

A significant aspect of the authority's recruitment process is the use of selection tools which include face-to-face interviews, psychometric testing, simulations, pre-employment checks, reference checks and security vetting. The selection tools are best practice within the child protection sector and by utilizing this planned and structured approach, the authority is able to minimize the risk of appointing someone unsuitable while at the same time selecting the right person for the role. It must be noted that it is difficult to determine a person's predisposition to abuse and accurate psychometric tools to detect such a propensity are still in development. However, the authority plans to introduce the child abuse potential inventory along with a personality assessment inventory to add to the series of selection tools.

The authority will also develop the child protection competency framework which will enhance the recruitment and selection process. The implementation of both tools is in alignment with one of the authority's strategic priorities outlined in its strategic plan 2020 to 2023 for sustainable institutional strengthening. While the child abuse potential inventory is a caretaker report measure developed to estimate the risk of a parent physically abusing a child, it evaluates respondents on distress,

rigidity, unhappiness, problems with child and self, problems with family and problems with others. The personality assessment inventory, on the other hand, tests personality and psychopathology which can also be used in personnel selection. The Government through the Office of the Prime Minister, Gender and Child Affairs will continue to collaborate and work closely with authority as we seek to defend and support child rights, and make child protection everybody's business. I thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Charles: Thanks very much, Minister, for your comprehensive response. I would just like to know whether there is continuous psychometric assessment of the staff to determine their appropriateness for working with children in the Children's Authority?

Hon. A. Webster-Roy: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Yes. However, as I would have indicated in my response, it is difficult, even with all the tools, to determine and detect someone's propensity to abuse. Thank you.

**MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS (ESTABLISHMENT OF THE
BOROUGH OF DIEGO MARTIN AND BOROUGH OF SIPARIA) BILL,
2021**

Bill to amend the Municipal Corporations Act, Chap. 25:04 to establish the Borough of Diego Martin and the Borough of Siparia and to make consequential amendments to the Representation of the People Act, Chap. 2:01, the Interpretation Act, Chap. 3:01, the Elections and Boundaries Commission (Local Government and Tobago House of Assembly) Act, Chap. 25:50, the Motor Vehicles and Road Traffic Regulations, Chap. 48:50, the Central Tenders Board Act, Chap. 71:91 and other written laws [*The Minister of Rural Development and Local Government*]; read the first time.

SUMMARY COURTS (AMDT.) BILL, 2021

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Bill to amend the Summary Courts Act, Chap. 4:20 to remove the requirement of consent for joinder of complaints in summary judicial matters [*The Attorney General*]; read the first time.

ARRANGEMENT OF BUSINESS

The Minister of Health (Hon. Terrence Deyalsingh): Thank you very much again, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, notwithstanding the resolution of the House on Wednesday, September 15, 2021, in relation to the speaking time during the period of the COVID-19 pandemic, I beg to move that for debate on the Motion to approve the notifications of the members of the Police Service Commission only, that the speaking time be as follows: the mover, 45 minutes; the first responder, 45 minutes; all other speakers, 20 minutes; and the mover in reply, 30 minutes, all with no extension. Thank you very much.

Question put and agreed to.

POLICE SERVICE COMMISSION (NOMINATIONS OF)

The Prime Minister (Hon. Dr. Keith Rowley): Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I beg to move the following Motion standing in my name:

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

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

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And whereas the President has issued notifications in respect of the nomination of the following persons for appointment as members of the Police Service Commission:

- (i) Retired Justice of Appeal Judith Jones;
- (ii) Ms. Maxine Attong;
- (iii) Mr. Ian Kevin Ramdhanie;
- (iv) Ms. Maxine King; and
- (v) Mr. Rajiv Persad;

And whereas the said Notifications were laid in the House of Representatives on Wednesday, November 10, 2021;

And whereas it is expedient to approve the Notifications:

Be it resolved that the Notifications for the nomination of:

- (i) Retired Justice of Appeal Judith Jones;
- (ii) Ms. Maxine Attong;
- (ii) Mr. Ian Kevin Ramdhanie;
- (iii) Ms. Maxine King; and
- (v) Mr. Rajiv Persad

as members of the Police Service Commission be approved.

Madam Speaker, it is common knowledge that in Trinidad and Tobago, in the recent weeks, the Police Service Commission is without membership. And as head of the Government, I gave the assurance to the country that as soon as the President would have done what is required by law, as I have just described, the Government would move expeditiously to ensure that this situation be resolved by the appointment or by the Parliament treating with the President's notification, and that is precisely what we are doing here today in the most expeditious of ways.

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Madam Speaker, as you would have noted, I can point out that on the 12th of October, the President identified for notification a person experienced and qualified in the discipline of law, and that person is in the form of Retired Justice of Appeal Judith Jones. On the same date, Madam Speaker, the President identified Ms. Maxine Attong as a person who is qualified and experienced in the disciplines of finance and management for appointment to the Police Service Commission. On the 15th of October, the President identified for notification Mr. Ian Kevin Ramnarine, who is a person qualified and experienced—

Mr. Hinds: Ramdhanie.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Sorry. My apologies, Madam Speaker. Ramdhanie, not Ramnarine. Ramdhanie. My apologies to the Members. Ian Kevin Ramdhanie. And Mr. Ramdhanie is qualified and experienced in the discipline of sociology. And he is put forward to us for service on the Police Service Commission. On the 20th of October, Madam Speaker, the President identified Ms. Maxine King who is a person experienced and qualified in the disciplines of finance and management. And on the 29th of October, the President identified Mr. Rajiv Persad as a person experienced and disciplined in law, and is advanced for service on the Police Service Commission.

Madam Speaker, I have been consulted on these persons and others throughout my career as Prime Minister, and I dare say as Opposition Leader. And I am proud to say, particularly as Prime Minister, I have made it my priority to ensure that I respond to the President, as required by the Constitution, when I am consulted on matters of this nature. This situation being no different, I was consulted and the President, in her exercise, came up with these names after the process of consultation. And I am pleased to say, Madam Speaker, that a final crop

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of qualified persons could hardly have been advanced for the service on this Commission, bringing these skills and experience to offer public service in a time when most persons in Trinidad and Tobago, especially persons who are comfortably placed like these people are, such persons are reluctant, hesitant to offer themselves or to accept offerings to positions to serve in the public domain, largely because they are fearful or want nothing to do with being pilloried simply because they have agreed to provide public service within the confines of their skills and experience.

Madam Speaker, many persons would tell you that they also would not accept offers for public service or invitations to public service because of the tedious arrangements in place for qualifying under the requirements of the Integrity Commission or, Madam Speaker, that by and large public service is a thankless job. So, I am grateful that these five people have agreed to take the responsibility for providing the country at the level of the Police Service Commission with the management and skills that are required to ensure that there is a functioning Police Service Commission to do what a Police Service Commission is required to do.

And, Madam Speaker, if I spend a minute or two indicating the level of qualifications that is before us. And let me just point out, Madam Speaker, as we have called the names of these people who have offered themselves and have found favour with the selection process of Her Excellency, the President, that this Motion is a Motion to identify the qualified persons by virtue of the skills outlined and the Constitution there and these are not substantive Motions with respect to the persons themselves in the House, because as you know, Madam Speaker, such persons are not here in this House to defend themselves from any allegation or accusation, frivolous or otherwise. It is simply, Madam Speaker, that they carry

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with them the requisite qualification and experience, and most importantly, that willingness to provide public service to the people of Trinidad and Tobago, and particularly to the police service which requires it at this time more than ever.

Justice Jones served as a judge in Trinidad and Tobago's Judiciary on the Court of Appeal from June 2015 to September 2020. Prior to that, Madam Speaker, she was a High Court Judge for many, many years, and she is also a director of Mediation Services Limited. She has been involved with the Legal Aid and Advisory Authority of Trinidad and Tobago from 1996 to 2002, and she has been an attorney-at-law in private practice from December 1978 to January 2004. Madam Speaker, she holds an honours degree from the University of the West Indies, Cave Hill and a legal education certificate from the Hugh Wooding Law School in 1967, and a mediation certificate from the University of South Florida, and she has served on a number of committees and boards and have taken part in a series of expert meetings. Madam Speaker, she is eminently qualified to bring what is required to any Police Service Commission at any time. We thank her for her willingness to serve.

Madam Speaker, with respect to Ms. Maxine Attong, she has a BSc in Accounting from the University of the West Indies, and a Masters in Organizational Development. She is a Gestalt perspective leader in management change in a volatile world from Middlesex University. This is her MSc presentation. And as far as professional certificates are concerned, Madam Speaker, she is a professional certified coach. She is involved in evidence-based coaching from Fielding University training, a certified professional management accountant. She is a member of the Society of Management of Accountants in Ontario, a certified professional facilitator, a qualified quality manager and

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management of excellence, the American Society of Quality. And, Madam Speaker, she is a Train the Trainer, expert from the Arthur Lok Jack Graduate School of the UWI. Madam Speaker, she has volunteered in a number of situations in the Trinidad and Tobago Human Resource Association—she was the president at one time—treasurer of the Girls Guides of Trinidad and Tobago.

2.30 p.m.

Madam Speaker, her work experience is quite extensive and also her public service. So, here again is a person from the private sector who is willing to contribute some portion of her very valuable time and experience to serve on the Police Service Commission. I thank her for her willingness to serve.

Madam Speaker, Mr. Ian Kevin Ramdhanie is also—he is currently proceeding with his studies for a PhD in social policy at the Sir Arthur Lewis Institute of Social and Economic Studies at the University of the West Indies, being the holder of a Master's of Science and Sociology from the same university at the St. Augustine Campus. Madam Speaker, he also holds a Bachelor in Sociology and Management Studies with a double major and he is in high demand in that area of sociology. He also has professional training in Assessor Training, National Training Agency of the Ministry of Education and he has a series of satisfactorily concluded professional employment record too long to list here this afternoon, Madam Speaker, otherwise it would take us up in all the allotted time.

Suffice it so say, Madam Speaker, that he is imminently qualified in the field of sociology and once again here is a citizen who is willing to serve and, Madam Speaker, on behalf of those of us in this House, at least on my side, we thank him for his willingness.

Madam Speaker, Ms. Maxine King, also highly qualified in the area of

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finance and management. She holds a Master's in Business Administration, masters in accounting and a Bachelor of Science in Management Studies and industrial management options. Madam Speaker, we could not ask for a more qualified person given the job that is expected to be done at the Police Service Commission. We thank her for her willingness to serve.

Madam Speaker, Mr. Rajiv Persad, a lawyer who is clearly well-known and quite widely well-known in Trinidad and Tobago. Mr. Rajiv Persad brings the discipline of law to the Commission. He is an attorney-at-law in private practice since 1997 to 2021. He was the Vice President of the Law Association of Trinidad and Tobago in 2017 to 2019 and 2021. He was an acting High Court judge of the Supreme Court of Montserrat in 2020; he was an acting High Court judge of the Supreme Court of the British Virgin Islands in 2019; he was an acting High Court judge in the Supreme Court of St. Vincent and the Grenadines in May 2014; an acting High Court judge in the Supreme Court of Grenada in 2013 and an acting High Court judge in the Supreme Court of Trinidad and Tobago in 2009 to 2010. He was also the deputy chairman of the Integrity Commission of Trinidad and Tobago 2015 to 2018. Madam Speaker, such a person so well qualified, we are lucky to have him agreeing so serve on the Police Service Commission.

So, Madam Speaker, these five people, five distinguished citizens, having offered themselves to service on the Police Service Commission, I have every confidence that they will bring the quality of their qualification and their experience to bear on any and all issues concerning the Police Service Commission which today this House is being asked to accept and fill vacancies which exist. And on that basis, Madam Speaker, I beg to move.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

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Question proposed.

Madam Speaker: Member for Siparia.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar SC (Siparia): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, for giving me this opportunity to join in the debate with respect to the Motion to approve members of the Police Service Commission. Madam, I wish to place on the record as Leader of the Opposition certain concerns which I think would be important to your good self and to all right thinking persons in our country. I think we need to place into context from which my concerns arise.

The hon. Prime Minister has piloted the Motion asking us to consider notifications issued by Her Excellency, the President, of five nominees for appointment under section 122 of our Constitution as members of the Police Service Commission. I want to emphasize that the consideration of these nominees for appointment is a constitutional function and therefore of high constitutional importance. That very said section 122 of our Constitution imposes on us as Members of this House a duty to consider the names, to deliberate, to debate and finally to signify our approval or disapproval of these nominees by a vote.

Further, Madam Speaker, we would want to consider these names in the context of recognizing the importance of the Police Service Commission. So there is no point in approving nominees without putting it into context of the importance of a Police Service Commission. This is a constitutional institution that establish by—Chap. 9 of the Constitution establishes a Police Service Commission, sets out the way in which persons can serve, the qualifications that they must have and the fact that they can only be removed in certain circumstances. We have witnessed as the Prime Minister said that at time when we—for the first time I think in our

history there is no Police Service Commission and the ramifications of that has been that there is no Commissioner of Police and no acting Commissioner of Police as well.

So it is very important that we understand the functions of these nominees would have to fill, very important constitutional functions and this is where in this honourable Chamber no one can deny it is important business that we are engaged in, the people's business. Why it is important, Madam Speaker? Because the Police Service Commission is extremely important in our constitutional structure. Their functions are laid out in the Constitution, Chap. 9, the functions of the Commission. The main function—and I was part of that process—where the appointment and the whole TTPS and management of it, where there was a division, dissection if you may call it, when it is that the TTPS would be managed by a commissioner of police and his deputies and other assistance in there, and whereas the Police Service Commission was given the primary function of appointment or making recommendations for the appointment of a commissioner and a deputy commissioner of Police. That is their core and primary function.

So, they will appoint following the due process laid out in the Constitution, that is to recommend to Her Excellency, the President, the President will then send notifications here to be approved or disapproved. So the Police Service Commission, their functions include under the Constitution:

- “(a) appoint persons to hold or act in the office of Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner...;
- (b) make appointments and promotion and to confirm appointments;
- (c) remove from office and exercise disciplinary control over persons holding or acting in...offices specified...”—in section 123, paragraph

A;

- “(d) monitor the efficiency and the effectiveness of the discharge of their functions;
- (e) prepare an annual performance appraisal report in such form as may be prescribed by the Police Service Commissioner respecting and for the information of the Commissioner or Deputy Commissioner of Police; and
- (f) hear and determine appeals from decisions of the Commissioner of Police, or of any person to whom the powers of the Commissioner of Police have been delegated, in relation to appointments on promotion...as a result of disciplinary proceedings brought against a police officer appointed by the”—COP—“the Commissioner of Police.”

So this is the Commission that will select persons whose names would be brought before Parliament through the Office of the President to be confirmed, to be appointed as commissioner or deputy commissioner. And when we look at the powers of the Deputy Commissioner and Commissioner of Police, again we see very important constitutional functions vested in these offices that we should take note of them. So the Constitution vests in the COP significant powers, including:

“...the complete power to manage the Police Service”—Commission—
 “and...to ensure that the human, financial and material resources...”—of—
 “the Service are used in an efficient and effective manner.”

