

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES*Friday, June 18, 2004*

The House met at 1.30 p.m.

[MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *in the Chair*]**PRAYERS****LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, I have received communication from the hon. Member for St. Augustine (Mr. W. Dookeran), requesting leave of absence from the sittings of the House for the periods June 20—24, 2004 and July 06—12, 2004. The leave which the hon. Member seeks is granted. I have also received communication from the hon. Member for Siparia (Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar), requesting leave of absence from today's sitting. The leave which the hon. Member seeks is also granted.

PAPERS LAID

1. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the financial statements of the Chaguaramas Development Authority for the year ended December 31, 1997. [*The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley)*]
2. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the financial statements of the Chaguanas Borough Corporation for the period January 01, 1998 to September 30, 1998. [*Hon. K. Valley*]
Papers 1 and 2 to be referred to the Public Accounts Committee.
3. Convention 185—Convention Revising the Seafarers' Identity Documents Convention, 1958. [*Hon. K. Valley*]

DEFINITE URGENT MATTER**(LEAVE)****Government's Pressure to Support Legislation**

Mr. Chandresh Sharma (Fyzabad): Mr. Deputy Speaker, before I deal with this matter, on behalf of the Members on this side, we wish to express our deepest sympathy on the passing of your mother, Mrs. Elizabeth Bannister. We pray that God's blessings will be with her at all times.

Definite Urgent Matter
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In accordance with Standing Order 12 of this House, I obtained your permission to move the adjournment of this House for the purpose of discussing the following matter, as a definite matter of urgent, public importance, which is, the instructions issued by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago to bring pressure upon Members of Parliament by way of hundreds of public advertisements in both the print and electronic media and through other mediums.

This matter is definite because it refers to the instructions issued by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, through paid advertisements; appearing in both the print and electronic media and other mediums, instructing the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago to demand that Members of Parliament support legislation in the Parliament, when it comes to the vote.

This matter is urgent because the instructions and actions of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, instructing citizens to demand that Members of Parliament support legislation in the Parliament when it comes to the vote, is a denial of the right of a Member of Parliament to perform his or her duties without fear or favour and is now posing threats to the life and limb of Members of Parliament.

This matter is of public importance because the actions of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and/or its agents and/or its servants demanding that Members of Parliament support legislation in the Parliament, when it comes to the vote is a breach of the Standing Orders and a further breach of the Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago. It is now posing threats to the safety and security of Members of Parliament, staff and personnel working at the offices of Members of Parliament and citizens seeking and obtaining services from same offices.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member, I wish to thank you and the Member for Chaguanas for attending my mother's funeral. However, notwithstanding, this matter does not qualify.

**ALTERNATIVE VEHICULAR ACCESS ROUTES
(DEVELOPMENT OF)**

The Minister of Works and Transport (Hon. Franklin Khan): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am authorized by the Cabinet to make the following statement.

As we are all aware, throughout Trinidad and Tobago, the steady expansion of towns, fuelled by a wildfire of business activity and compounded by the steep rise in vehicle ownership, has produced the familiar scenario: the nightmarish wait to jostle for limited road space between taxis and maxi-taxis, trucks and vans; the

long queues of frustrated motorists and passengers; and the incredible loss of man-hours, just to get where one is going.

It is no secret that our ability to provide much needed road infrastructure has been overtaken by the real-world demands of a growing nation and this has been the case for a very long time. The Ministry of Works and Transport is the State entity charged with the responsibility to deal with this problem and in this regard, we are proceeding with a clear and structured plan.

I take this opportunity to inform this honourable House that a contract was awarded to the consulting firm, Parsons Brinkerhoff Quade and Douglas, in collaboration with Trintoplan Consultants and Associates in the sum of \$25 million, to undertake a comprehensive National Transportation Study. This study which will commence in July 2004, which is long overdue because the last such study was done in the mid-1960s and circumstances have changed dramatically since that time. This study will take into consideration social and economic issues, agricultural, residential, industrial and commercial land use, as well as the environmental prerequisites. Upon completion, it will be the road map of the transportation sector on our way to developed country status.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, while we await the outcome of the study, there is need to take appropriate, immediate term measures to deal with the traffic congestion and transportation problems, which now confront us. I wish to emphasize that the immediate term measures will in no way compromise the outcome of the National Transportation Study but, rather, will complement the recommendations.

Towards this end, I am pleased to announce to this honourable House today, that in December 2003, Cabinet approved the preparation of a programme of road upgrade and new road construction, to provide alternative vehicular access routes, linking key population centres throughout Trinidad and Tobago, as well as the establishment of a steering committee.

