

**THE
PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
OFFICIAL REPORT**

**IN THE FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTH PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF
TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO WHICH OPENED ON NOVEMBER 27, 1995**

SESSION 1995 - 1996

VOLUME 1

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, November 27, 1995

10.00 A.M.

The House having assembled, and it being the first meeting of the First Session of the Fifth Parliament of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, the Clerk of the House read the following Proclamation:

REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

No. 22 of 1995
[L.S.]

By His Excellency NOOR MOHAMED
HASSANALI, T.C., President and Commander-
in-Chief of the Republic of Trinidad and
Tobago

NOOR M. HASSANALI
President

A PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS it is provided by subsection (1) of section 67 of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago that each session of Parliament shall be held at such place within Trinidad and Tobago and shall commence at such time as the President may by Proclamation appoint:

Now, therefore, I, NOOR MOHAMED HASSANALI, President as aforesaid, do hereby appoint the Red House, Port of Spain, as the place at which the First Session of the Fifth Parliament of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago shall be held and 10.00 a.m. on Monday the 27th day of November, 1995, as the time at which the said Session shall commence.

Given under my hand and the Seal of the
President of the Republic of Trinidad
and Tobago, at the Office of the
President, St. Ann's, this 17th day of
November, 1995.

Election of Speaker

Monday, November 27, 1995

ELECTION OF SPEAKER

Clerk of the House: I now invite nominations for the office of Speaker of the House of Representatives.

Mr. Maharaj: Madam Clerk of the House of Representatives, I wish to propose Mr. Hector McClean to be elected Speaker of the House of Representatives.

Mr. Valley: Madam Clerk, it is normal for the Opposition to second the nomination of the Speaker of the House. We are unable to do so on this occasion for reasons already stated. We would have preferred that there was consensus on this matter.

Seconded by Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar.

There being no other nominations, the Clerk of the House declared Mr. Hector McClean duly elected Speaker of the House of Representatives.

OATH OF ALLEGIANCE

Mr. Hector McClean took and subscribed the Oath of Allegiance as required by law.

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the next item on the agenda is the question of the election of a Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Maharaj: Mr. Speaker, I beg to propose that Dr. Fuad Khan, the hon. Member for Barataria/San Juan, be elected as the Deputy Speaker of this honourable House.

Seconded by Mr. K. Valley.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, in accordance with Standing Order 4, paragraph (1), Dr. Fuad Khan, having been nominated and seconded to the office of Deputy Speaker, I will now ask whether there are any other nominations for this position.

There being no other nominations, the Speaker declared Dr. Fuad Khan duly elected Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives.

Oath of Allegiance

Monday, November 27, 1995

OATH OF ALLEGIANCE

Dr. Fuad Khan took and subscribed the Oath of Allegiance as required by law.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I would now invite the other Members of the House to take the Oath of Allegiance.

The following Members took and subscribed the Oath of Allegiance as required by law:

Mr. Ramesh Maharaj	Mr. Kenneth Valley
Mr. Basdeo Panday	Mr. Patrick Manning
Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar	Dr. Keith Rowley
Mr. A.N.R. Robinson	Mr. Gordon Draper
Mr. John Humphrey	Mr. Colm Imbert
Mr. Trevor Sudama	Dr. Vincent Lasse
Mr. Ralph Maraj	Mrs. Camille Robinson-Regis
Miss Pamela Nicholson	Mr. Jarrette Narine
Dr. Hamza Rafeeq	Mr. Edward Hart
Mr. Mervyn Assam	Mrs. Eulalie James
Mr. Ganga Singh	Dr. Rupert Griffith
Dr. Adesh Nanan	Mr. Hedwige Bereaux
Mr. Harry Partap	Mr. Martin Joseph
Dr. Reeza Mohammed	Mr. Barendra Sinanan
Mr. Dhanraj Singh	Mr. Roger Boynes
Mr. Manohar Ramsaran	Mr. Fitzgerald Hinds
Mr. Chandresh Sharma	Mr. Eric Williams
Mr. Razack Ali	

PRAYERS

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, His Excellency the President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago desires to address both Houses of Parliament.