And this is again mandated by the Constitution section 123A.

Section 123A (2) of that Constitution, empowers the Commissioner to:

“(a) appoint persons to hold or act in an office of the Police Service”—

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Commission or—

- “(b) transfer any...officer;
- (c) remove from office...exercise disciplinary”—power—“over police officers...”

And even where the powers of the Commissioner may be exercised by a designate it the Commissioner of Police himself who must authorize that designate. Without the Commissioner or Acting Commissioner duties and functions simply cannot be exercised and we are seeing that happening now, Madam Speaker. I will not go into details of that, but we do have that situation, certain functions of the TTPS cannot be handled because there is no Commissioner or no Acting Commissioner.

In the current state of emergency that we find ourselves in the Commissioner is the only officer who can, for example, vary curfew times; authorize curfew exemptions; exercise certain other powers to ensure protection of public health; public safety and so on, and we can look at the emergency regulations that were promulgated by the Government. The Commissioner is also authorized to issue permits for protest. I think there was a little protest outside, there is no Commissioner, so who is going to give that authority during this period where there is no Commissioner to give permission. There was one outside, I think that was broken up by the police.

Under section 112 of the Summary Offences Act this is where there is no Commissioner, no Acting Commissioner and therefore our constitutional rights are even more severely curtail by the absence of the Commissioner. It means no consideration will be given to citizens’ rights to protest and even further incursion on fundamental rights. Again the Commissioner of Police is only one of three persons, Madam, in our country by law authorized to intercept communications in

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the interest of national security.

Over the past several years we have seen where reports of the interception of communication annual reports for the period 2012 to 2017 and I give these—this is the data that we have. There have been two million interceptions authorized by a Commissioner of Police. So again a very important function to be exercised by the Commissioner of Police and/or his designate, but if he is not there he cannot designate anyone. So that aspect too of national security is being severely hampered where interceptions can be done to pursue, to get information on criminal activity and thereby work towards trying to put a break on more criminal activity.

The interception Act which is not yet proclaimed deals with criminal proceedings, proceedings under the Proceeds of Crime Act, proceedings under Extradition Act, proceedings under the Anti-Terrorism Act, proceedings under the Civil Asset Recovery and Management, and Unexplained Wealth and so on. Net effect of this, Madam, is that the COP can authorize communication to be intercepted in furtherance of any of the five circumstances. Again, no Commissioner of Police therefore we have seen an upsurge in criminal activity. In fact, and that may be partly due to the fact that there is no head of the TTPS lawfully, a lawful head of the TTPS. Also the Commissioner's order is to grant licences, certificates, permits under the Firearms Act. And then we have the pepper spray Act, Madam, again, that has not been implemented in spite of all the hot air and the talk that has come. And there are numerous other functions for the Commissioner of Police.

So here we are, the Prime Minister mentioned, we must do this expeditiously and these are some of the reasons why, yes, expedition is important and essential

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so that we can put a Police Service Commission in place so they can carry on with their core function, which is to make recommendations for a commissioner and a deputy commissioner. But whilst we do that, Madam, it is important that we do not lose sight of the fact that whomever we put, whomever is placed there, the nominees, that we must be assured, the public must have that trust that there will be independence of the police service—independence. And that independence will stem, starting at the top, the body that is responsible for making the recommendations to appoint the head of the police service, that is the Police Service Commission. We must be cognizant of the fact that the offices of COP and deputy commissioner, they wield enormous powers. And the person is expected to exercise those powers independently of any political directorate and must appear to be beyond the reach of the Government of the day.

So in consideration, in this debate and elsewhere, I am sure, we must pay heed to the fact that what we want to do is to put persons in place on this Commission who will be fiercely independent. And that has been the locus classicus of this whole concept of the independence of service commissions, Madam, you may be well familiar being an attorney yourself. We must remind ourselves of the warning of Lord Diplock in the landmark case of *Endell Thomas v the AG* and this locus classicus has been followed in several other judgments in our jurisdiction and elsewhere. It is at Chap. 9 of our—then Chap. 8, when Lord Diplock spoke. It was Chap. 8 of our Constitution, now it is Chap. 9 which sets out a whole structure and function and powers, et cetera, of service commissions and applies to the one that we are now seeking to approve nominees for.

And what Lord Diplock said in that landmark case was that he pointed to the dangers of a police service that is exposed to political pressure and political

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interference becoming the private army of the party with the majority of the seats in the House. It was because of what can only be described as a bullying and tyranny of the majority which forms the government of the day that the constitutionally devised service commissions were employed. This is coming from Lord Diplock and that judgment.

Indeed that is the case with the Police Service Commission being one of these protected, supposed to be independent institutions. The idea was that of institutional independence, the Police Service Commission that is left to perform its core functions without fear, intimidation or pressure from the government or anyone else. A Police Service Commission must be free from any suggestion or bias or partisanship or indeed the appearance of any bias or political sympathies. This is where we seek to go when we want to set up the members of a Police Service Commission.

So therefore, Madam Speaker, in this context, this wider context, I would say respectfully that is why the exercise of scrutinizing nominees of potential members of the Commission is vitally important, vitally important.

Hon. Members: [*Desk banging*]

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: There is a saying that one bad orange spoils the whole heap or the whole basket. There is yet another saying that the fruit of a poison tree will itself be poison.

Hon. Members: [*Desk banging*]

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: And to put it simply the outcomes of the process of selection of nominees for the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner will only be as good and as fair as the Commission which undertakes the exercise to make the recommendations.

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Hon. Members: [*Desk banging*]

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: The public must have the utmost confidence in the fairness of members of the PSC, Police Service Commission, in order to have confidence in their selections. Those members cannot be seen as tools of government, as somehow beholden or dependent, or appear to be beholden or dependent on the ruling party for business, for stipends, for favours, for appointments or awards. And therefore that is the scrutiny we intend to engage in as we look at the persons being put forward.

These members then, it naturally follows, that the level of trust and confidence that is placed by the public in those offices of commissioner and deputy commissioner directly correlate to the wider respect for the police and the maintenance of law, order and stability which is so vital in a democracy and vital in any country in the world, including ours, especially in these trouble times.

Madam Speaker, that is how important the process of considering these notifications, that is how important it is and I want to underscore that. I want to say that this House is not to be a mere rubber stamp for the wishes of the Government.

Hon. Member: [*Desk banging*]

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: There are other offices in this realm which will perform that function but this House must not be a rubber stamp for the wishes of the Government.

Hon. Member: [*Desk banging*]

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: What we are supposed to do here is consider publicly debate and afterwards signify approval or disapproval all in the sight of the people we represent. It is they who will judge us at the appropriate time for the choices we make today; it is they who will have to feel comfortable that there is

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nothing amiss or there is no potential for abuse of power by the Government, this Government or any government, that there is no potential for abuse of power. No amount of fancy talk or beating up on the Opposition can remove the feeling people have in their bones when they witness tyranny, abuse and bullying. And the Opposition will not be bullied in any way.

Hon. Member: [*Desk banging*]

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: So why are we here, Madam, in this context, this larger, wider context, why are we here, Madam? I want to place into the context of my concerns, the reason we are here now on the 11th day of November, 10th of November—is it 11th or 10th?—on this day in November. I believe it is the 10th, 10th of November, 2021, is to consider the Motion on the Order Paper. How did we get here though? That is an important question. Yes, we are here, what has happened the Constitution sets out that the tenure of office of Members in a Police Service Commission will be for, max of five years and no less than three years. All the persons in the previous Commission were appointed for three years, Madam, what happened? How did we get here? We are here because these vacancies have been created, because they all resigned, en bloc, en masse, it was like a meltdown, the blocks came tumbling down like Humpty Dumpty I guess, just shattered, the Police Service Commission. And that is why we are here, because there is none, every man jack went, left, resigned, gone, why?

The catalyst for the sad state of affairs, sorry state of affairs, we find ourselves began one year ago when the Prime Minister by his own admission said, he wrote the Police Service Commission to indicate his displeasure with the Commissioner of Police, Gary Griffith. Fast forward now to June this year Government sought to introduce a new commissioner and deputy commissioner

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selection process, Legal Notice—became Legal Notice 183 of 2021. This Order remove the role of an independent firm and the mandate to advertise the post internationally to get a commissioner and deputy commissioner. This is the Police Service Commission, this is their job. They removed the role of an independent firm and mandate to advertise the post.

On July 05, 2021 the Opposition attempted to annul that Order unsuccessfully. Sen. Wade Mark in the Senate and other Senators unsuccessfully tried to annul that Order which we felt was bad law. Of course they went ahead, the rest is history, it went to court and so on. The Police Service Commission then proceeded with the selection process, barred the recruitment firm and so on, international advertisements which resulted in a merit list being generated. Police Service Commission again, that is their duty, they have to come up with the merit list, that is their core function, look at what happened then, look at what happened, that is why we are here today, that is why we are here today. Former chairman, Police Service Commission, Roger Kawalsingh, commissioner, raised an alarm about a possible interference from an unnamed person resulted in the merit list being placed in limbo. Where is the list today?—we do not know. And now there are several questions. Who was the public official who met with the President on the 11th or 12th of August?

Hon. Member: [*Desk banging*]

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: And who interfered in the process of delivering the list of nominees—

Madam Speaker: Member?

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC:—to the President, for the Commissioner—

Madam Speaker: Member?

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Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC (cont'd)

Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar SC: Yes Ma'am.

Madam Speaker: While I understand your context as you laid out, remember what we are here about is to consider these nominees. So that I understand where you are going but I really do not want this debate to turn into something that it is not. So I am just cautioning you to remember what the purpose is, is to consider these nominees.

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: I am guided, Madam Speaker, I am guided and I will say to you we are here today because the Police Service Commission collapsed.

Hon. Members: [*Desk banging*]

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Why did it collapse? We would have never been here today if it did not collapse and I think it is important for people to understand—please, it is important to understand why we are here today. We must know the context—I am guided by your ruling and I will not skirt into another debate, but we must understand and the public, the people who we represent—

Hon. Members: [*Desk banging*]

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC:—must understand what happened. And so who are the persons who met and so on, that that notification, that merit list was withdrawn? This question still remains unanswered. Acting list or substantive list, what has become of it? Where is that list? What is the legal status of that list? This new service commission will have to consider those matters, whether that list is a live list.

Hon. Members: [*Desk banging*]

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: I am of a respectful view it is a live list because when it was prepared by the service commission then, they were legally in office

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and did no wrong at that point in time. Everything seems to have happened after they put it.

So pending the appointment of a new Commissioner and the debacle of legality of the acting appointments which had to resolve in the court, what happened? No Police Service Commission, no Commissioner of Police, no Deputy Commissioner of Police that is why we are here today. And the judgment of Justice Kangaloo, Madam, is very instructive in the case of *Ravi Balgobin Maharaj v the Attorney General of Trinidad and Tobago*. The court ruled that the appointment with Gary Griffith as acting Police Commissioner was unconstitutional. So we ended up Mr. Griffith could not act. We have no Commissioner of Police, but a very strange thing happened as well. Went back to 2009, the court said that 2009 Order, where the Police Service Commission could appoint an acting person that that was also unconstitutional, null and void. So we ended up with the Acting Commissioner of Police as well, gone, situation today and no Police Service Commission.

Can I say, Madam, by the way, that there have been over 188 acting appointments since the 2009 Order? About 188. The question then arises actions taken on those 188 acting actors, whether they are legal or valid since that Order on which they were appointed has been rendered unconstitutional, null and void. So we see what is going on with no Police Service Commission, no Commissioner, no Deputy Commissioner we come to the nominees themselves now. The issue is that the nominees must be fit for purpose, the nominees must be fit for purpose. Can you give me a time please? And how can we deal with the nominees being fit for purpose, Madam? It has to do with qualifications, but it is not just qualifications, it is also about experience. [*Interruption*] I cannot see it.

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Mr. Indarsingh: Twenty-four minutes.

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Sorry?

Mr. Indarsingh: Left.

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: What?

Mr. Indarsingh: 2-4.

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you very much. Sorry, Madam, just getting a time check. Can I just say Madam, I have asked officials here if you will be kind enough to put a clock so we can look straight that way.

Hon. Member: [*Desk banging*]

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: I know the clock is on this side. So we do have a problem with the clock. There used to be one on both sides but now you have to really duck under.

Mr. Charles: [*Inaudible*] the Government.

Madam Speaker: Well Member you would appreciate the ad hoc measure that had to be put in place for our safety. [*Interruption*]

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Yes.

Madam Speaker:—which is the speaking booths and therefore we have a little difficulty in repositioning because as you know the clocks are electrical clocks, but we would see.

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: I thank you, Madam. I think it will assist us all very greatly in the quality of our debate and keeping within the time limits. We how have retracted time limits. [*Interruption*]

Madam Speaker: But you know there is also the practice and you will know where I pass the time to the Whip to notify.

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: That is very kind, Madam, but the Whip is a way

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distance away from me. When we used to sit together it used to be very easy, but I think given the circumstance—I will not dwell longer, Ma'am but I make the point. So you will forgive me if I am asking my colleague who is closer to me about the time.

3.00 p.m.

Thank you very much. We come to nominees fit for purpose. The Constitution itself sets out that there may be persons who are qualified in law, in sociology, in finance and so on. So those are the qualifications. And the hon. Prime Minister did spend some of his time—I was surprised he finished so early when we were allotted the 45, but that is his discretion—did read out qualifications for us, but I am saying that is not all. It is also talks about experience. So there are two criteria to be met. You have the qualification, you have the degree in management, you have the degree in X or Y, and when we examine the résumé of the nominees we will see whether we get not just qualifications, a B, a BAC, a LLB, but there should also be some indication as to experience and I think my colleagues will raise that issue in due course when they are allowed to join the debate.

So, Madam, for the record, sometimes we forget that what happens here, these proceedings, not proceedings of a private club, we are not here to vote and go home. We are here to debate and to discuss all for the benefit of the persons we represent. The hon. Prime Minister made a very curious statement and he said we are on a non-substantive Motion—non-substantive Motion—which then implies that we cannot question the nominees. So then what are we here to do? To come and just rubber stamp, vote and go home? We have to scrutinize the nominees, Madam, and that is why you know we talk about due diligence. When the first letter of consultation I received from Her Excellency dated October 7th, was one

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Mr. Ernest Koylass, a very distinguished gentleman, Madam. I practised with him some years ago when I used to practice in the courts in San Fernando. A very distinguished—

Personally, we have nothing against any of the nominees. Nothing whatsoever.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: They are distinguished sons and daughters of our soil, but our concerns have to do with what may appear to be apparent bias—what may appear to be apparent bias—what may appear to be a conflict of interest. Because you set out the context with respect to what Lord Diplock said way back, when in the Privy Council that there must be fierce independence, robust independence in these service commissions, and therefore, the scrutiny cannot just be simply to read the qualifications. We have to look at if there is any possibility of bias. If there is not direct bias, whether there is apparent bias, whether there is any conflict of interest, and I say we will deal with it. So I go back.

On the 7th of October a letter dated from Her Excellency, we got a Notification, not a Notification, I got a letter, a consultation letter, from Her Excellency on Ernest Koylass. Well, he seems to have been fallen by the wayside. We discovered matters relating to it.