This committee comprises technical officers from the Ministries of Works and Transport, Local Government, Energy and Energy Industries, Housing, Planning and Development, representatives of Petrotrin and the Estate Management Development Company Limited and was established in February 2004, to develop and execute this programme. The committee deliberated over the past three months and produced a report with the following recommendations for Phase I of the programme. These recommendations are as follows:

In the northern region of Trinidad and Tobago, seven projects were identified as follows:

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1. Rebuilding the Farm Road Bridge, over the St. Joseph River and repairing Farm Road and Harris Street to link the Southern Main Road in Curepe to the Eastern Main Road in Champs Fleurs.
2. Directly linking Aranguéz Road to Bridge Road, by constructing a bridge across the San Juan River, thus potentially eliminating the difficult at-grade crossings of the Priority Bus Route at the Croisée and Aranguéz Road.
3. Upgrading the link between Aranguéz Road and the Uriah Butler Highway, through Aranguéz Estate Traces in Mount Lambert.
4. Upgrading Laventille Road from Saddle Road, Lower Santa Cruz to Lady Young Road, Mon Repos and Caledonia in Morvant.
5. Constructing a link between the Saddle Road in Santa Cruz and Lady Chancellor Road, via the hills of St. Ann's.
6. Upgrading the Hololo Mountain Road between Santa Cruz and Cascade.
7. Upgrading the link between Tucker Valley, Chaguaramas and Convigne Road in Diego Martin.

In the central region, two projects were identified:

1. Upgrading existing estate roads to improve the link between Rivulet Road and the Couva town centre, to the new NHA Roystonia Development and Point Lisas.
2. Repair of the existing Bagasse Plant Road, to improve the link between Rivulet Road and the Phoenix Park Road Junction.

In the southern region we have identified five projects:

1. Upgrading from the S.S. Siparia Erin Road, Santa Flora to the Point Fortin Central Roundabout, Southern Main Road, through the Forest Reserve Oilfields, passing through central Los Bajos.
2. Upgrading from Fyzabad to the Point Fortin Central Roundabout, Southern Main Road, through Forest Reserve.

Mr. Sharma: Thank you.

Hon. F. Khan: It continues:

3. Upgrading the Union Road Crossing in Gasparillo, to a full diamond interchange by adding ramps to the Solomon Hochoy Highway on all

four quadrants, together with the widening of the existing on and off ramps at the Bon Aventure Road interchange.

4. Upgrading from Craignish to Ste. Madeline, via the MI Tasker Road, through the bypass road and improving access to the two schools in Corinth.
5. Constructing a link between Marabella and King's Wharf, San Fernando, then further to Lady Hailes Avenue, along the abandoned railway line.

The preliminary estimates for phase I of the programme are in the vicinity of \$700 million. It should be noted that this cost includes both consultancy and construction.

Further, Mr. Speaker, I am happy to report that Cabinet has approved the Phase I programme of road upgrade and new road construction to provide alternative vehicular access routes linking key population centres. Additionally, approval was also granted to commence works immediately, in fiscal 2003/2004 on the following four projects:

1. Rebuilding the Farm Road Bridge over the St. Joseph River and repairing Farm Road and Harris Street to link the Southern Main Road in Curepe to the Eastern Main Road in Champs Fleurs.
2. In the central region: upgrading the existing estate roads to improve the link between Rivulet Road and the Couva town centre.
3. Repairs of the existing Bagasse Plant Road to improve the link between Rivulet Road and the Phoenix Park Junction.
4. In the South: upgrading from Craignish to Ste. Madeline, via the MI Tasker Road, through the bypass road and improving the access ultimately, to the two schools in Corinth.

In addition to identifying the phase I projects for consideration by Cabinet, the committee has to continue the search for the less conspicuous solutions, which exist throughout the country.

As we proceed with this programme of bringing alternate road links to the public, I wish to thank the technical officers of the steering committee for their dedication and diligence.

I would also take this opportunity to advise this honourable House of the receipt by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago of a pre-feasibility study from

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the Indian consulting firm RITES, on the establishment of a mass transit system in Trinidad. The consultant recommended a light rail system, elevated in many parts, from Arima to Diego Martin and from Port of Spain to San Fernando. This study will be referred to the consultants engaged in developing the National Transportation Plan for further detailed study and if found feasible, will provide an integral part of Government's policy for early implementation. This aspect of the plan should become available by the second quarter of 2005.

Finally, and most importantly, today I wish to reiterate my Government's commitment to reducing the stress and frustration experienced on a daily basis on the roadways by the national community.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I thank you.

Mr. Ramsaran: Mr. Deputy Speaker, would the Minister table this for debate?