Prayers

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10.42 a.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

10.50 a.m.: Members of the Senate arrived and took their places in the Chamber.

11.13 a.m.: *His Excellency the President, accompanied by the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives, arrived in the Chamber.*

[INVOCATIONS]

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

His Excellency the President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, Mr. Noor Mohamed Hassanali, addressed both Houses of Parliament as follows:

Mr. President of the Senate, Mr. Speaker, honourable Members of Parliament, ladies and gentlemen, greetings. May God's peace be with us all, now and always. I congratulate the honourable Members on their selection, election or appointment as the case may be, and I wish for everyone an enjoyable and successful term of office.

I thank the representatives of religious faiths for their prayers for the welfare of honourable Members and for the welfare of our Nation.

Hon. Members, on the occasion of the commencement of the First Session of the Fifth Parliament of our Republic, I wish to share with you some thoughts on the subject "Tolerance." The term "tolerance" is defined variously as the ability to be patient with the opinions and practices of others, forbearance, broadmindedness, freedom from prejudice and catholicity of spirit. Tolerance does not imply a lack of commitment to one's own beliefs. It does not imply condescension or patronising. It does, however, disapprove persecution or oppression of others. Wisely, our cosmopolitan population has accepted tolerance as crucial enough a virtue to be one of the three watchwords of our national motto: Discipline, Production and Tolerance.

Hon. Members, we need a spirit of tolerance prevailing in our society if we are successfully to "aspire together" or to "achieve together." We need such a spirit of tolerance if we are to achieve "unity" or "harmony in diversity." Difference of opinion is neither justification nor excuse for incivility, hostility or even discourtesy. Perhaps, we do well to contemplate the French idiom *toujours la*

politesse. In my way of thinking in English, I suggest politeness at all times and perhaps, I may add especially in civilized society.

Tolerance, like love, as a virtue, subserves the creed of the universal brotherhood of man. It enhances self-respect and due respect for fellow human beings. It embodies patience and is an ally of humility. It fosters the desire for, and the benefit of thought and care in the use of guarded language in debate. Its observance would preclude or reduce the incidence of hostility or arrogance. Tolerance is essential to peaceful co-existence and to the welfare and progress of human society however small or large at local, regional or international level. On the other hand, intolerance begets incivility, discourtesy and even hostility.

Hon. Members the importance of tolerance manifests itself at the earliest stage of our lives and our education in the home or family, the first training ground for every kind of morality. Its importance is evident in all institutions of learning, also in the work place, in the place of recreation, and of course, in the community at large. Indeed, it has been said that the highest result of education is tolerance.

However, hon. Members, time and again there is an incident which suggests intolerance as substantially contributing to one or more of the following: discrimination, extremism, violence (including domestic violence), and disrespect for human dignity. Many years ago Helen Keller was moved to comment as follows:

“No loss by flood or lightning, no destruction of cities and temples by the hostile forces of nature has deprived man of so many noble lives and impulses, as those which his intolerance has destroyed.”

Hon. Members, you are law makers, but you are also citizens with relatives or friends resident in the country and engaged in different areas of legitimate endeavour beneficial to the national community.

The national community is entitled to expect that hon. Members as leaders and exemplars, in Parliament and elsewhere, in your deliberations and actions, will give precedence to the national interest above sectoral and personal interest.

As hon. Members are aware, in its bid to create “a Better World” the United Nations General Assembly had declared 1995 “The International Year of Tolerance.”

President's Address

Monday, November 27, 1995

In its declaration the General Assembly has affirmed that the virtue of tolerance is needed today because of “worldwide trends of discrimination, extremism, violence and blunt disrespect for human dignity.” It has suggested institution of a culture of peace, since the only way for peace to happen is to “instil tolerance into individuals and social discourse.” It has therefore recommended that local and international activities for the year should be mainly centred on “education, mobilization of governments, non-governmental organizations, media, intellectuals and youth, and the building of public awareness.”