Madam Speaker: Member?

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Yes.

Madam Speaker: Member, in fact that is not a name on the Notification. So let us deal with what is relevant. Okay? I cautioned you, let us deal with what is relevant

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: I am very guided, Madam. Then on the 7th of October I received a consultation letter from Her Excellency about Justice Judith

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Jones; same 7th of October, Maxine Attong; October 12th, Ian Kevin Ramdhanie; October 14th, Maxine King; October 25th, Rajiv Persad; October 27th, Pundit and lawyer Rudranath Maharaj.

Now, two of these name, Madam, I do not know why—the first one fell off so I would not go back there, but we got these. Again, the Prime Minister said he did his duty as Prime Minister and as Opposition Leader, that when Her Excellency sent the consultation letters to him he—

Mr. Deyalsingh: Madam.

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC:—participated in the process.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Madam Speaker, Standing Order 48(1). We are now talking about people who are not on the list. Please.

Dr. Rowley: We “cyar” have that.

Madam Speaker: Member for Siparia, again, I am guiding you. Let us deal with relevance which will be the five nominees before us.

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: I thank you for confining me to the five nominees, Madam. I do wish to make the point, however, that the hon. Prime Minister talked about the consultation process and this is what I am referring—I am replying.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Hon. Prime Minister indicated that he participated in the—he got the consultation letters and participated in a consultation exercise. He did his duty. He did it before as Opposition Leader, he is doing it again as Prime Minister, and that issue arises. I engaged in a consultation—I received consultation letters with respect to these persons.

Madam Speaker, I want to make it very clear that I wrote to Her Excellency in response to the consultations letters indicating that we should pause on this until

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the air is cleared—

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC:—about what happened to cause the fiasco that we are in. And then now Prime Minister talks about the expeditious way in which they came to the Parliament. Is that for real? Is that right? These Notifications laid: Ramdhanie, 15th October; Judith Jones, 12th October—Notification dates, I am sorry, Madam. The date. And that is another very interesting thing. In every time since whenever, since 2009 coming down, when Notifications are sent to the Parliament they have laid it individually. In this case that happened we followed the Constitution, and then we are given separate Motions. This is the first time we are going in “grappe” that we have to take all or none. [*Desk thumping*] All or none and I will come to that procedural point in a moment. Maxine Attong, Notification 12th October.

So there we were, three notifications, almost one month ago, and you are coming here today to talk about expeditious implementation to get Police Service Commission in place. Why did we not do it? You have had a Police Service Commission with only three persons for the past two years. That is the quorum. If the President and yourself needed more time to get the other two, fine. But we could have had a Service Commission, Madam. Today is not expeditious. I say with greatest of respect, why? Something intervened. Maybe Scotland intervened, and I am not speaking about MP Scotland. [*Desk thumping*] That was more important than convening this Parliament to put a Police Service Commission. So I am not fooled by the attempts to say we did this expeditiously. It has not been expeditious. It has not been, and therefore, still, we agree we must put a Service Commission in place and I continue.

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So we have five before us to approve. I have spoken about the importance and the independence of the Commission. It is one thing to say—*[Interruption]* I “can’t” see it. It is too small.

Mr. Indarsingh: Fifteen.

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you. I have spoken about the importance of the Commission. We have to approve persons I will say not just on qualifications. We have to talk about the realities of the office they will assume. Such realities must be factored into any debate and discussion of the names that have been placed before us on the Order Paper, and it is an understatement that recent events have shone a spotlight on the reality that is now our present environment. I will highlight one instance which we will do well to reflect upon when we consider whether the nominees before us are fit for purpose on the Police Service Commission.

We recall a former commissioner Kawalsingh talking about a high official and so on intervening—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Deyalsingh: Madam Speaker, we are here to discuss five nominees. Standing Order 48(1), please.

Madam Speaker: Again, Member for Siparia, as I said before, I understood you did some context, but again I caution you on relevance and ask you to let us deal now with the appointees, the nominees, that are before us.

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: I thank you very much. I will take your guidance, Madam. But you know the truth will always prevail. If not here, in other places the truth will prevail.

Hon. Members: *[Desk thumping]*

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: I want to make some procedural objections now,

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Madam, before we get to the names. It is my respectful view, having set out that context, our specific concerns about the process. I hope that we will be given that opportunity to voice our objections. The nation is watching us in this Parliament.

Since 2010, about 19 Motions came to this House to approve nominations for appointment to the Police Service Commission. Two were never debated, but each nomination was contained in a separate Motion. That is the first procedural point I want to make. Each nomination was contained in a separate Motion. So we have the Notifications as separate papers laid today, but we have one Motion asking us to approve all five in one bloc, in one vote. Here we are, each Motion including the name of the nominee and the date the Notification was made by the President, that was always contained in the Motions made before the House. Every time from 2010 down to now you had the date of the Notification inserted into the Motion itself which is laid on the Order Paper.

In this case there is no date. You know where I found the dates, Madam? Her Excellency the President issued a press release and that was carried in the media giving the dates of the Notifications. So up to today nobody knew the date of the Notifications. I made the point before that these dates of Notifications come into this Parliament almost a month ago. At least three were before sent to the Parliament almost a month ago. So that is the first procedural point. You do not put a date. No date, whereas that is important. When did Her Excellency send it, that has always been included. We will say it is a minor point, but that is an important point too in assessing what the Prime Minister wants to talk about, doing it expeditiously.

Then now, the mover of the Motion sought leave to the House to debate all Motions together. That could have been done. That did not happen here. We had—

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all over the years where you had separate matters, separate nominees, each one was dealt with on a separate Motion. On two occasions leave was sought to debate all together—to debate all together. Leave was sought on two occasions over the years from 2010 to debate all together, but the Motions were separate Motions, one, and, two, the votes were separate votes. That is a very, very important point. I mentioned before you know, when you go to buy mangoes or oranges you buy the “grappe”. You get it at a cheaper price but you do not get a better quality maybe. What you do is you select the best ones.

So you may want to vote yes for some and no for some. But when you group it like this, when you “grappe” it, you know, it is like a Carnival band jumping up and going down and has to be judged, and when they go up on the stage to be judged, guess what? Before they go up they are jumping up everywhere, but when they get on stage you have to get in your section—get in your section. And that is what we are saying here. This Motion is procedurally flawed to lump all five together because we object to that procedure on the ground that some may be acceptable for approval, some may not be, but there is only one resolution. The five names “Be it resolved” that these persons be approved. That is procedurally wrong.

Now, we have precedence in the past. We do not have to reinvent the wheel. We do not have to do that because it is there. It has always been done, separate Notifications, separate Motions, and you may come and ask for leave from your good self, Madam, to debate all together, but then again when you come to vote you vote several. If there are five, it is five different votes. That has not happened and I think that places us in a very difficult position. So in section 122(4) of the Constitution it is through purport and meaning. It is not a “grappe”, it is not the

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band, is not the five. It talks about each; it talks about each. It says the clear intention there. It talks about each Notification; each must be approved by the House and that cannot mean that they are to be approved in “grappe”, in bunch.

The clear intent in my respectful view, that this House and the Standing Orders cannot override the Constitution which mandates that the names must be considered and debated, and most important voted on separately. Suppose there is a Member on the other side who wants to abstain or say no, what happens? That opportunity will not be afforded because this Motion is procedurally flawed in that regard. There were previous instances, as I say before, but we will not go into that. Now, I mentioned the importance of the debate. It is not a now for now exercise. The House will not be the rubber stamp. On previous occasions I have said this before, we have the precedent of the practice and procedure in this Chamber for debating a Motion such as this.

I want to now turn to raise just a few issues on the fit for purpose on specific nominees. My colleagues will expand on these points. We have a—I make the point again, Madam, with the greatest of respect, we have no personal malice, spite or ill-will towards any of these persons who have offered themselves, or have been selected to offer themselves for service to country. We have nothing personally against any of the nominees. They are good distinguished men and women of our soil who have distinguished themselves in their various careers. That is why they are before this House for consideration. My issue again comes down again relating to fit for purpose and the fact that this Service Commission must be like Caesar’s wife, above, above, should not have any taint or like the man riding on the PTSC bus. You know when you are studying law you talk about the man on the Clapham bus, that is the ordinary citizen, must not have any doubt that they will be non-

partisan, that they will be independent.

So I deal with, firstly, the nominee Mr. Ian Ramdhanie. In his résumé which we received, he is listed as the Academic Head of the Caribbean Institute of Security and Public Safety. Again, we did a search, due diligence, on this company, Academic Head of the Caribbean Institute of Security and Public Safety. The most recent annual return of this Caribbean Institute of Security and Public Safety submitted on the 11th of August, 2021 in the Companies Registry, states the shareholders of this company: Mr. John Aboud shareholder, and Michael Aboud. Directors: Brian Ramsey; Maurice Aboud; James Philbert, that is the former Commissioner of Police; Anthony Subero; Curt Cadet and Mervyn Salandy. The most recent annual return of Amalgamated Security Services Limited with respect to shareholders, the same—Amalgamated Security.

So Mr. Ramdhanie is Academic Head of Caribbean Institute of Security and Public Safety, and that company, I read for you the directors and the shareholders. And we come now to a company known as Amalgamated, the shareholders are the same—John Aboud, Michael Aboud are the two largest shareholders—and directors again, John Aboud, Michael and some others. Madam, the point is this, Amalgamated Security is—there is a common denominator in both that Caribbean Institute of Security and Public Safety and the Amalgamated Security firm from the company's documents, and this is where we raise the issue of possible conflict of interest or possibility of some semblance of bias, partisanship, or conflict of interest. And I raise that possible conflict of interest—

Madam Speaker: One minute please, Member for Siparia. In terms of this, remember this is as you quite rightly pointed out, a question of if the people are fit for purpose, and therefore, I think in terms of assessing them as you rightly pointed

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out, these people are not here to respond. And therefore, if it is there is a question about fitness, let us not go into the realm of speculating. If there is an issue that is definite and confirmed, I will allow that. But this speculative sort of incursion I will not allow it.

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you very much, Madam.

Madam Speaker: Thank you.

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: I am not—with the greatest of respect I am not speculating. I have read the company documents. Amalgamated is a firm which will have an interest in guns, in ammunitions, arms; a security firm, and therefore, if there is a person sitting on the Police Service Commission whose bosses are from that firm, there is a possible conflict of interest there.

There is—

Madam Speaker: Member?

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC:—apparent bias.

Madam Speaker: Member, I again caution you. I have said that the link that one is trying to make here I consider it speculative and I would advise you not to continue in that trend. Thank you.

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: I am guided, Madam. I would say now that I believe respectfully the Motion is procedurally flawed because we are dealing with all the nominees in one go, one bloc. I believe that that is not what the Constitution intended, that we deal with this Motion in that manner. We have here then nominees placed before this House for consideration. My colleagues will raise further concerns as we continue in the debate, and I would like to say, Madam, this is very important for our country.

At the outstart I made the point originally, fit for purpose does not just mean

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qualifications and experience. Fit for purpose means as Lord Diplock told us in the Privy Council, that the Commissions must be, they must be and seen to be independent.

Hon. Member: [*Desk thumping*]

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: And if you have persons who will not be seen to be independent, then we are setting up ourselves for another fall. We are going to end up in the same khaki pants as I say, where we were before, what happened with the previous Police Service Commission. And therefore, whilst I respect your ruling, I think it is not wise, it is not wise for us not to bring to the light matters that will give the impression to John public, the man on the PTSC bus, the man in the maxi-taxi, the ordinary citizens of our land. It must be brought to their attention because then in the interest of the public, in the public interest, in the public good, we must know there is cause for worry.

We do not want to end back in the same khaki pants.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: We do not want to end there with political interference on the Police Service Commission to interfere in the TTPS. That should never be allowed to happen again. And so we will continue to make our points, procedurally flawed Motion, and I am being given a nudge here my time is up. I want to thank you very much for allowing me to contribute in this debate.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker: Minister of National Security.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of National Security (Hon. Fitzgerald Hinds): Thank you very kindly, Madam Speaker, for your identification of this Member to make a very

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short contribution to this debate. Madam Speaker, we are here today, as indicated by the Member for Diego Martin West, to resolve any issue, all of the issues and problems, shortcomings that may exist in the current circumstances in relation to the absence of the Police Service Commission. It does not now exist. This debate gives this Parliament an opportunity to provide a solution to any problems or perceived problems. We are here to debate Her Excellency's nominees of Madam Judith Jones, Madam Maxine Attong, Madam Maxine King, Mr. Ian Ramdhanie, Mr. Rajiv Persad as has again been indicated by the Member for Diego Martin West, all nominated by Her Excellency after a process of consultation on the basis of clearly defined qualifications and skill sets identified in the Constitution.

I simply want to say at this point for the benefit of the parliamentary record and those citizens who are paying attention, that as per our Order Paper the votes on each of these nominees will be done separately.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. F. Hinds: I propose, Madam Speaker, to focus on the original, meaning 1962 and 1976 role of the Police Service Commission, if I may, and the very seminal amendment in respect of this, of 2007, which amended the role of the Police Service Commission—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Charles: Standing Order 48(1), this has nothing to do with the debate before us.

Madam Speaker: Please continue.

Hon. F. Hinds: Thank you very warmly, Madam Speaker—and all of the role, the original role and from the seminal amendment for those persons who are nominated by Her Excellency which we debate today, all of their roles and responsibilities are undergirded by a constitutional principle of independence. This

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independence, I suggest, cannot be assessed in advance. It has to be, if I may utilize the well-known maxim, seen to be done, and it can only sensibly be seen while they are on the job, in post, acting as a Police Service Commission. Anything else is speculative.

Madam Speaker, the Police Service Commission which the nominees in front of us today will, if this Parliament approves each of them, will be supported by a secretariat so that they can function effectively in the service as a Police Service Commission. And that secretariat provides logistical and administrative and technical support to the Police Service Commission constituted by the nominees presumably that we have in front of us today. It supports the Commission in its examination of the performance of the persons who it must appoint. It provides administrative and clerical services to the Commission's Appeal Tribunal, a matter that I should come to shortly as a clear function, a role that must be undertaken by the persons that we debate here today if we approve them as a Parliament, their appellate function. And, of course, the secretariat assists in the dissemination of information and the conduct of the Commission's public education programmes.

Just to support this, the secretariat comprises of the administrative unit, a monitoring and evaluation unit, research and evaluation unit, the appeals—very importantly because that is one of the roles that these nominees must pursue—the appeals unit, the public education unit and, of course, Madam Speaker, a legal unit. Madam Speaker, this seminal amendment to the role and function of the Police Service Commission which will be populated by the five persons nominated by Her Excellency in front of us today, underwent seminal change, significant change in 2007. In fact, Madam—[*Interruption*]

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Mr. Charles: Madam Speaker, 48(1).

Hon. F. Hinds: In fact, Madam Speaker—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Charles: Madam Speaker, 48(1). We are here you said to discuss the nominations.

Madam Speaker: I heard you. You referred to Standing Order 48(1), I overruled.