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Contracts Awarded (Details of)

The following question was asked by Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar (Siparia):

- 18.** (a) Would the hon. Minister of Education state:
- (i) The names, job designations and remuneration packages of each person or company hired on contract;
 - (ii) The names and job description of each person or company awarded contracts for the supply of goods and services and the cost of each such contract awarded;
- by the Ministry of Education since January 01, 2002 with the exception of the school feeding programme?
- (b) In the case of companies, the names of the directors of each company;
 - (c) Whether the jobs/tenders were advertised and if they were, where and when were the advertisements placed;
 - (d) In the case of tenders, the bid made by each tenderer;
 - (e) What was the procedure and criteria used to hire each person and company and/or used to award contracts for the supply of goods and services?

Written answer lodged in Parliament Library.

**Motor Vehicle Drivers Charged
(Details of)**

The following question was asked by Mr. Subhas Panday (Princes Town):

- 103.** (a) How many motor vehicle drivers have been charged with the offence of exceeding the speed limits in Trinidad and Tobago between January 01, 2002 to the present time?
- (b) Could the Minister state the date, time and place where these drivers have been charged?
- (c) What steps are being embarked upon to increase the frequency in the execution of more speed traps?

Vide end of sitting for written answer.

FOOD AND DRUGS (AMDT.) BILL

Order for second reading read.

The Minister of Health (Hon. John Rahael): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move,

That a Bill to amend the Food and Drugs Act, Chap. 30:01, be now read a second time.

In moving the second reading of this Bill, I seek the leave of the House to discuss, along with this Bill, the Pesticides and Toxic Chemical (Amdt.) Bill, since they are inter-related.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is this the wish of the House?

Mr. Singh: Mr. Deputy, based on discussions with the Leader of Government Business, we have agreed. Of course, we want to be convinced of the inter-relationship, we do not see it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Are you agreeing?

Assent indicated.

Question proposed.

Hon. J. Rahael: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Pesticides and Toxic Chemicals (Amdt.) Bill seeks to amend the Pesticides and Toxic Chemicals Act, to strengthen the regulatory framework, as it relates to pesticides and toxic chemicals.

The Food and Drugs (Amdt.) Bill seeks to amend Part II of the Third Schedule of the Food and Drugs Act, to provide greater controls in the distribution of certain chemical substances used in the manufacture of illicit drugs.

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The legislative framework regarding chemical control, as currently exists, could be described as varied and scattered. Provisions for the control and monitoring of such chemicals are found in three pieces of legislation, namely: the Food and Drugs Act, the Pesticides and Toxic Chemicals Act and the Dangerous Drugs Act.

The Pesticides and Toxic Chemicals Act regulates the importation, storage, manufacture, sale, use and transportation of pesticides and toxic chemicals.

The Food and Drugs Act deals with the preparation, manufacture, import/export, packaging, labelling, selling and inspection of food, drugs, cosmetics and medical devices.

The Dangerous Drugs Act, as evidenced by its amendment in 1994, is responsible for the establishment of provisions related to precursor chemicals.

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago recognized the importance of precursor chemicals to the production of illicit drugs and psychotropic substances, acknowledging that illicit drug production would be greatly handicapped without precursor chemicals. This Government is committed to controlling the import/export, use and diversion of these chemicals, in an effort to suppress the illicit trade in precursor chemicals and ultimately illicit drug trafficking.

The commitment of the Government is grounded on the country's involvement in the international coalition against the abuse and trafficking of illicit narcotics and its agreement to the 1988 UN Vienna Convention. The Convention is the template document governing international co-operation between countries that are parties to it, in the area of illicit drug trafficking and its related crimes, such as money laundering. It also provides measures that countries should implement, in order to counter these crimes. Amongst these measures is the suggested control of the manufacture, import/export of precursor chemicals.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, a precursor chemical means any substance which can be used in any of the chemical processes involved in the production, manufacture or preparation of narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances, or substances having a similar effect; and incorporates its structure into the final product, making it essential for those processes.

The fact that precursor chemicals are vital to the manufacture of illicit drugs has to be substantial and these chemicals are being diverted for illegal use. A survey done by the Chemical Action Task Force determined that the important links in the chemical distribution chain were being used to give effect to the diversion process. The Task Force identified the following methods as the most common diversion methods: theft, smuggling; misusing or abusing opportunities

afforded by international trade and changing ownership after shipment are among the other areas.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the absence of a comprehensive legislative framework to execute the requirements of the Convention, the Government developed a quasi-legislative framework through which its obligations under the Convention would be discharged. The following agencies currently execute the relevant functions: the Drug Inspectorate and the Chemistry Food and Drugs Division of the Ministry of Health; and the Strategic Services Agency, under the preview of the Ministry of National Security and the Customs and Excise Division. The Drug Inspectorate was named as the competent national authority, under the 1988 Vienna Convention and is responsible for the issue of import and export certificates. It is also expected to monitor the use of Table I and Table II substances listed in the Convention.