Hon. Members, our freedom, including that of our democratic institutions, as envisaged in our Constitution, is of course, freedom within the law, in an atmosphere of peace and goodwill. At all events, for our welfare as a people and as a nation, we need to earn the confidence of the peoples of other nations in the stability of our government as well as in the stability of our character as a people: our habits our attitudes and our perception of priorities.

Trinidad and Tobago (as a member state of the United Nations) must, to the extent that it can, faithfully support the United Nations General Assembly's bid to create “A Better World”.

Our efforts, the efforts of Trinidad and Tobago, in such support must not be confined to one day, or to one year. There must be a continuing process to secure the establishment of a culture of peace with a spirit of tolerance prevailing in our society. To this end, I appeal to hon. Members to strive, in obedience to intellect and conscience, at every opportunity, to make your best contributions, individually, jointly or otherwise, as circumstances require.

Mr. President of the Senate, Mr. Speaker, hon. Members, I wish you God's guidance and protection in an enjoyable and successful First Session of the Fifth Parliament of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

May God bless us all.

May God bless our Nation.

I thank you.

11.47 a.m.: *His Excellency The President, accompanied by the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives, left the Chamber.*

11.57 a.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Paper Laid

Monday, November 27, 1995

PAPER LAID

Address by His Excellency the President on the occasion of the opening of the First Session of the Fifth Parliament of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. [*The Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs (Hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar)*]

To be printed as a House Paper

ADJOURNMENT

The Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs (Hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the House do now adjourn to Friday, December 1, 1995 at 1.30 p.m.

Mr. R. L. Maharaj: Mr. Speaker, before you put the question, may I, with your leave, be given the opportunity on this side of the House to offer a congratulatory message to yourself and to the Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Indeed!

Congratulations

Mr. Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj (Couva South): Mr. Speaker, this side of the House expresses its warmest congratulations to you on your election to office in this historic Fifth Parliament which has a government of national unity. We have no doubt that with your experience, knowledge and commitment to duty you will provide dignity and objectivity to this honourable House and that you will perform your duties without favour and fear.

On this side of the House we are committed to co-operating with you in the discharge of your duties. There is a perception that our Parliament is less than what is desired. We are committed to so conducting ourselves in the hope of eradicating this perception.

We also extend our congratulations to the hon. Deputy Speaker and we assure him that we shall give him the same kind of commitment.

Thank you.

Mr. Patrick Manning (San Fernando East): Mr. Speaker, I too would like to join with Members on the Government side in extending sincere congratulations to you. As you are aware, an unusual situation transpired this morning where there was not agreement between the Government and the Opposition in respect of the selection of a Speaker.

Congratulations
[MR. MANNING]

Monday, November 27, 1995

I want straightaway to assure you that there is nothing personal in the failure of both sides to come to an agreement. As you know, there are certain principles that we believe are essential to the proper functioning of the system of government to which we subscribe. In those circumstances, we experienced some difficulty in agreeing.

Nonetheless Mr. Speaker, I have known you for a long time. I am sure you will remember. [*Laughter*] I have very fond memories of your parting words to me on April 1, 1978, when you took your leave of the government of the day. Incidentally, it was the day on which I was elevated to ministerial office. I want to assure you that the advice you proffered on that occasion has served me in very good stead in my entire political career. You are someone for whom we have high regard and so we feel that with you in the Chair, we can look forward to the equity in the conduct of the parliamentary affairs to which we all subscribe and consider essential for the proper functioning of this Parliament.

I also assure you that we propose to be the best alternative government that this country has ever seen. That is our intention. Indeed, to be the best alternative government in the world, we aspire to be world class. I want to further assure you that we propose to assist you in preserving the integrity of this Parliament. It is something that is very dear to us and in that regard you can expect no difficulties from us.

I also extend sincere congratulations to the Deputy Speaker who has been elected this morning and I assure you both that it looks as though we are going to have a very interesting Parliament.

Thank you.

Vote Of Thanks

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I for my part wish to thank you on both sides of the House for your kind and generous expressions. I shall continue to pray that I shall be so guided by the Almighty that my actions in this honourable House would always be objective and fair and in keeping with the solemn oath which I have taken.

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 12.07 p.m.