Hon. F. Hinds: May I thank you warmly again, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, an amendment, a significant amendment affecting the conduct of the business of the Police Service Commission which the persons in the five of them in front of us today would oversee, took place in 2007 by constitutional amendment in what was then called the Police Reform Bills and a Constitution (Amdt.) Bill, and it was piloted in this House by Sen. The Hon. Martin Joseph, Minister of National Security as he then was. May his soul rest in peace. And I just want to quote a very short paragraph with your kind leave, which in my view encapsulates the essence of the seminal change of 2007, Madam Speaker.

Minister Joseph as he then was, is quoted to say from *Hansard* of Friday June the 22nd, 2007:

“...the new governance arrangements call for a very different role for the Police Service Commission, than the one to which...members are accustomed. In the past, the Police Service Commission has spent most of its energies in overseeing the review of specific cases: disciplinary and grievances, but under the new system, its most important function will be ensuring the accountability of the Commissioner of Police and the police service itself in fulfilling the priorities set forth by the Government and other appropriate authorities.

This goes well beyond evaluating whether the Commissioner and its

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subordinates have followed laws, rules and procedures; rather it requires an assessment of how well they perform their responsibilities...”

He went on to say quickly:

“...because someone can be well within the law and still not do a very good job.”

Madam Speaker, I went to that quotation because as we discussed for our approval or otherwise of the nominees, five of them—and I have already named them, no need to do that—that quotation demonstrates a major change and the role that they will be expected to carry out post 2007 including, of course, going forward.

Madam Speaker, in the conduct of the affairs of the Police Service Commission, they are under the Constitution entitled not only to take reports from the Police Commissioner and the Deputy Commissioner who they will appoint, but also can gather information outside of those two officeholders on their own volition.

3.30 p.m.

The Police Service Commission, which these nominees would populate, Madam Speaker, will effectively be a watchdog on those two officeholders. And insofar as getting information outside of them, they are permitted under the Constitution to hold public hearings, if they so choose, to interview other police officers and to interview even members of the public, the end users who benefit from the service offered by the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service. All of those form part of the responsibility of the Police Service Commission; responsibilities that the persons in front of us today as nominees will have to carry out.

Madam Speaker, the information they would have gathered as a result would

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be used to inform the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, in accordance with the Constitution, of the state of affairs with their police service, its functioning, its effectiveness or otherwise, and of course, it will assist them— and this is critical— it will assist them in determining the decisions that they make in relation to the appointment or the continuing in office of those two officeholders. Very important. So I am just demonstrating that in terms of their role and function, they can get information elsewhere to assist in their determination. That is permitted under the Constitution insofar as the role of the Police Service Commission is concerned.

So, Madam Speaker, I did allude to the fact that they host an appellate function and that is to say, apart from monitoring, hiring, firing, monitoring the efficiency of, the effectiveness of those two officeholders, the Commissioner and deputy, they host a very important appellate function, all the disciplinary procedures of the Police Service which are overseen by the Police Commissioner. The outcomes of those, if there is dissatisfaction, can be appealed to the Police Service Commission. So that these nominees, Madam Speaker, will hear appeals from the Police Service on matters touching and concerning promotions and discipline.

I am advised, based on the report of the last Police Service Commission, a report issued in 2019, the Annual Report of 2019, Madam Speaker, that there was a hiatus in this very important appellate function which those nominees must undertake and they have a job, it is to bring up to date the outstanding appeals. They had resumed taking appeals in the Service Commission only on the 7th of May, 2019 and there is a significant backlog since 2011.

So, Madam Speaker, the Constitution of this Republic, particularly in section 122, highlights in subsection (1) that:

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“There shall be a Police Service Commission for Trinidad and Tobago which shall consist of a Chairman and four other members.”

Subsection (2) tells us plainly that the service commission is appointed by Her Excellency. Subsection (3), the President shall after consultation with the Leader of the Opposition and of course, the Prime Minister propose these nominations as are before us. And most of all, Madam Speaker:

“The President shall make an appointment under this section only after the House of Representatives has approved the Notification”—or notifications—“in respect of...”—each of those persons.

That is to say, Madam Jones, Madam Maxine King, Mr. Ian Ramdhanie and the others who I would have earlier identified, namely Rajiv Persad and Maxine Attong. The Constitution, Madam Speaker, is very clear. I have quoted from the *Hansard* to support what Parliament’s intention was in that seminal debate, an amendment and the Constitution is before us, section 123(1) which we have heard about earlier in this debate talks about the power of the Police Service Commission and its responsibilities.

Madam Speaker, I just want to, as I approach the end of my allotment of time here, say in respect of section 123(5), the Police Service Commission—subsection (7), Madam Speaker:

“Notwithstanding subsection (6), the Police Service Commission may, on its own initiative, request a special report from the Commissioner of Police at any time on any matter relating to the management of the Police Service, to which the Commissioner of Police shall respond in a timely manner.”

Madam Speaker, all of the provisions of the Constitution are pellucidly clear and I am satisfied that we are now, with this debate in front of us, in a position to

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resolve all of many shortcomings that may exist or may be perceived to exist and I will rest for the time being, clear in my mind, that all of the Members of this House invested with copies of the Constitution, understanding the role and function of the Police Service Commission and the role and function of this Parliament in making that process complete so that we resolve that aspect of our governance in Trinidad and Tobago. Madam Speaker, I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker: Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Roodal Moonilal (*Oropouche East*): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to join this debate. Madam Speaker, today we meet for a very important debate on a critical Motion brought by the Member for Diego Martin West as he has done before. Madam Speaker, these moments as they come now are defined by our health regulations and certain constraints and in 20 minutes—given the approach of the Government, I have 20 minutes to focus on five nominees. So a few minutes on each because we are here to scrutinize, to examine, to interrogate their résumés so that we will decide as a House whether they are fit for purpose, whether they can stand up to the task that they are assigned by our Constitution and by our law. This is the purpose of being here today. So in four minutes, I must reflect on one nominee given the approach of this Government and this is why the Opposition Leader was very clear that this is procedurally flawed. We have received five letters in one Motion. We will speak for four minutes on each, Madam Speaker. I will take an introduction of two minutes so I will have less time on each of the nominees.

Madam Speaker, the last speaker before, the Minister of National Security—he left, I think, now, but he reflected on 2007 and the amendments to the Constitution that led us to this procedure. And we came close at that time—I was

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also a Member of the House. It was an attempt to bring transparency, to bring disclosure, to bring openness to appointments that were previously done behind closed doors, in the dark of the night, with no one looking, no one exposing, no one scrutinizing and, Madam Speaker, we must guard today that we do not go back to those days. Because we changed the Constitution and the law to ensure that the Parliament as a whole scrutinized the CVs, the appointments.

We were following at that time, Madam Speaker—those of us who were on the compound then—we were following the American congressional system in which key appointees in the US system of Government came before a congressional committee to be interrogated and scrutinized and examined. We did not go so far, Madam Speaker. So today, our five nominees are not before us in the pit but we have their résumés before us. So we cannot ask them questions directly and invite them to answer or respond but by debating the résumés, by debating those nominees, we can ask questions of them as to whether they can conduct the business for which they offer themselves.

Madam Speaker, I take note of the Prime Minister's opening statement and I was also troubled by that statement made by the Prime Minister about substantive Motion or not. Madam Speaker, I am very clear; I am very clear that persons who have offered themselves for public office, we have their resumés, we can examine their resumés. Yes, Ma'am?

Madam Speaker: Member, there is no need to shout and I mean, I do not know you to be “ah shouter” but I think maybe you have to—

Dr. R. Moonilal: Madam Speaker, I will limit my passion. [*Laughter*] So I will limit my passion on this matter. I feel so strongly on this matter. Madam Speaker?

Madam Speaker: [*Inaudible*]—the passion, just the volume. No need to limit the

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passion.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Now I am not hearing your voice.

Madam Speaker: Well, I said no need to limit the passion, just the volume.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Okay, Madam Speaker. So I will keep the passion and reduce the volume.

Madam Speaker: Thank you.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Thank you. Madam Speaker, we have the nominees before us and I could not help but reflect on the statement by the Prime Minister and the Prime Minister made some statements about the member and he went through the CV, as you know, of Madame Justice Judith Jones and others. And you know, I took note of the Prime Minister saying that persons are bringing their useful experience and skill of developing performance standards, of improving the standards in the police service. Persons will bring all their skills and they have skills in finance, in accounting, in management, and so on, and so forth.

And you know, Madam Speaker, I am not reading from the *Hansard* of today, I am reading from the *Hansard* of March 28, 2018, when the very Mover moved a Motion to appoint one Bliss Seepersad as the member of the Police Service Commission. And I say that because I want to make the point that today, we may have faith in the nominees, we may well have faith given their impressive résumés of some persons of course but, Madam Speaker, I have no faith in the Mover of this Motion [*Desk thumping*] because he brought one before us and today, the entire country is asking, “Bliss, where is the list?”

Madam Speaker, let me get to the CV—

Madam Speaker: So—

Dr. R. Moonilal: —immediately.

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Madam Speaker: Thank you very much.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Sure. Madam Speaker, in the very limited time that is available to us, I want to reflect on the CV of one of the candidates here, one Maxine King. I have the CV, of course, before me. The President has sent it to the Members of the House and therefore, I am in possession of that. And, Madam, I am a bit troubled by this CV. I am a bit troubled. I hold no malice, no prejudice against a person with a Masters in business administration, accounting and so on, who is clearly willing to serve us and willing to serve the population at a time when the former Police Service Commission has imploded under the weight of some type of darkness that we are yet to reveal.

Madam Speaker, this person in her CV states that from November 2018 to present, the person is a wealth manager, Head, Wealth Management of Firstline Securities Limited. And when I took note of that, we immediately in the Opposition began our investigation as we do on all candidates. Madam Speaker, when I looked at that, I could not help but ponder that Firstline Securities Limited—we have a documentation that is a public document. Firstline Securities Limited is a collateral agent in matters involving the development of the Bacolet Estate in Tobago of which Ms. Maxine King is the Wealth Manager of Firstline Securities Limited, the Bacolet Estate in Tobago being developed by a company called Inez Investments which is, of course, the company run by a very prominent and successful businessman, Mr. Alleyne Warner in Tobago and Mr. Warner is a former business partner of a Member of Parliament.

Madam Speaker: So—

Dr. R. Moonilal: Madam Speaker—

Madam Speaker: Member—

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Dr. R. Moonilal: I am not naming any Member of Parliament.

Madam Speaker: Member, I want to caution you and caution all Members who are going to may take part in this debate, it is something I raised when the hon. Member for Siparia was speaking in terms of trying to draw these kinds of connections. I have said before, yes, you can interrogate the CVs. Yes, as you have said, it is more than qualifications, it is fitness for purpose in its fullest sense, but I am not going to allow speculative connections to be made under this rubric of fitness for purpose. If there is, as I said, something that is proven, something that is established, something that is known, that makes somebody, to use your wide term, fitness for purpose, to make that question, I will allow that. Okay?

Dr. R. Moonilal: Sure. Madam Speaker, could I reflect and quote from the Companies Act, a document, statement of charge created by a company dated November 23, 2017, which is a document filed—a public document that speaks of a mortgage between a company, Firstline Securities Limited of which a nominee before us is the wealth manager of that company and as wealth manager is involved in a business—

Madam Speaker: [*Inaudible*]*—*what I am saying is, in terms of what we are discussing, it appears to be some sort of speculative connection that one is trying to make.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Okay. Madam Speaker, then let me make the headline point and I will move on.

Madam Speaker: Yes.

Dr. R. Moonilal: The headline point is the person Maxine King is much too close to the political Executive of this country—

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

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Dr. R. Moonilal: —to be on the Police Service Commission by virtue of her job as the Wealth Manager of Firstline Securities involved in a massive construction project in Tobago that has a business partner linked to a sitting Member of Parliament, and I move on.

Madam Speaker: Okay. And what I am saying is, this is precisely what I have said that you should not do. Okay?

Dr. R. Moonilal: So, Madam Speaker—

Madam Speaker: “Ah.”

Dr. R. Moonilal: [*Raises both hands in the air*]

[*Madam Speaker sits*]

Dr. R. Moonilal: Let me move on to another nominee. Madam Speaker, the Opposition Leader raised the issue of one Ian—not Ramnarine—but I believe, Ramdhanie. Madam Speaker, it troubles me to raise this issue. It is something that unfixed my hair. It is a matter that I was distressed about but I have received communications by members of the society, by citizens of this country who have raised concern about the fitness for purpose of a nominee before us. So much so, Madam Speaker, that one citizen of this country, a public officer—

Madam Speaker: So let me ask you something just before you go further. These matters that have come to you, are these proven matters or just hearsay matters coming? If they are just hearsay matters coming, I would not allow it. If these are proven, established matters, then.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Madam Speaker, let me make the point that as Members of Parliament, when matters come for debate in the Parliament, citizens of this country are until now free to communicate with us their views on any Bill, any Motion, any nominee—

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Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. Moonilal: —and we owe a duty, Madam Speaker, to bring those matters to the Parliament.

And, Madam Speaker, I will not get into any detail because I am not here to cast aspersions or to scandalize anyone. I am here to raise questions and all I am saying is if a nominee before me, I would just ask the nominee whether or not they are conflicted by an appointment to the Police Service Commission, bearing in mind a previous interfacing with staff at the Police Service Commission that compromised their position and undermined human resource management and indeed undermined the employment status of employees of the Police Service Commission. I am raising those questions. I will not go further with that. I will not go further into any domain because then that would really be taking to create some type of scandal that is unnecessary.

All I ask today is nominee Ramdhanie, whether or not you have had some interfacing with staff of the Police Service Commission so that today, you can declare that before assuming any position as a commissioner. Because an employee of that organization has indicated to me that the person is prepared to write the new chairman and indeed the Director of Personnel Administration about a previous interfacing with a nominee who is before us who we believe should clarify that matter, who we believe should clear the air before assuming a position as a commissioner in the Police Service Commission which the Commission itself has been so tainted and dragged through the mud and imploded because of questions that I have raised before.

Madam Speaker, it was in March 2018, when I raised the issue, the Opposition here, on behalf of the Opposition. I raised the issue of a fitness for

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purpose of a former Chairman. Look what happened. Today, I am raising the issue about a fitness for purpose about a nominee before us. And if and when that nominee is approved today, a letter will be written to the Director of Personnel Administration to the new chairman of Police Service Commission raising serious concerns about the conduct—previous conduct, the interfacing. And it is not only one member of staff. I want to assure you, Madam Speaker, several, maybe four or five staff members of the Police Service Commission have indicated that they are prepared to say the truth concerning a previous campaign of conduct by a nominee before us today.

Now, I have a duty to identify the nominee because then if I speak like this, someone could say it is Madam Justice Judith Jones that I am speaking about and I am causing some type of question mark over the conduct of a former Court of Appeal Judge. Today I am asking pointedly and with great respect and sincerity whether Mr. Ian Ramdhanie could clarify with the powers that be, before an appointment is made, as to any situation before involving a member or members of the staff of the Police Service Commission. Because, Madam Speaker, my lifelong training is in the area of employment and labour relations. That is my lifelong training. I have written on that as well. And I do not want a situation to arise where an employee or employees can be victimized, can be discriminated against, can lose their job when they are on contract because we have appointed someone today, that we made an appointment that led to someone being victimized at the workplace. I raise these matters. They are serious matters.