In order to perform its duties, the Drug Inspectorate used section 6 of the Dangerous Drugs Act as a guide to implement the Convention's requirements as they pertained to the control of precursor chemicals. Monitoring was introduced on a phased basis. To this end, the Inspectorate developed a protocol for the import/export sale and use of precursors and a registry in which approximately 172 chemical precursor operators are registered.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in addition to the administrative measures that have been undertaken by the Drug Inspectorate, the Strategic Services Agency has responsibilities that facilitate the Inspectorate's efforts. One of the main functions of the Agency is to act as an office for centralizing information that could facilitate the detection and prevention of illicit traffic in narcotic drugs.

In addition, the Agency maintains a database of manufacturers and suppliers of chemical precursors and other substances used in the illegal production of drugs in Trinidad and Tobago and internationally. Although the agency is new, it has worked very hard to fulfil the mandate to prepare a drug interdiction strategy and stimulate action and, more importantly, to monitor the implementation of the strategy. This Agency is also mandated to establish links with overseas services and to provide a national focal point for the exchange of information and intelligence. It is evident that the control of precursor chemicals requires an effective, legal framework supported by stringent, administrative and enforceable measures.

Trinidad and Tobago, with the help of international and regional organizations, has in fact made concerted strides in the establishment of an effective precursor chemical control framework. Today, we are taking yet another important step as these Bills seek to strengthen the present legal framework.

Clause 3 of the Pesticides and Toxic Chemicals (Amdt.) Bill seeks to amend the long title of the Act to extend the scope of the Act to the export of toxic chemicals. The present Act addresses only the import of toxic chemicals.

Clause 4 provides an expanded definition of the term “toxic chemical”. This Bill seeks to define “toxic chemical” as any chemical other than a pesticide, which through its chemical action on life processes can cause death, temporary or permanent harm to humans or animals, and includes all such chemicals irrespective of their origin or method of production. An exporter is defined as any person who whether as owner, consignor, agent or broker is in the possession of the article or in any way entitled to the custody of it.

Clause 5 seeks to enlarge the composition of the Pesticides and Toxic Chemicals Control Board by three members and to increase the number of members who would form a quorum.

Clause 6 would amend section 4A of the Act, to prohibit the export of a controlled product without any export licence.

Clause 7 would amend section 5 of the Act, to give the Registrar of the Pesticides and Toxic Chemicals Control Board the power to supervise Inspectors and give such inspectors instructions and directions in respect of their duties.

Clause 8 would amend section 6 of the Act, to allow persons who are registered with the Veterinary Registration Board, to be designated medical examiners. Currently only medical practitioners can be designated “medical examiners”.

Clause 9 would amend section 12 of the Act, to enable the Minister to make regulations in respect of the export of controlled products and would increase the fines for contravention of the Regulations.

Clause 10 would amend section 13 of the Act, to increase the fines for various other offences created by the Act.

It is material to note that we have already drafted and approved a package of Toxic Chemicals Regulations, which address the import/export, use, manufacture, sale, storage, transport, handling and distribution of various classes of toxic chemicals. It is expected that these Regulations will be published three months after the assent of these Bills. Within the next few months, the Ministry of Health intends to hold a number of workshops to educate stakeholders on the implications of these Regulations.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, four classes of toxic chemicals will be regulated: highly toxic chemicals, toxic industrial chemicals, controlled chemicals and toxic

chemicals and precursors used in the manufacture of chemical weapons. These categories have been developed, based on considerations of toxicity usage and whether they can be diverted for illicit purposes or not.

The Food and Drugs Act is being amended by including, under Part II of the Third Schedule, a number of precursors which are classified as drugs but are certainly controlled under this Act.

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago, in its effort to bring all these precursor chemicals under control, is pleased to put forward these amendments.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move.

Dr. Hamza Rafeeq (*Caroni Central*): I rise to make a contribution in this debate on the Food and Drugs (Amdt.) Bill and the Pesticides and Toxic Chemicals (Amdt.) Bill. Before I make my contribution, I want to express on behalf of this side our total disgust and disappointment at the behaviour of the Government on the last occasion we were here, when my colleague was denied an extension of his speaking time. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: [*Interruption*] Hon. Members for Couva South and Diego Martin West, please. I want to make a ruling on the statement made by the Member for Caroni Central. That matter was dealt with on the last debate and it was ruled upon. Please begin your contribution on this matter.

Dr. H. Rafeeq: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will abide by your ruling. This government has a history of abuse of power. Even in the light of that, the irony of it is that at this point in time, they are spending millions of dollars. The Government is on its knees begging the Opposition to support the Police Reform Bills. The millions of dollars that the Government is spending are a waste of time. They are wasting taxpayers' money. The Government can take the same \$5 million or \$6 million that is being spent and give it to the police service to buy vehicles. That will serve crime in a much better way.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I suspect you would be going to the Bill now.

Dr. H. Rafeeq: I am just concluding my introduction and I would be going to the Bill. If the Government persists in spending this amount of money on that campaign, then we on this side of the House demand similar resources. [*Desk thumping*]

The first Bill before us, the Food and Drugs (Amdt.) Bill, is a one-clause Bill. This is similar in length to the Bill that the Minister brought here some time ago, the Regional Health Authorities (Amdt.) Bill. On that occasion, when we spoke on

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that Bill, we told him that the Bill was unconstitutional and that it should be withdrawn. That Bill has now gone to the other place. It has been languishing there for the last three months. If the Minister has now seen the light of day and he has now taken our advice and is going to withdraw that Bill, I want to congratulate him. [*Desk thumping*] While congratulating him, I want him to know that he must be very careful of people who are trying to set him up; not people on this side, but people in his own Cabinet.

In dealing with this Bill, I think we are wasting time with this particular piece of legislation. I will tell you why. I do not know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but maybe one day, between yourself and the Speaker, you should tell us how much it costs the Parliament to convene on any particular day, taking into consideration that there are 36 Members of Parliament, the Speaker and the supporting staff. I think we have convened Parliament today merely to waste time. It is not necessary to bring a Bill of this nature to Parliament, because the Third Schedule, which the Minister is trying to amend, can be amended by a legal notice, so there is no need for a Bill of this nature. We did not have to come to Parliament. I would read the relevant sections of the Act. Section 25(1) of the Food and Drugs Act, Chap 30:01, states:

“The Minister may make Regulations for carrying the purposes and provisions of this Act into effect,...”

It goes on to say:

- “(k) providing for the making of special Schedules of drugs and for the listing or describing of drugs therein and for the conditions under which the drugs shall be sold...
- (l) adding anything to any of the Schedules, in the interest of, or for the prevention of injury to, the health of the consumer or purchaser, or deleting anything therefrom;”

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is what the Act states.

The Regulations state that:

“7. The Minister may, on the advice of the Drug Advisory Committee, add any new drug to the Third Schedule.

9. The addition of a drug to the Third Schedule may be published by Notice in the *Gazette*, and the addition shall be effective from the date of publication of the Notice.”

There was no need to bring this to Parliament. We understand why. The Government does not have a parliamentary agenda and they are just looking for bits and pieces to come to Parliament.

The second point on this particular Bill is that there is nothing in this piece of legislation that refers to dosage. I will tell you why it is important. I would select one of the drugs, psuedoephedrine. Psuedoephedrine is one of the major ingredients in most cold and cough mixtures that are sold over the counter. Sudafed, Comtrex, Tylenol Panadol Multi-symptom—the major ingredient in all of these is psuedoephedrine. We are now putting psuedoephedrine under the Third Schedule. I would tell you the implications of that in a minute. It now means—there is nothing in the law that says otherwise—if you want to buy any one of these cough or cold mixtures: Comtrex, Tylenol Cold or Sudafed, you must get a prescription to do that. The Second Schedule states:

“1. No person shall sell a Third Schedule drug unless he has received a prescription therefor; and the prescription shall show—

- (a) the name and address of the person for whom the drug may be dispensed;
- (b) the name and quantity of the drug specified therein;
- (c) the directions for use given therewith;
- (d) the date of the prescription; and
- (e) the signature of the practitioner, who issued the prescription,”

It goes on to say:

“2. A record of every prescription for a Third Schedule drug shall be retained by the dispenser thereof for a period of at least two years, and shall show—

- (a) the name and address of the person named in the prescription;
- (b) the name and quantity of the drug specified therein;
- (c) the name of the practitioner who issued the prescription;
- (d) the date and number of the prescription;
- (e) the directions for use given therewith.

3. No person shall refill a prescription for a Third Schedule drug unless the practitioner so directs on the prescription, and specifies the number of times that the same may be refilled.”

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What this means is if someone has a little sneezing, cold or sore throat and has to get any one of these medications, one must first go to the doctor, pay the fee of \$60 or \$80, as the case may be, and then go to the pharmacy to buy two Comtrex. What this effectively means is that it would create a lot of hardship for ordinary people. People would have to go to their private doctors before they can buy medication for colds. If they cannot afford to go to their private doctors, they will have to flock the health centres in order to get a prescription to buy ordinary medication.