We will not have a chance to debate this again. Madam Speaker, when we come back for Police Service Commission, it will be the new faces, new CVs, new résumés. This is the only point at which we can raise issues of fitness for purpose.

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So the Opposition Leader, in her wisdom, raised the issue of training schools and so on, where a person is involved with a security company in a training school and must go to—

Madam Speaker: [*Inaudible*]

Dr. R. Moonilal: Okay.

Madam Speaker: I am not going to allow you do something that I did not allow the hon. Member of National Security.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Sure. Well then you clearly will allow me to raise a red flag concerning an appointee who may have to answer questions as it relates to a previous interfacing with employees or an employee of the Police Service Commission.

Madam Speaker: And you have already done that, so I will ask you to move on.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Good. Thank you, Madam Speaker. And, Madam Speaker, I can indicate to you, I did not come here just to speak on this matter out of the top of my head. I have in my hand which I will not read. I have in my hand email and WhatsApp correspondence on this matter which I am prepared to show anyone who would have an interest.

Madam Speaker, the Police Service Commission, as the Minister of National Security indicated—and I took note that he spoke about the role of the Police Service Commission as a watchdog, the role of the Police Service Commission as supervising the employment, the work, the performance of the Commissioner of Police and the Deputy Commissioners of Police. That is a very, very specific function. It calls for men and women of some stature but also men and women who can resist temptation, who can resist the temptation to bow to the dictates of politicians. And that is a fundamental—that differentiates the Police Service

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Commission in such a fundamental way.

Because you see, Madam Speaker, a Commissioner of Police in our country is also a creature of the Constitution. They wield enormous power that as a Parliament we have given them by that major constitutional amendment. And if a Commissioner of Police is appointed and that person, for one reason or another, is appointed by persons who themselves will genuflect and bow to the dictates of the political directorate, its reeks of corruption. It will lead to a situation where that person can carry on the dictates of politicians.

And I am not saying government politicians necessarily. Madam Speaker, we change governments here. The Opposition is a government in waiting and if you make the mistake of putting someone on a Police Service Commission that is not independent sufficiently, you can end up with a police state and we know the dangers of that from looking around the world where commissioners and police, they synchronize with the political directorate of the day, not only the ones sitting here but of the day and they can take punitive action, dictatorial action against opposition, against trade unions, against students, against civil society. That is what we are here to guard today. That is what we are here to guard today.

And when we look at the nominees, Madam Speaker, and we look at the list, we have not raised any fundamental objections to several of these people: Justice Judith Jones, Mr. Rajiv Persad, I think the Prime Minister spoke about him. We have some others. What we have raised concern is about one or two of those persons who we believe are too close to the political Executive and that is a concern. When we raised it before, the Government ignored us but they ignored us to their peril because today—they used to make fun of the Partnership Government and said we had an acting Police Commissioner for five years. They have no

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Commissioner of Police, none, not even acting, and that carries dire consequences.

So, Madam Speaker, it is not my intention at all to scandalize persons but to raise the red flag because you did not hear us when we spoke about Bliss Seepersad, please hear us today when we raise questions about nominee Maxine King, about nominee Ian Ramdhanie.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. R. Moonilal: Do not have us rushing back here another time because you suddenly discover a problem when I am telling there are problems, when the Opposition Leader told you. Because why is the President asking for advice and consensus and consultation on six nominees when only five will compose the Police Service Commission? Why? Anybody is saying why? But of course, we are not here to debate that, we are here to debate the five clear names in front of us, not the six that we have been asked to consult on. We are here to debate five. But the question is why six? Is there somebody going to be thrown out?

Madam Speaker: Member.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Yes?

Madam Speaker: Again—

Dr. R. Moonilal: Sure.

Madam Speaker: Standing Order 48(1), I am not going to warn you again.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Madam Speaker, you will not need to warn me again because I want to thank you.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker: Member for San Fernando—Member for Couva South.

Mr. Rudranath Indarsingh (*Couva South*): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, as I join this debate and apparently the Opposition has to fulfil its duty in

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the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago this evening because from the indicators, it seems that the Government is not prepared to do their duty and defend the Motion that has been piloted by the Prime Minister during this afternoon's proceeding. It is very important to understand that section 122(5) of the Constitution states that:

“The President shall make an appointment under this section only after the House of Representatives has approved the Notification in respect of the relevant person.”

And this afternoon, we have five nominees before this House this evening where the President, after consultation with the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition, has sought to nominate the persons who are qualified and experienced in the disciplines of law, finance, sociology or management to be appointed as members of the Police Service Commission.

And, Madam Speaker, it is important for us to understand that the only way we can give some voice or legitimacy to our purpose in this particular debate is through asking questions and seeking to put forward issues which have been brought to the attention of the Opposition.

4.00 p.m.

And the Opposition is fulfilling its constitutional responsibility here this evening. And I wish to reiterate the point made by the Leader of the Opposition and the Member for Siparia, that the UNC will not rubber stamp this particular debate here this evening. Because, at the end of the day, Madam Speaker, this is not a popularity contest for the Opposition. This is about the Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago. It is about the fabric of our democracy, because sections 122 and 123, as it relates to the Police Service Commission, the powers of the Commissioner of Police and the Deputy Commissioner of Police, it is entrenched

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in the Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago.

And we may consider that this is the ordinary business of Parliament, but in the midst of what I consider to be an extraordinary circumstance of the day. Because Madam Speaker, Parliaments before us have debated the appointment of many service commissions and Parliaments after us will continue to debate. And this includes many debates which have led to the appointment of chairmen and commissioners on service commissions as in this particular instance, Madam Speaker, the Police Service Commission. And Madam Speaker, it is important that we grasp the extraordinary circumstances of the day to determine the extraordinary tasks that the Police Commissioner and Deputy Commissioners of Police will have to deal with going forward, Madam Speaker.

Because, it is important, as I said, that the Police Service Commission shall have the power to make appointments and to make appointments on promotion and to confirm and also to remove from office and exercise disciplinary control over persons holding or acting in offices specified in 123(1A), which is, as I said, the Commissioner of Police and the Deputy Commissioner of Police. And they would also have the responsibility to monitor the efficiency and the effectiveness of the discharge of these functions and also, Madam Speaker, to prepare an annual performance appraisal report in such form which may be prescribed by the Police Service Commission respecting and for the information of the Commissioner of Police or the Deputy Commissioner of Police, and to hear and determine appeals from the decision of the Commissioner of Police and/or any person to whom the Commissioner of Police has been delegated in relation to appointments in promotion, or as a result of disciplinary proceedings brought against a police officer appointed by the Commissioner of Police, Madam Speaker.

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And Madam Speaker, it is against this backdrop that we must understand or appreciate the unique considerations to be made by an incoming Commissioner of Police and Deputy Commissioner of Police, whoever they may be. We can appreciate that unique consideration, Madam Speaker, must be made by members of the Police Service Commission whom we are called here to appoint. And we must all uphold the law and the dignity of our respective offices and we are all accountable, Madam Speaker, for our actions to the people of Trinidad and Tobago, Madam Speaker. And in that regard, we must be able to stand—whatever we do here this evening, it must be able to stand the test of time as it relates to public accountability, due process and the rule of law, Madam Speaker.

And the incoming Commissioner of Police and the Deputy Commissioner of Police too, which the Commission will have the responsibility to appoint, they will be tasked with the issue of providing safety during a pandemic. And also it is important for us to understand too that they will have to lead the police service through an election in the year 2022, or even a local government election, Madam Speaker. And also, Madam Speaker, we must be able to understand that these persons who will be appointed will have to deal with the lifting of a state of emergency and the issues which may emerge beyond the lifting of the state of emergency in the context of national security issues, Madam Speaker.

And that is why it leads me to the very important issue, because at the end of the day, it is important that we raise issues to highlight the very unique background of the political upheaval that has existed, as the Prime Minister said in his piloting of this Motion, the upheaval for the past few months and also to highlight that the incoming commissioners will have to function against the recent historic background of the institutional collapse, apparent political interference and

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constitutional upheaval previously unforeseen in our political—or not political but in our independent institution. Madam Speaker, and it is important that the commissioners whose resumes are before this Parliament this evening, must be able to give the country the assurance—

Madam Speaker: Okay, so Member for Couva South, I am cautioning you with respect to Standing Order 55(1)(b). You are nine minutes into your contribution and you have made the same points repeatedly and they are points that have been made by speakers before you. So I would ask you, at this stage, to move on to a fresh point.

Mr. R. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am guided in the context of what you have indicated to me and that leads me on the very issue of the blessed assurance that we seek from the commissioners. It leads me very straight to the nomination of Her Excellency as it relates to Ms. Maxine Attong, who has been nominated to be a member of the Commission and she being a person to be qualified and experienced in the discipline of finance and management, Madam Speaker.

And the Prime Minister indicated in his presentation that Ms. Attong, and it is also indicated in the resume that we received, that Ms. Attong is the holder of a BSc in Accounting from the University of the West Indies. She also has a Masters as it relates to organizational development and she has respective professional certifications, as it relates to Train the Trainer and she is also trained in terms of evidence-based coaching from Fielding University, Madam Speaker. And she is also a previous President of the Human Resources Association of Trinidad and Tobago.

But, Madam Speaker, it is important for us to go on to the work experience

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of Ms. Maxine Attong. And under “work experience”, it indicates 2000 to present, Maxine Attong, consulting. And it spells out executive coaching, leadership training and development facilitated workshops, and so on, keynote speaking. And under the heading of “recent client”, it indicates or points to a direction where Maxine Attong, consulting, has had a clientele in the private sector and in the public sector, Madam Speaker. And two particular clients stand out in the context of the National Gas Company and the National Petroleum Company, Madam Speaker. These are two State entities, Madam Speaker, and it must be reiterated here this evening, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Member for Couva South, I stand. This is the exact thing I have spoken about that has been tried with respect to your two previous speakers. Okay? As I said, if there is a real settled conflict, I will allow that, but to draw a speculation between something that somebody is doing and this process, I am not going allow it.

Mr. R. Indarsingh: I am guided, Madam Speaker, but it is my responsibility, Madam Speaker, given that this individual who is before the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago here this afternoon—

Mr. Deyalsingh: Madam Speaker, is he defying your ruling?

Madam Speaker: Member for Couva South, again I warn you, can we move on?

Mr. R. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Speaker. And in this regard, Madam Speaker, it has been indicated that the nominee, Ms. Maxine Attong, is a Director and Chief Operating Officer of Energy Caribbean Limited and now is also someone who is engaged or was engaged between January of 2006 to 2012, as the Deputy Controls Manager at British Gas, Madam Speaker.

And Madam Speaker, based on what I have seen, in terms of what has come

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to my attention via the CV and also what has been reported to me in the context of being the Member of Parliament for Couva South, I have a responsibility to continue to raise issues in this Parliament and outside of the Parliament, in terms of the fitness of individuals and whether they can stand up to scrutiny in relation to this particular debate to uphold the independence, Madam Speaker, the independence of the Police Service Commission. Because the Police Service Commission is an independent institution Madam Speaker, and it is the only way that the Opposition can seek to clarify whether persons are indeed fit and proper along the lines of being truly independent. Because all those who have spoken, as it relates, from the Government Bench here this afternoon, have not been able to provide any sense of comfort to whether there will be another collapsed Police Service Commission when these commissioners, indeed, if they are approved here this afternoon and when they begin to meet, then we may find out the issue of apparent bias and the issue of conflict arising, and then we will be back to square one Madam Speaker, at the end of the day. And that is our concern and that will be our consistent concern in the interest of accountability and in the interest of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. That is the only vested interest that Members of the Opposition have there this afternoon and we will continue to fulfil on behalf of the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Because, at the end of the day, at the end of the day, if the independence—the Prime Minister, the Minister of National Security and all who have spoken here and will continue to speak from a Government's point of view have not comforted me whether after this, the conclusion of this debate whether the people's confidence, not those of us who are sitting inside here "yuh know", the people's confidence, all of the citizens of this country will say indeed that there is a fully-

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constituted Police Service Commission that is independent and will not be manipulated through political interference, and whether we will have commissioners who will be able to have the strength and the fortitude not to bow to political pressure. And can we be guaranteed after this debate is concluded, Madam Speaker, that indeed no high official will journey again to President's House when a merit list is finalized by the Police Service Commission and the commissioners going forward, whether a high official will seek to intervene, whether we will have a merit list that would be withdrawn? And up till today we will not know—well today we will not know where the previous merit list was, and I hope, Madam Speaker—

Madam Speaker: Member, again I rise on Standing Order 55(1)(b). This is the second time I have cautioned if you will use the few minutes you left, I think, more wisely.

Mr. R. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, at the end of the day, as I said, this is about the Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago. This is about the independence of the Police Service Commission and Trinidad and Tobago must have the best assurance from the commissioners of this country that indeed they can fulfil the mandate that is expected of them in the interest of finding a Police Commissioner and Deputy Police Commissioners who will be apolitical, will be truly independent of the ruling political party and will not succumb to political pressure, where we could have the emergence of a police force taking instructions from the People's National Movement, led by Dr. Keith Rowley. I thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Member for Naparima.

Mr. Rodney Charles (*Naparima*): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

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Madam Speaker, we are here in part today to discuss the nomination of Mr. Rajiv Persad to be a member of the Police Service Commission. Since I have limited time, I have a two-minute speech prepared, a 10-minute speech prepared and a 20-minute speech and that would depend on the time that is allotted to me.

I will speak only about Mr. Rajiv Persad. He is listed among the five nominees for membership of the Police Service Commission. But before I begin my contribution, I must admonish Members opposite, especially the Prime Minister, for their utterances that these nominees will all be appointed since only a simple majority is necessary for Parliament to give its approval. That is a fact, we understand that, but it appears as if it is rubbed in our face. And Madam Speaker, herein lies what I consider an approach to Parliament, which states in effect that: “We the PNM have the power to say who cometh and who go out and everything else does not matter. We are in charge and everyone else, especially Opposition Members—”

Mr. Deyalsingh: Madam Speaker, Standing Order 48(1) and 48(4), and 48(6).

Madam Speaker: Member for Naparima, I rule on 48(6) and, as far as 48(1), while you have just begun and I would have allowed you some leeway, because I have ruled on 48(6), I will ask you to leave that and move on. As you said you have limited time and therefore, please stick within the Standing—

Mr. R. Charles: I will.

Madam Speaker: Please fix your posture. Please fix your posture. Yes. Proceed.

Mr. R. Charles: So we are here to discuss the nomination of Mr. Rajiv Persad and I could deal with that. He is a person eminently qualified in law; one of the disciplines identified in section 122(1) of our Constitution in which members of the Police Service Commission must be qualified.