In addition to that, pharmacists and the distributors, as I have read out to you, will have to keep records of these. This will put additional work on them, which would eventually result in an increase in the price of these ordinary medications. The net effect of all of this would be hardship for the common man. There would be a lot of difficulties to obtain medications that could now be purchased over the counter. This is law we are passing. No drug inspector, nor the Food and Drugs Department, can go against the law. There is nothing about dosage. It would have been easy if the law had stated that a prescription would be required beyond a certain dosage. This document does not state such.

I have in my possession a list which states that Tylenol Cold contains 30 milligrams of psuedoephedrine, Panadol Multi-symptom contains 30 milligrams of psuedoephedrine, Comtrex contains 30 milligrams of psuedoephedrine and Sudafed contains a little more. I do not have that figure. If the Government wanted to bring this into effect, it could have said: "over a certain dosage". That would have made it possible for these medications to be sold over the counter. Mr. Deputy Speaker, if this is passed as legislation and any of these medications are sold without prescription, the pharmacists would be guilty of an offence.

2.15 p.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, while I am talking about the increase in prices, I came across a document yesterday where concerned citizens are saying that the status of the Port of Spain Port is creating serious hardships at this time because ships are planning to bypass the Port of Spain Port, and that is because of the privatization process of the port. I know that this matter does not directly concern this debate, but as I am talking about the increase in prices, I just wanted to mention this matter because they have given a whole fact sheet. We are talking about 50 to 100 per cent increase in freight prices; higher freight; less frequent service and so forth. A lot of hardships would be created and it would definitely impact on prices for the consumers on most of the imported goods in Trinidad and Tobago.

I want to move on. What we are doing here today, as the Minister rightly said, is that we are trying to control the distribution of these precursor drugs. At this point in time, I do not know how much abuse there is as far as these precursor drugs are concerned. I do not think that the Minister knows. The thing is that we are trying to prevent a situation before it occurs. The irony of this is that while we are trying to deal with precursor drugs, at this point in time, this Government stands accused of exporting cocaine in the diplomatic pouch. [*Desk thumping*] That is not a precursor drug; that is the real thing. [*Interruption*]

The diplomatic pouch is a diplomatic bag that is housed in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The contents of this pouch are put in by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs itself; it is transported by an official vehicle to the airport; it is taken from the airport and transported to its destination; from there it is collected by an official from the embassy and then taken by an official, in an official car, to its destination to the embassy where it is opened. In diplomatic circles, the diplomatic pouch is almost considered to be secret. In this country, we have cocaine in diplomatic pouch. A Minister has claimed responsibility for it and he still sits in the Cabinet of this country.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are talking about achieving developed country status and all of that, and in any self-respecting country, a Minister who stands up and claims responsibility for cocaine in a diplomatic pouch should have resigned immediately. [*Interruption*] I do not know what connection the Member has with the diplomatic pouch. [*Laughter*] That is the contempt with which this Government treats the citizens of this country. We have a Minister who has claimed responsibility, and that Minister still sits in the Cabinet.

This Bill that we are debating today—I am talking about the amendment to the Food and Drugs Act—is creating another offence, and that is people who do not subscribe to the conditions of this Bill, of course, they would be committing an offence. How is this going to be monitored? At this point in time, the Food and Drugs Department is woefully understaffed; it is under-equipped; and there is poor motivation in that Department. They have been crying out for resources for a long time.

Last week, when we dealt with the Variation of Appropriation Bill in this House, there was an allocation for the Food and Drugs Department, which was removed. That allocation was removed because the Ministry of Health could not spend that money. So, while there was an allocation in the 2003/2004 budget for the Food and Drugs Department that allocation has been removed because the Ministry could not spend that amount of money. While we are adding more

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responsibilities to the Food and Drugs Department, they are not getting the necessary resources to deal with their responsibilities.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, a couple of weeks ago, you would have seen in the newspaper that there is a threat of counterfeit drugs in Trinidad and Tobago. That is not only a threat; that is a reality in this country. First of all, the effects of counterfeit drugs could be made with very cheap and dangerous substances as precursors, and this could have very harmful effect on persons who take these drugs. These counterfeit drugs could also have very serious side effects.

If patients are taking these counterfeit drugs for the control of one of their chronic illnesses like high blood pressure or diabetes and so forth, they would not get the effect of the drugs, and it would mean that their condition would not be controlled, and when their conditions are not controlled, of course, they could get complications associated with these conditions. It is a very serious problem when counterfeit drugs are used. Not only that, sometimes when counterfeit drugs are used, and in your follow-up visit to your doctor, you tell him that a particular dose does not work, then he could increase your dosage. If the doctor increases your dosage and you get the correct dosage at that time, then you could end up on the other side where you would have an over dosage of the drug, and you could end up with very serious side effects.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the point I am making is that if you do not have proper systems to monitor food and drugs in this country, and if you do not give the proper resources to the Food and Drugs Department, then they would not be able to perform their functions satisfactorily. It does not matter how many laws are passed; it would not make any difference.