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We understand that he will serve as a member of the Police Service Commission for a period of three years. We have perused his CV and note that he is eminently qualified to serve. He certainly has the legal acumen and pedigree for the position. It is most pleasing that he has offered to serve, and for this he must be honoured. “I see dem quiet on the other side. Dey like tuh hear what dey like tuh hear.” We have perused his CV and note his eminent qualifications. He, no doubt, should be congratulated by virtue of his experience, his qualifications and track record to serve as a member, not only of the PSC but any similar body in Trinidad and Tobago. His track record also shows that he is indeed a Caribbean man and thus able to rise above the parochialism that bedevils governance and leadership in Trinidad and Tobago.

We note his qualifications: Bachelor of Laws; History; Law; LLB, Upper Second; Certificate of Legal Education; Certificate in Mediation. We note also his exemplary professional experience, and the Prime Minister alluded to it. I see like they want to get up on 48. He is an attorney-at-law for 24 years. He is Vice-President of the Law Association of Trinidad and Tobago. And this gives him a unique perspective coming from the most representative body of legal professionals locally. He is an acting High Court Judge in the British Virgin Islands, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Grenada. And this tells us, this tells us that he has a regional perspective and will be less likely to succumb to the false view that “God is ah Trini” or even that all wisdom resides within our borders or even with the confines of Balisier House, as those opposite do verily believe, and I am talking about his qualifications here and his expertise. He is Deputy Chairman of the Integrity Commission of Trinidad and Tobago—was. That informs us that he is familiar with the finer points and the nuances of ethical behaviour and may not be

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the kind of person who will recuse himself incessantly from deliberations of the PSC, as a result of conflict of interest, financial or otherwise.

I am speaking, let me reiterate, about his qualifications. He has provided extensive advisory work to corporate and Government agencies, both locally and regionally, on matters ranging from the law of contract, tort, public law, corporate fraud, legislative drafting and drafting of contracts. That is commendable, in that he appears, not to be rich but financially secure, so that he will not succumb to the “eat ah food” syndrome that would make him susceptible to financial inducements by the Executive.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Madam Speaker, “ financial inducements by the Executive”? Standing Order 48(1) and 48(6).

Madam Speaker: Okay, so what I would say is even though you have said it in the negative, it does cast a sort of aspersion. So I will ask you to withdraw that and say it another way. You can find another way.

Mr. R. Charles: I would withdraw it and I would say that it is commendable that he will not be able to succumb to inducements by anyone.

He served as international expert to review the draft Criminal Procedure Bill of Sierra Leone, and he did this on behalf of the UNDP, United Nations Development Programme. Mr. Persad is a—he is Senior Counsel material, in our view, eminently qualified, even to sit in a Court of Appeal. He is a senior executive member of the Law Association committee on the award of silk and appointment of judges; certainly qualifications and experience that could serve in the highest independent institutions in our country, Madam Speaker. And it goes on, I will not. But clearly we are speaking about someone who is eminently qualified and has a track record.

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Madam Speaker, it is monumentally critical in these times of Executive overreach, and I am speaking globally, that we have persons like Mr. Persad who will be able to speak truth to power and who have the character and track record to tell anyone where to get off if they attempt to breach the walls separating our independent institutions from the growing reach of any dictatorship, proposed or in the future.

Dr. Rowley is on record as saying that he will speak to whomever, including and presumably members of the Service Commissions and he is here and I heard him say so, whenever he wishes and on any matter which he considers of national interest. You see, Madam Speaker, the Prime Minister does not understand the sacredness of the boundaries separating the Executive from our independent Service Commissions and that is why it is important—

Mr. Deyalsingh: Madam Speaker.

Mr. R. Charles:—in appointing—

Mr. Deyalsingh: Madam Speaker, Standing Order 48(6). My Prime Minister is wiser than that.

Madam Speaker: So I will let you go on.

Mr. R. Charles: Madam Speaker, the Privy Council in Appeal No. 69 of 2015, heard on the 8th of May, 2017 in the famous case between the Attorney General and Dumas, which, of course, we lost. In that case the Attorney General criticized the Court of Appeal for overlooking the role of Parliament in the process of selecting members of the Police Service Commission. Our AG had—and it is critical in terms of what we are discussing here today, the Attorney General had argued in error that, and I quote from the Privy Council judgment:

“because the House had approved the nominations, the challenge”—by Mr.

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Dumas—“was impermissible on ordinary separation of powers principles’.”

That is in the judgment, which I have before me. The Privy Council accepted:

“with little or no reservation”

—the role of the Trinidad Court—

Mr. Deyalsingh: Madam Speaker, Standing Order 48(1), please.

Madam Speaker: Member for Naparima, I uphold the objection.

Mr. R. Charles: All right. Madam Speaker, it was just that they said that the Parliament does not have—

Mr. Deyalsingh: Madam Speaker, Standing Order 48(1). You have ruled.

Mr. R. Charles: Okay.

Madam Speaker: Member, please proceed. I have ruled. Please proceed to another point. Right?

Mr. R. Charles: Right. Okay. Madam Speaker, okay, I hear you. Mr. Persad appears to be the kind of person who will resign if he is witness to any act of ministerial interference in the Police Service Commission and the rulings said that Parliament does not have—Privy Council rulings—final say; it is the courts that have the say. So that, as we meet today let it be understood that the Privy Council has ruled that even if we make the appointment—

Mr. Deyalsingh: Madam Speaker, again Standing Order 48(1), you have ruled on this and the Member is looking for a backdoor to revive the issue.

Mr. R. Charles: I move on. I move on.

Madam Speaker: And again, all right. Member, you are going to move on to another point.

Mr. R. Charles: Yes.

Madam Speaker: Yeah?

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4.30 p.m.

Mr. R. Charles: Yes. Trinidad and Tobago sorely needs independent citizens who have testicular fortitude, the moral rectitude, and the necessary conviction to defend our democracy at every turn. Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty and that is why we are here today, to uncompromisingly defend our democracy. And “doh” matter how they stop us, we are resolute that we will fulfill our duty as the loyal Opposition of the people of Trinidad and Tobago elected by over 300,000 citizens.

Madam Speaker, while Mr. Persad is eminently qualified, competent, knowledgeable, and equipped for membership on the Police Service Commission, the problem is not with Mr. Persad. And we wish to let him know in no uncertain terms that this is not about him personally. He is not the cause of our discomfort. He is not the cause. Madam Speaker, it is about the process. It is about a process for appointing a Commissioner of Police and a Deputy Commissioner of Police and today a Police Service Commission.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Standing Order 55(1)(b), that issue of the process has been regurgitated several times by every speaker on the Opposition.

Madam Speaker: Okay. So Member for Naparima, one, we are not here debating the process of the appointment of the Commissioner of Police. While it may be a function, the appointment might be a function of the Commission, we are not dealing with the process. And I uphold the point made by the Member for St. Joseph in that this is tedious repetition. Four speakers or three speakers before you, you are the fourth, have dealt with the Commissioner of Police and the function of the Police Commission in having to appoint the Commissioner and the Deputy Commissioner. Okay?

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Mr. R. Charles: Yes. Madam Speaker, our Constitution which is our supreme law, supreme even over the Standing Orders of this House, tells us that our:

“...Nation...is...founded...”—on—“...principles...”—which—“...
 acknowledge the supremacy of God...”

And I wanted to go to the scriptures to determine that out of the scriptures, and I am dealing with the *Bhagavad Gita* and the *Bible* and the holy *Qur'an*.

Mr. Imbert: Point of order, Madam Speaker, 48(1).

Mr. Young: “If he want tuh preach leh him go inna church.”

Madam Speaker: Member for Naparima, where are you going with all of this?

Mr. R. Charles: I am just making one point, one scriptural point. And I will move on.

Madam Speaker: I am going to give you one second to make the point.

Mr. R. Charles: One second—King James version, Matthew 7:18:

“A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit,...”—

Mr. Imbert: Point of order, Madam Speaker—

Mr. R. Charles: —“...neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.”

Mr. Imbert: Point of order, 48(1).

Mr. R. Charles: I move on. I move on. You gave me a minute and I took it. Information in the—[*Interruption*—]sorry, yes. The critical lesson, the critical lesson, my previous speakers talked about the process about why we are here today and I am not dwelling on that, that who resigned and why we do not have a Police Service Commission. But the critical lesson is that governance combines elements of people, processes, systems, outputs, accountability, and responsibility. All of these must go hand in hand to have a process output recommendation assessment that is above board and can stand like Caesar’s wife beyond scrutiny.

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Now, this Government has a history of usurping processes to hoodwink the population and interrupt outputs.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Madam Speaker, Standing Orders 48(1) and 48(6).

Madam Speaker: Member for Naparima, I rule on 48(6). Please withdraw that and find another way to say what you would like to say, or go on to another point.

Mr. R. Charles: I withdraw and I raise the point that I taught ethics at university and the PNM's actions today do not square with the principles, the standard principles of ethics—

Hon. Imbert: Point of order, Madam Speaker, 48(1)—

Mr. Al-Rawi: And (6).

Hon. Imbert:—and (6).

Madam Speaker: Member, again, I stand on 48(6).

Mr. R. Charles: And here we are today, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Yes.

Mr. R. Charles: All resulting because the Government deemed that the process was flawed and ignored it. And Madam Speaker, I call on the PM, since I am constantly interrupted, I call on the PM to state whether he was the high office holder who intervened when the list was presented to the President.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Standing Orders 48(6), 48(1).

Madam Speaker: Member for—Member for Naparima. Member for Naparima, you have complained about the number of times you have been interrupted but you have been continuously breaching the Standing Orders and I have had to intervene. So you have a few minutes left, if not, and I am cautioning you to please be relevant and to desist from making those comments that impute improper motive. Okay?

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Mr. R. Charles: So, Madam Speaker, my concluding statements, and my concluding statements are, clearly in this Parliament, one of the problems we have, one of the problems we have is that we end up with legislation, we end up with systems, we end up with procedures that are found to be flawed, that are found to be inadequate. And it is because—

Mr. Deyalsingh: Madam Speaker, Standing Order 48(1)—

Madam Speaker: Member, I am standing.

Mr. Deyalsingh:—and 55(1)(b).

Madam Speaker: Member, we are not dealing here with legislation. We are not dealing here with procedures. We are dealing with the Notification. I rule on Standing Order 48(1). This is the last time.

Mr. R. Charles: Yes. Madam Speaker, it is clear that the voices of the people of Naparima should not be heard. And I wish to make the point as I leave, as I leave—

Madam Speaker: Member.

Mr. R. Charles: Yes, Madam.

Madam Speaker: Member, I am on my legs. I am going to ask you to withdraw that statement.

Mr. R. Charles: Madam Speaker, I withdraw the statement and I leave!

Madam Speaker: Member. Member for Naparima, please come back. I am certain you do not mean that disrespect. I am certain you do not. Okay, and I ask you to apologize.

Mr. R. Charles: Madam Speaker, I apologize.

Madam Speaker: I ask you to apologize and I ask you also to really appear sincere when you apologize.

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Mr. R. Charles: Madam Speaker, I apologize. But, Madam Speaker, I leave.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Prime Minister.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

The Prime Minister (Hon. Dr. Keith Rowley): Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I would like to respond to a few points raised by the Member for Siparia who joined this debate at its onset. And Madam Speaker, there were two points made by the Member for Siparia which I cannot allow to remain on the record unchallenged. Because, Madam Speaker, it is clear to me that, notwithstanding the facts of the situation, my colleagues from the other side have taken the decision to perpetually play the victim. That is quite all right, Madam Speaker, except when they choose to cloak that situation of playing the victim in the Constitution and our Standing Orders in particular, and claim that the Constitution is being breached by the Government, and they and their supporters are victims of such a breach.

Madam Speaker, you know and I know that our colleague from Siparia is a Senior Counsel and we are not here debating today how she got that accolade. But to come to the House today, Madam Speaker, in this debate and spend a significant period of time telling the country, particularly the Members from the constituency from which they come, that the Chair in the House created an unusual development with respect to the Order Paper of the Parliament, where somehow the Government put something in place to improperly influence this debate and the involvement of our colleagues from the other side.

Madam Speaker, the Member for Siparia said that the way the Motion appeared on the Order Paper is improper. And went on to say it was the first time that any such thing has happened in this House. It has never happened before

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where a situation like this, particularly where there is more than one choice to be made. There are five persons to vote on, and we have so organized the debate that the Opposition has no choice to select either/or, or to choose two or three and not choose the others. That was the substance and the essence of the presentation of the Member for Siparia.

Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition, Senior Counsel and Member of this House for the longest while appears to have a very convenient memory. Because the Member states that it never happened. Madam Speaker, that is not correct. I have checked, and in 2007 the *Hansard* will show that a question was put to the House. And let me just quote what it says on the *Hansard*.

Be it resolved:

“That, the Notification of the nominations of Mr. Christopher Thomas, Mr. Seenath Jairam, Ms. Jacqueline Cheeseman, Pastor Clive Dottin and Mr. Jewan Singh...”

That was the resolution. All those names put in one package put to the House. Question was put and agreed to. That happened in this Parliament and is on the *Hansard*. And therefore it is untrue, it is unbecoming of a Senior Counsel, a Member of this House, a former Prime Minister, to come in here today and say that it has never happened before where five—

Mr. Charles: Madam Speaker, I rise on Standing Order 48(6), and I ask you to rule.

Madam Speaker: Prime Minister, continue.

The Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Madam Speaker, I put that on the record so that statements made by the Member for Siparia to the public today, will not go unchallenged—

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Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

The Hon. Dr. K. Rowley:—because it does not represent the record of *Hansard*. And I myself would be asking why would the Member want to do that? And I think I know the answer. The answer is to give the impression that something improper is happening in the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago. That has been the recent theme. All this talk about defending democracy and protecting democracy, and protecting the Constitution, it is based on tissue of lies being fabricated—untruths being fabricated.

Madam Speaker: Just withdraw the word.

The Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: “Lies” is withdrawn. “Untruths” kept. Fabricated—

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

The Hon. Dr. K. Rowley:—to give the impression, to give the impression that something is going on wrong. Go to the *Hansard* of 2007 and interestingly enough, Madam Speaker, it was the Member for Couva South at the time who was the last speaker before the matter wound up. Today we had the Member for Couva South going in there just before we wind up and repeating the same thing that was said by the Member for Siparia. And I am sure there are thousands of persons across the nation who would have heard the Member for Siparia say that and think it is true. It is not true.

Madam Speaker, that what I just mentioned happened when a new commission was being put in place, and all the names were put in place. The Member made reference to situations where notifications came and they came on the Order Paper individually. Yes, Madam Speaker, that was also true. And the Member went on to say that the House would have been asked for permission to treat with it altogether. Yes, Madam Speaker. But in those instances they came as

separate Motions. The Motions were separate and the House was asked, since it is the same thing, let us do it altogether. But in this case, Madam Speaker, as is the authority of the Chair of the House, all five came on one Motion and therefore, there was no need to put anything to the floor. It is a singular Motion which will be voted on at the end of my presentation, Madam Speaker.