You would have also seen in the media, regular claims by persons who sell these drugs saying that these drugs could do anything. For example, they could cure cancer, AIDS, impotence and other kinds of illnesses. Most of these claims are false and these advertisements continue to appear in the newspaper and the public is misled. There are laws against false advertising, but where is the implementation and monitoring? All I am asking is: Who is protecting the public interest in cases like these? We are passing these laws, but who is protecting the interest of the public in these cases?

The Minister has brought this Bill to the House today because, as I said, the Government has no legislative agenda, and there is nothing else to bring to the House, and these Bills have found themselves here. I want to point out to the Minister—I hope someone is taking notes for him—that there are several pieces

of legislation that are lying in the Ministry of Health that need to come to Parliament. I have been talking about these pieces of legislation for a long time.

The first piece of legislation is the Human Tissue Transplant Bill. That piece of legislation has the potential to save lives. I have said this on many occasions. After years of consultation, we brought that piece of legislation when we were in government. We sent that Bill to a joint select committee, and finally that piece of legislation was passed. That Bill cannot be implemented until these regulations are put into force. When we demitted office in 2001, the regulations were almost completed. It is two and a half years now, going on three years, and we do not have the regulations for the Human Tissue Transplant Bill. And, as I said, that piece of legislation has the potential to save lives. There are thousands of persons in this country who are suffering from kidney failure who could benefit from that legislation. There are many young persons who are being killed, and their organs could be used to transplant into people who are ill.

For sometime now, people have been going to Pakistan to get kidney transplants. Recently, I heard the Minister say that he wants to develop a relationship with Cuba where he would send patients there for kidney transplants. Why does the Minister have to do all this when he could simply bring the regulations to Parliament; create the infrastructure; begin the programme; and let our people's lives here be saved? [*Desk thumping*] It is extremely expensive to go to Pakistan. I am sure that even if we develop a relationship with Cuba, it is going to be very expensive to send our patients there for kidney transplants. We should develop the infrastructure; bring the regulations to Parliament; and let us deal with it so that lives in this country could be saved.

The second piece of legislation that needs to be brought to Parliament is the Quality Health Services Bill. During our term in office, we did a lot of work on this Bill. This is the piece of legislation that creates standards in the health sector for the practice of medicine, both in the public and private sector. When the Member for Diego Martin East was the Minister of Health, he said that he would bring this piece of legislation within one year. Two and a half years have passed and they have not yet brought it to the Parliament. We had drafted the legislation when we left office. If there are problems with the draft legislation, then they should deal with the problems, and have consultations and so forth. That is a very important piece of legislation to regulate standards in the health sector.

Recently, the Prime Minister announced that there were questionable deaths in the health sector, and he has appointed an entire commission of enquiry to deal with that matter. If we had the Quality Health Services Act, standards would have

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been there to regulate these institutions and there would have been no need for the commission of enquiry. That is an important piece of legislation that needs to be brought to Parliament as early as possible.

The third piece of legislation—again, we had put out a White Paper on this matter—is related to smoking. Most of the countries in the world have already gone far ahead of us, as far as legislation with respect to smoking is concerned. We are way behind most countries in this regard. I am not too sure if the convention by the World Health Organization has been ratified. We need to put legislation in place to give effect to the provisions in the convention. We had already developed a White Paper on this matter and we wanted to legislate the advertising of tobacco and tobacco products—there should be no advertising; there should be messages on the cigarette packs with respect to the dangers of smoking and so forth. We had about five or six things in that White Paper and so far nothing has been done with that legislation.

Mr. Ramnath: Where is the Minister?

Dr. H. Rafeeq: The Minister is not interested. Lives continue to be lost through diseases and complications related to smoking. We have seen the Cancer Society taking the initiative in this matter. They are putting out all sorts of advertisements encouraging people not to smoke. We are saying that legislation is important. We know that we would not be able to curb smoking entirely, but what we do know is that if that comes into being, we would be able to save many lives, especially the lives of our young people.

The fourth piece of legislation that needs to come to Parliament from the Ministry of Health—I am glad the Minister is back—is legislation regulating the ambulance service. As you know, when we were in government, we established the Emergency Health Service, and that service was not working the way we wanted it to work, but the fact is that there is a service, and this service needs to be properly regulated so that the population could get the kind of service that they want and the service that they have become accustomed to. There is need for proper legislation for this.