My colleague from Siparia went on to give the impression and to state that the Opposition has no way of saying nay or yay to any of the individuals. Madam Speaker, if they are properly led they will know that at any point in the proceedings today any member could have got up and put an amendment to the House to say nay to any of these five people as an amendment. And of course that amendment would have been voted upon by the whole House. And that would have been their avenue for extracting any one of these five people. If they have a question, as they seem to, based on fact and substance, they have a responsibility as Members of the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago to put that as an amendment if it is worthy of such a consideration. They choose not to, but they come here Madam Speaker, to speculate and expect the House to take positions based on speculation on, “I think so”, “it appears so”, “may be so”.

And, Madam Speaker, if given half an opportunity to scandalize people in the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago and that, Madam Speaker, we will have none of it.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

The Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: If you seriously had any concern with any of these persons worthy of the attention of the Parliament you would have used the opportunity of an amendment to extract them and, Madam Speaker, the House would have had to vote on your concern, but no you do not do that. You try to

scandalize people on speculation.

Madam Speaker, section 41(10) of our Standing Orders in this House, page 26. And again I take it that the Member for Siparia, Senior Counsel, former Prime Minister, Opposition Leader, Attorney General, would know that section 41(10) comes under the heading: “Separation of a complicated question”

And this operation here today qualifies as a complicated question. You have five people to choose, you want to choose one and do not choose four, or choose four and do not choose one, you amend by putting it to the House with your concerns to go.

“Separation of a complicated question”

Standing Order—Standing Order, under:

“Motions—General Rules”

41(10) says:

“The Speaker may order that a complicated question be divided.”

Authority of the Chair. And how does the Speaker do that? And how do you do that if you want to do that? Put an amendment. State an amendment. But you did not—not one of them did that, Madam Speaker. Including our garrulous friend from Naparima, all right. But you are coming to bad talk the Parliament, bad talk the Chair, bad talk the Prime Minister, bad talk the Government as though something is going wrong. Madam Speaker, absolutely nothing has gone wrong, everything is according to the law and the Standing Orders.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

The Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: The only thing which is going wrong is the attitude of our colleagues on the other side. I saw one of them coming here today with four tyres. I expected a fire in the road outside. Because that is a strategy.

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Madam Speaker, they accuse the Government of expecting us to come here and vote no and go home. Madam Speaker, we have done nothing to prevent them from standing and talking all night until they are out of time. We never asked any of them to vote no and go home. They are given the authority of the microphone to go there and take their allotted time and speak to the country. You saw Madam Speaker how they struggled because they promised the country and the media in particular that there will be fire and brimstone here today. And of course we saw the damp squib.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

The Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Madam Speaker, to refer to the five names on the Order Paper as they are placed, as we placed it there in “grappe”, Madam Speaker, that is not worthy of a response. And to say, Madam Speaker, that we have not come here with dispatch is again to misrepresent it. A big chunk of the presentation of my colleague from Siparia is that the Prime Minister said they will come with dispatch and look at how long they take to come. Madam Speaker, the President did not send all these names on the same day. Some came on the 12th, one came on the 15th, one came on the 20th, and one came on the 29th of October.

Madam Speaker, this Motion was submitted as one question circulated since Wednesday the 3rd of November. Today is the 10th of November. So therefore, Madam Speaker, we have come here as quickly as was reasonably expected.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

The Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: And whether the Leader of Government Business or the Prime Minister went to Scotland has nothing to do with how this was dealt with in dispatch. It had to do with managing the affairs of the Government and people of Trinidad and Tobago and that is what it was.

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Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

The Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: It has nothing to do with your idle talk about golf in Scotland and suits and dinners. It just shows how shallow our colleagues and how idle our colleagues are on the other side.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

The Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: And we could deal with the Police Service Commission matter and the climate change matter in Scotland because we are the Government of Trinidad and Tobago handling a number of horses on any course.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

The Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: So, Madam Speaker, I want you to dismiss that. That finds its way into the Parliament again today. It was not sufficient to talk that unuseful, nonsensical statement outside; they bring it in to the Parliament for the debate and talking about heat in the Parliament.

Madam Speaker, I will not take very long except with all that has been said, and the speculation that seems to be stuck in the craw of some of our colleagues, there were two interesting questions that had been in the public domain with respect to this issue, and I simply want to mention them. And they happened to have come from the Office of the President of Trinidad and Tobago and it would be worthy that the population pay attention to that because you might get something out of it, you might learn something out of it because we have got nothing out of the behaviour and the outrage, or so-called outrage that the Opposition is trying to engender in this country.

And question number one is this: Should a commission be left in the dark if there is information that is pertinent to the commission's operations? And let me repeat that, Madam Speaker, for this House and for the population. And it came

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from no other person in this situation that is going on in the country, it came from your President in written form, published for the public to just think about. Notwithstanding all else that has been said and assumed and the concerns and the speculation. But there is a solid question here. Should a commission be left in the dark if there is pertinent information which is useful to the commission's operations?

I move on. The second question is: If the commission is to be informed, by whom? And I want to add here today Madam Speaker, by what process? And I move on.

Madam Speaker, I will end by quoting from the Constitution, this document. For all those, especially my colleagues on the other side who are appearing not to be able to sleep at nights, I am talking about page 98 of the Laws of Trinidad and Tobago, which is the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, page 98, where it deals with, section 123 of the Constitution, where it deals with the Police Service Commission. And it says:

“The Police Service Commission shall have the power to—”

And it lists a number of powers. And I want go down to subsection (5) — subsection (7). Subsection (7) says:

“Notwithstanding subsection (6)...”

And to make sure you understand what I am saying, subsection (6) talks about the Police Service Commission shall ask:

“the Commissioner of Police...every six months...”—to—“... submit a report...”

And the:

“...Commission shall have the power to call the Commissioner...to produce

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documents...”

That is subsection (6). Subsection (7) says:

“Notwithstanding subsection (6), the Police Service Commission may, on its own initiative, request a special report in from the Commissioner of Police at any time on any matter relating to the management of the Police Service, to which the Commissioner of Police shall respond in a timely manner.”

I want repeat that for the benefit of the public who have been led down a rabbit hole through righteous indignation by persons who are speculating and pretending they know something and they know something. And I am—just mention it, Madam Speaker, before I repeat it.

I have been in the public service as a Gazetted public officer since 1968, and I know of no post on the establishment of the management of Trinidad and Tobago called “high government official”. None. So all this talk about tongue in cheek and round the corner high government official went and committed some offence somewhere and threatened the—absolute poppy cock.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

The Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Let me repeat section (7) on page 98 of the Constitution, under the section on the Police Service Commission:

“Notwithstanding subsection (6), the Police Service Commission may, on its own initiative, request a special report in from the Commissioner of Police at any time on any matter relating to the management of the Police Service...”

And I take that to mean that any police service commission at any time could find out any information about the management of the police service, any time. And that brings us back to the two questions the President asked. Should information be

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held from the Commission? Keep them in the dark? And if not, who should inform the Commission if such information exists? And on that basis, Madam Speaker, I end by saying, if I as Prime Minister find myself in a situation with information that is pertinent to any commission conducting its business, I will not hesitate to pass that information to the Commission.

Hon. Members: [*Sustained desk thumping*].

The Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: And on that basis, Madam Speaker, I beg to move.

Hon. Member: [*Inaudible*] [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, I have heard the contributions today and certain Members have raised a concern regarding the form of the Motion and the question to be put, being that of all the five Notifications. Firstly, I want to say that the practice of this House has demonstrated that this matter can be debated as one Motion. In fact, the nature of this matter is for the approval of the Notifications to establish the Commission. And therefore, there is really one issue.

In the circumstance, I considered the Motion as filed to have been in order. However, having regard to the trend of the debate, even in the absence of any proposal for an amendment to the Motion, I have determined that I will put the question separately in accordance with Standing Order 41(10). And just for the guidance and recall of Members, Standing Order 41(10) reads as follows:

“The Speaker may order that a complicated question be divided.”

And therefore, the question on each nominee will now be put separately.

5.00 p.m.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Madam Speaker, I am objecting to this—

Hon. Members: [*Inaudible*]

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Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: 41(10) speaks to a complicated question and Erskine May defines “complicated” to mean where there is more than one proposal within the Bill or the Motion then the Speaker can intervene.

Hon. Members: [*Inaudible*]

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: I share my concern, and I am entitled so to do—

Hon. Members: [*Inaudible*]

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Madam Speaker, this Motion has one proposal, one resolution—

Hon. Members: [*Inaudible*]

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: No, no, no the proposal—

Madam Speaker: Member—

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: —is for the five to be approved.

Madam Speaker: Member for Siparia, could you please—

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: I am objecting to the use of 41(10).

Madam Speaker: I am on my legs. I have heard you.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: I am objecting.

Madam Speaker: I have heard you. All right? So that, again—

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Because you all did it wrong.

Madam Speaker:—the question on each nominee will now be put separately.

Question put.

Hon. Members: Division.

Madam Speaker: Now, again, Members, as we know all Members are not here, we will take a three minute break to allow Members to come in to the Chamber to vote. So after three minutes the vote will be commenced. Again, I remind if a Member has not come into the Chamber by the time their place has been reached,

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they will be allowed to vote once the vote has not been announced. [Pause]
Leader?

Mr. Deyalsingh: Yes.

Madam Speaker: Whip.

Mr. Lee: Yes.

Madam Speaker: Okay. The division will commence.

The House divided: Ayes 21 Noes 19

Deyalsingh, Hon. T.

Rowley, Hon. Dr. K.

Al-Rawi, Hon. F.

Imbert, Hon. C.

Young, Hon. S.

Beckles, Hon. P.

Hinds, Hon. F.

Forde, E.

Webster-Roy, Hon. A.

Cudjoe, Hon. S

Gadsby-Dolly, Hon. Dr. N.

Gonzales, Hon. M.

Mc Clashie, Hon. S.

Cummings, Hon. F.

Richards, K.

Manning, Hon. B.

Leonce, Hon. A.

Morris-Julian, Hon. L.

de Nobriga, Hon. S.

Police Service Commission
(Nomination of)

Scotland. K.

Monroe. R.

NOES

Lee, D.

Persad-Bissessar, SC, Mrs. K

Ms. Ameen: Is my mike on? No.

Division continued.

Charles, R.

Moonilal, Dr. R.

Paray, R.

Indarsingh, R.

Bodoe, Dr. L.

Hosein, S.

Paradath, B.

Haynes, Ms. A.

Tancoo, D.

Mohit, Ms V.

Benjamin, Ms. M.

Rambally, R.

Ragbir, Dr. R.

Ram, A.

Seecheran, Dr. R.

Ratiram, R.

Question agreed to.

Resolved:

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That the Notification for the nomination of Retired Justice of Appeal Judith Jones as a member of the Police Service Commission be approved.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Question put.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Division.

The House divided:

Ayes 21

Noes 19

Deyalsingh, Hon. T.

Rowley, Hon. Dr. K.

Al-Rawi, Hon. F.

Imbert, Hon. C.

Young, Hon. S.

Beckles, Hon. P.

Hinds, Hon. F.

Cummings, Hon. F.

Forde, E.

Webster-Roy, Hon. A.

Cudjoe, Hon. S.

Gadsby-Dolly, Hon. Dr. N.

Gonzales, Hon. M.

Mc Clashie, Hon. S.

Monroe, R.

Scotland, K.

Richards, K.

Manning, Hon. B.

Leonce, Hon. A.

Morris-Julian, Hon. L.

Police Service Commission
(Nomination of)

de Nobriga, Hon. S.

NOES

Lee, D.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: My mike is not on. No.

Division continued.

Ameen, Ms. K.

Charles, R.

Moonilal, Dr. R.

Paray, R.

Indarsingh, R.

Bodoe, Dr. L.

Hosein, S.

Paradath, B.

Haynes, Ms. A.

Tancoo, D.

Mohit, Ms. V.

Benjamin, Ms. M.

Rambally, D.

Ragbir, Dr. R.

Ram, R.

Seecheran, Dr. R.

Ratiram, R.

Question agreed to.

Resolved:

That the Notification for the nomination of Ms. Maxine Attong as a member of the Police Service Commission be approved.

UNREVISED

Police Service Commission
(Nomination of)

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Question put.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Division.

The House divided:

Ayes 21

Noes 19

Deyalsingh, Hon. T.

Rowley, Hon. Dr. K.

Al-Rawi, Hon. F.

Imbert, Hon. C.

Young, Hon. S.

Beckles, Hon. P.

Hinds, Hon. F.

Cummings, Hon. F.

Forde, E.

Webster-Roy, Hon. A.

Cudjoe, Hon. S

Gadsby-Dolly, Hon. Dr. N.

Gonzales, Hon. M.

Mc Clashie, Hon. S.

Monroe, R.

Scotland, K.

Richards, K.

Manning, Hon. B.

Leonce, Hon. A.

Morris-Julian, Hon. L.

de Nobriga, Hon. S.

NOES

Police Service Commission
(Nomination of)

Lee, D.

Persad-Bissessar, SC, Mrs. K

Ameen, Ms. K.

Moonilal, Dr. R.

Paray, R.

Indarsingh, R.

Bodoe, Dr. L.

Hosein, S.

Paradath, B.

Charles, R.

Haynes, Ms. A.

Tancoo, D.

Mohit, Ms. V.

Benjamin, Miss M.

Rambally, D.

Ragbir, Dr. R.

Ram, A.

Seecheran, Dr. R.

Ratiram, R.

Question agreed to.

Resolved:

That the Notification for the nomination of Mr. Ian Kevin Ramdhanie as a member of the Police Service Commission be approved.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Question put.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Division.

Police Service Commission
(Nomination of)

The House divided:

Ayes 21

Noes 19

Deyalsingh, Hon. T.

Rowley, Hon. Dr. K.

Al-Rawi, Hon. F.

Imbert, Hon. C.

Young, Hon. S.

Beckles, Hon. P.

Hinds, Hon. F.

Cummings, Hon. F.

Forde, E.

Webster-Roy, Hon. A.

Cudjoe, Hon. S

Gadsby-Dolly, Hon. Dr. N.

Gonzales, Hon. M.

Mc Clashie, Hon. S.

Richards, K.

Manning, Hon. B.

Leonce, Hon. A.

Morris-Julian, Hon. L.

de Nobriga, Hon. S.

Scotland, K.

Monroe, R.

NOES

Lee, D.

Persad-Bissessar, SC, Mrs. K

Ameen, Ms. K.

Police Service Commission
(Nomination of)

Charles, R.

Moonilal, Dr. R.

Paray, R.

Indarsingh, R.

Bodoe, Dr. L.

Hosein, S.

Paradath, B.

Haynes, Miss A.

Tancoo, D.

Mohit, Ms. V.

Benjamin, Ms. M.

Rambally, D.

Ragbir, Dr. R.

Ram, A.

Seecheran, Dr. R.

Ratiram, R.

Question agreed to.

Resolved:

That the Notification for the nomination of Ms. Maxine King as a member of the Police Service Commission be approved.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Question put.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Division.

Hon. Member: What!

Hon. Deyalsingh: [*Inaudible*]—for this one. You extolled the virtues on the man.

Hon. Members: [*Inaudible*]

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The House divided:

Ayes 21

Noes 19

Deyalsingh, Hon. T.

Madam Speaker: One minute, please. Can we take the vote in silence, please?*Division continued.*

Rowley, Hon. Dr. K.

Al-Rawi, Hon. F.

Imbert, Hon. C.

Young, Hon. S.

Beckles, Hon. P.

Hinds, Hon. F.

Cummings, Hon. F.

Forde, E.

Webster-Roy, Hon. A.

Cudjoe, Hon. S.

Gadsby-Dolly, Hon. Dr. N.

Gonzales, Hon. M.

Mc Clashie, Hon. S.

Monroe, R.

Scotland, K.

Richards, K.

Manning, Hon. B.

Leonce, Hon. A.

Morris-Julian, Hon. L.

de Nobriga, Hon. S.

NOES

Lee, D.

Police Service Commission
(Nomination of)

Persad-Bissessar, SC, Mrs. K.

Ameen, Ms. K.

Mr. Charles: The process is flawed. No.

Hon. Members: Woah!

Division continued.

Moonilal, Dr. R.

Paray, R.

Dr. Moonilal: [*Inaudible*]

Madam Speaker: Members, as the process has been interrupted, I am going to restart the count with the Opposition.

NOES

Lee, D.

Persad-Bissessar, SC, Mrs. K.

Ameen, Ms. K.

Charles, R.

Hon. Members: [*Laughter*]

Moonilal, Dr. R.

[Madam Speaker confers with Clerk]

Dr. Moonilal: You should start over.

Division continued.

Paray, R.

Indarsingh, R.

Bodoe, Dr. L.

Hosein, S.

Paradath, B.

Haynes, Ms. A.

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Tancoo, D.

Mohit, Ms. V.

Benjamin, Ms. M.

Rambally, D.

Ragbir, Dr. R.

Ram, A.

Seecheran, Dr. R.

Ratiram, R.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Madam Speaker, just for the clarity of the *Hansard*, before the result is given to you, we on this side did not hear the vote for the Member for Naparima.

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk*]

Ms. Ameen: “When allyuh was not hearing we last week, you did not have a problem with that”.

Madam Speaker: Member for St. Joseph. Madam Clerk, please. Hon. Members, on a division with 21 Members voting for, 18 Members voting against and one abstention, the—

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk*]

Madam Speaker: Members, I am on my legs—the Motion that the Notification for the Mr. Rajiv Persad as a member of the Police Service Commission be approved.

Hon. Members: [*Sustained desk thumping*]

Mr. Charles: Madam Speaker.

Hon. Members: [*Inaudible*]

Mr. Charles: Madam Speaker, I object. I want my own vote to be recorded, no.

Hon. Members: [*Inaudible*]

Police Service Commission
(Nomination of)

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Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, having regard to the protest by the Member for Naparima, we shall commence the division once again.

The House divided: Ayes 21 Noes 19

Deyalsingh, Hon. T.

Rowley, Hon. Dr. K.

Al-Rawi, Hon. F.

Imbert, Hon. C.

Young, Hon. S.

Beckles, Hon. P.

Hinds, Hon. F.

Cummings, Hon. F.

Forde, E.

Webster-Roy, Hon. A.

Cudjoe, Hon. S

Gadsby-Dolly, Hon. Dr. N.

Gonzales, Hon. M.

Mc Clashie, Hon. S.

Monroe, R.

Scotland, K.

Richards, K.

Manning, Hon. B.

Leonce, Hon. A.

Morris-Julian, Hon. L.

de Nobriga, Hon. S.

NOES

Lee, D.

Police Service Commission
(Nomination of)

Persad-Bissessar, SC, Mrs. K.

Ameen, Ms. K.

Charles, R.

Hon. Member: “Wayyy”.

Hon. Members: [*Laughter*]

Moonilal, Dr. R.

Madam Speaker: Members, Members can we have the vote in silence?

Division continued.

Paray, R.

Indarsingh, R.

Bodoe, Dr. L.

Hosein, S.

Paradath, B.

Haynes, Ms. A.

Tancoo, D.

Mohit, Ms. V.

Benjamin, Ms. M.

Rambally, D.

Ragbir, Dr. R.

Ram, A.

Seecharan, Dr. R.

Ratiram, R.

Question agreed to.

Resolved:

That the Motion on the notification for the nomination of Mr. Rajiv Persad as a member of the Police Service Commission be approved. [*Desk thumping*]

ADJOURNMENT

Madam Speaker: Leader of the House.

The Minister of Health (Hon. Terrence Deyalsingh): Thank you, Madam Speaker. I beg to move that this House do now adjourn to Friday the 12th of November, 2021, at 1.30 p.m.. On that day, it is the intention of the Government to debate the Trinidad and Tobago Revenue Authority Bill and take it through all its stages. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members before putting the question on the adjournment, there are two matters which qualify on the adjournment. I now call upon the Member for Tabaquite. [*Desk thumping*]

5.30 p.m.

[MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Electricity and Water Supply in Tabaquite (Inconsistent Delivery)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member for Tabaquite, proceed.

Ms. Anita Haynes (Tabaquite): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I thank you for the opportunity to raise this important matter on the adjournment here today. It is, indeed, my responsibility as a representative for the people of the Tabaquite constituency to raise the inconsistent delivery of the most basic goods and services. In this case, I am focusing on water and electricity services, and the need to hold the Ministry to account as the executing agency. This is one of avenues available to me as an Opposition MP as I seek to represent the needs of, not just my constituents, but an entire country that is saying that if you want to take credit—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Silence. Silence please, Members. [*Crosstalk*] Okay, Members. Right.

Ms. A. Haynes: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And if you want to take credit for works done, you also have to take responsibility for when work is not done. It is important to note, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and the Minister would be well aware, that the Government agencies are responsible for the provision of these services so that the people of this country, in particular, my focus on Tabaquite constituency, are absolutely dependent on the Government agencies for the provisions of these services.

A quick glance at the records of my office from the number of messages, including messages I received today and logs of calls from the office, there is a constant call and clamouring for a consistent water supply in the midst of a pandemic, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The residents of Forres Park, Springvale, Gran Couva, Caratal, Montique Lands, Macaulay, Whiteland, Parforce and other areas in Gasparillo have chronic water problems, and I really do mean chronic water problems. For the past year, I have been inundated with calls, messages. Sometimes there is no water supply for a month, two months. This morning, this weekend, in a neighbourhood WhatsApp group from Gran Couva, I saw a video of the water that they got in Gran Couva. It was brown, not fit for human consumption. So, in the first instance, you are beleaguered by an inconsistent water supply and then when you do get water, you cannot use it.

The residents have raised, over and over, that when you do get water sometimes it is in the middle of the night. You have to get up and scramble to fill up tanks, then when you do check your tanks, you have to then clean out the tanks, because you have a problem with the quality of the water that you are receiving. [*Interruption*] Now, I know—now, I am hearing, I cannot exactly hear the

crosstalk, but I am 100 per cent sure those on that side have similar issues to raise, and that their constituents will be wondering why their issues are not represented in the House of Representatives. So I would urge Members to be very quiet. If you are not going to raise the issues facing your constituents, I will do so for my constituents. [*Desk thumping*]

Now, while I can stand here and discuss an inconsistent water supply, you know what is very consistent, Mr. Deputy Speaker? The WASA bill, extremely consistent. And so while on one hand you cannot receive the service, you are asked to pay for it religiously. It is an insult to the people of this country, Mr. Deputy Speaker that I can stand here, at the end of 2021, and talk about a village, Corosal, who have had several meetings asking for a pipe-borne supply of water. There were water tanks placed in the community with the undertaking from WASA that the water tanks would be filled periodically and cleaned periodically. That has not been done.

We have several areas that have requested over the past few years—a number since 2018—with requests for the electrification and street lighting programme. And at a time when we are discussing the safety and security of the people of this country, street lighting and well lit streets are a very practical and sensible safety measure and, therefore, it should be part and parcel of the Government's delivery programme to ensure that these basic needs are met.

Now, my intention here, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is to fulfil my role as a representative, but also to speak as a citizen to say it is the responsibility of an Executive to provide these services. It is my sincerest hope that the Minister sees the value of this Motion and moves swiftly to bring relief to the citizens of this country. This is a human issue. It is beyond the political issue that we in this country—anybody on any side in any bench—could be discussing consistent water

supply in 2021, that we could be discussing the fact that we have areas that are in complete darkness that I would have to get calls while we were discussing devices and online learning, that there are areas without electricity, without electric polls that we have been clamouring and asking for relief for these areas, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is my sincerest hope that the Minister will use his 10 minutes as best as possible to give timelines for delivery.

As I conclude, we are oftentimes reminded about who is in charge and that the Executive is in charge and they are a responsible Government, because the buck stops with you and, therefore, when you speak to the people of this country, because in answering my Motion, you will be speaking to all of the people of this country but, in specific need, the questions to the people of Tabaquite, I am asking that you do not come with excuses, but remember that it is time to get to work, and I thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I recognize the Minister of Public Utilities. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of Public Utilities (Hon. Marvin Gonzales): Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I wish to thank the Member for Tabaquite for presenting me with an opportunity to speak on some targeted programmes and solutions and interventions that I have started over a year to bring relief—water relief, electricity relief—to the people not only in Tabaquite, but the people all across Trinidad and Tobago. If my friend from Tabaquite was very much truthful, she would admit that, perhaps, what she is doing here today, if those things had been raised and dealt with over the last 10 to 15 years by her previous colleague, Member for Tabaquite, that these matters would have been dealt with and dealt with efficiently.

Oftentimes Members of the Opposition bring matters and raise matters as

though it is—and cast blame on the Government but, oftentimes, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they represent the constant failure of the Opposition to represent their constituency and oftentimes blame the Government for what ideally they should have been doing to represent their people. But I wish, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to sympathize with the citizens of Tabaquite and those areas who have been affected from time to time by poor water services, poor electricity services and these matters, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are happening all over Trinidad and Tobago.

Even in my constituency of Lopinot/Bon Air West, I have to deal with water interruptions, even in constituencies all across St. Joseph, in Tunapuna and even in Pointe-a-Pierre. Every single constituency and every single community in Trinidad and Tobago, we often have to grapple with disruptions in our system, both in water and electricity. And I always say, as Minister of Public Utilities, that the issue of water and the issue of electricity ought not to be politicized because they affect every single constituency and every single citizen of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me put some context. The Caroni Water Treatment Plant—and those are some of the surface and groundwater sources that feed the constituency of Tabaquite—the surface water source, the district is supplied with 52 per cent of Gasparillo, 52 per cent of the residents. The Freeport Water Treatment Plant groundwater source in Gran Couva serves 23.8 per cent of the citizens of Tabaquite, and the Navet Water Treatment Plant via Tabaquite TCO Alleyne Road and Piparo Booster is a surface water source. The districts supplied are Tabaquite and Brickfield, serving 21.9 per cent of the citizens of Tabaquite and in Guaracara Reservoir surface water source serving the area of Guaracara 2.3 per cent of the residents.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am advised that over the last month or so, there were several disruptions affecting the constituency of Tabaquite, and let me first itemize

them. Because of these disruptions, WASA has undertaken repairs to the San Pedro Booster Station over the period October the 11th to the 21st and the areas affected included the Rio Claro/Tabaquite Road up to LP 85 Jeffer's Crossing; repairs to a leaking eight inch main at Farnum Village during the first week of November and the areas affected included Farnum Village and environs; a ruptured twelve inch main at Taitt Madhoo Road in Freeport, which was subsequently repaired, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and supply restored on the 28th of October 2021. And among the areas that were negatively affected, unfortunately, were: Mayo Road, Indian Trail, Tortuga Road, Mayo Road in Point, Cocoyal Trace, Ramdial Trace, Cedar Hill Road and Chratal Road.

Steps being taken by the Water and Sewerage Authority to address some of these concerns, and these are ongoing: The installation of 513 metres of line along the Morne Roche Quarry Road in Williamsville. This has already been completed, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and the success of this project, the residents there already started experiencing an improvement in their water supply to the extent that there are a number of households which were outside of the water grid are now receiving water for the very first time; the rehabilitation and operationalization of wells in the Freeport Aquifer which are a feeder for the Freeport Water Treatment Plant.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when I became Minister of Public Utilities, I observed there are a number of wells in the Freeport Well Field that were responsible for providing water to the Freeport Water Treatment Plant, which is a significant portion of the Tabaquite constituency. During a short period of time, Mr. Deputy Speaker, three or four wells were brought back into production, producing over one million gallons of water or more to the Freeport Water Treatment Plant [*Desk thumping*] and because of that over 23,000 citizens who would be affected by a poor water supply are now experiencing an improvement in their water supply.

And we are not ending there, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because we have identified three more production wells in the Freeport Well Field, which we intent to bring into production over the next month or so which will add an additional one million gallons of water to the Freeport community and including the 23,000 citizens. And I believe, and the Water and Sewerage Authority is of the opinion, that once those production wells are brought into operation feeding into the Freeport Well Field, over 23,000 citizens of the Tabaquite constituency will see an improvement in their water supply. [*Desk thumping*]

What do we intend to do over the next couple months? We will drill further wells. We are going to refurbish the Gran Couva Booster. We are going to lay down some high leakage lines—replace some high leakage lines at Freeport Todds Road 18 to La Quesa Junction. We are going to replace some raw water mains, high leakage raw water mains at La Quesa Junction to bridge east of Mission Road and Freeport Todds Road. We are going to rehabilitate the Freeport Water Treatment Plant by the installation of new lift pump sets, actuated filter valves, sedimentation basin valves, new backwash storage tanks, rehabilitation of the plant processes and the instrumentation system at that plant and the refurbishment and the integration of a first keder system and some other works which we believe, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will improve the water supply to the people of Tabaquite. Mr. Deputy Speaker, how much more time do I have?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: You have three more minutes.

Hon. M. Gonzales: Three minutes. With respect to electricity, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Tabaquite 66 kilovolts substation is the main source of supply of electricity to the Tabaquite constituency, which is provided through three-12 kilovolt feeders. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission has advised me that over the last six months they have received 48

unplanned outages and the main causes are as a result of vegetation, animal contact, vehicular accidents and aged infrastructure in some regards.

Over the last month or so, there were some planned outages, which were geared towards undertaking routine maintenance at Corosal Road, Mayo Road insulator replacement, Mapipire Road, **Sancora** Road, Poonah Village, Nariva Road, Alleyne Road, Brothers Road, Guaracara, Tabaquite Road and Rio Claro. As a result of these interventions, Mr. Deputy Speaker, T&TEC has advised that there has been a marked reduction in interruption of electricity supply in the Tabaquite constituency.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, despite the financial challenges affecting both our utility companies—both WASA and T&TEC—in difficult financial times, remain committed to providing the people of Tabaquite, the constituency of Tabaquite and all constituencies across Trinidad and Tobago with a reliable water supply and with a reliable electricity supply. And in closing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wish to sincerely apologize to some of the citizens in Tabaquite who may have been affected by some of the disruptions in water and electricity. But on every single instance, both WASA and T&TEC, have been on the job stabilizing and improving the water supply, and as we do so for the constituency of Tabaquite, we will do so for every single constituency in difficult financial circumstances. And I wish to thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and to thank the utility companies for the work that they continue to do across Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, there are two other matters which, by agreement, have been deferred to the next sitting.

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 5.47 p.m.