I want to say to the Minister that one of the biggest mistakes that could be made with this ambulance service is to bring it within the ambit of the Ministry of Health or the ambit of the Regional Health Authority. That should never be done. It should be left in the hands of the private sector, or another agency should be created to give it the authority over the service, but do not bring it within the ambit of the Ministry of Health or the Regional Health Authority. If you do that, it would surely ensure the collapse of the ambulance service.

The final piece of legislation is the Funeral Homes Bill. This is a piece of legislation that regulates funeral homes. At this point in time, there is no legislation that creates standards for them. That Bill has already been prepared and all that is needed is for it to go to the Parliament to be debated.

I heard the Minister say—and he was not here when I was speaking—that the regulations for the Pesticides and Toxic Chemicals Bill are already in place. I want him to work expeditiously on the regulations for the Tissue Transplant Bill, and bring them to Parliament as early as possible so that we could continue to save lives.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have pointed out some of the deficiencies in the Bill. I hope that in the Minister's response he would clarify some of the issues that I have raised.

Last week, the Prime Minister announced a commission of enquiry into the health sector. He cited as his reason for this commission of enquiry, questionable deaths in public institutions. I hope that the commission of enquiry would also have the mandate to look at the operations of the Food and Drugs Department. When there were questionable neonatal deaths at Mount Hope Maternity Hospital, we had asked for a commission of enquiry, and the Prime Minister did not respond at that time. We also asked for commissions of enquiry on other occasions, and he did not respond. It is sad to say this, but we do not believe the reason he gave for appointing this commission of enquiry. We believe that there are one or two reasons: One of the reasons is that there is a vote of no confidence in the present Minister of Health or, secondly, it is just another red herring to distract the population. I want to say up front, that we on this side support any move to improve the health sector, but we are not holding our breaths.

During the tenure of this Government from 1991 to 1995, there was a commission of enquiry into an incident at the St. Ann's Hospital where 13 or 14 persons were killed, and Sir Isaac Hyatali headed that commission of enquiry. He made several recommendations and none of those recommendations were implemented. There was also a commission of enquiry into the Biche High School and nothing came out of that enquiry; there was a commission of enquiry into the Elections and Boundaries Commission and nothing came out of that enquiry; and, of course, we had the spectacle of the Piarco Airport Enquiry.

Mr. Speaker, those are the comments that I wanted to make on the Food and Drugs Bill. I just want to make a couple comments on the Pesticides and Toxic Chemicals Bill. I have seen that there is one significant difference in the definition

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section of the Bill, and this has serious implications. In the definition section of the Bill “toxic chemical” is redefined. In the previous legislation, toxic chemical excluded drugs. In this new definition, toxic chemical does not exclude drugs, which means that drugs now fall under the heading of toxic chemical.

I would like the Minister when he is winding up to clarify that matter for us. I was saying that in the previous definition of “toxic chemical”, drugs were excluded, but drugs are not excluded from this present definition of: “toxic chemical”. I do not know what is the reason for this. Does it mean that drugs now fall under the heading of toxic chemicals? I would read the definition for you and then I would tell you why I say that. The definition says:

“‘toxic chemical’ means any chemical, other than a pesticide, which through its chemical action on life processes can cause death, temporary incapacitation or permanent harm to humans or animals,...”

The point I am making is that any drug such as cancer drugs, insulin, narcotics and so forth, through their chemical action and life processes could cause harm, death or disabilities. I want to find out why it is that drugs have now been included under the definition of toxic chemical, whereby in the previous piece of legislation, the definition of toxic chemical meant disinfectant, poisonous, corrosive and so forth, and at the end of the definition, it says that it does not include antiseptics, drugs, pesticides or preservatives. I just want an explanation as to why you have now included drugs in the definition of toxic chemical.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I also want to point out to the Minister that there are several problems in the country as far as pesticides and toxic chemicals are concerned; especially environmental problems. My other colleagues would be dealing with this matter in greater details. I just want to point out a few problems. The disposal of toxic chemical containers after they are used pose a serious environmental problem. After these containers are used they are either disposed of on the streets or waterways and they create serious health risk to persons. Developed countries have a pay back system for the return of these containers. This is something that maybe the Minister will want to consider, but something definitely needs to be done as far as the disposal of these toxic chemical containers are concerned.

Secondly, there is a group of chemicals called class I chemicals, and those are dangerous chemicals. One of these chemicals is grammoxone. At this point in time all these chemicals are sold over the counter. Anyone could walk into an agricultural shop and buy grammoxone or any one of these dangerous weedicides

and so forth. Of course, we know what are the effects of these chemicals. There is need for some kind of regulations with respect to the sale of these class I chemicals.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, some European countries have banned grammoxone altogether, and some of them have seriously regulated this chemical to the point that it is even difficult to buy it. I am saying that even as a first step, if the Government wants to consider that in order to purchase grammoxone one should have a farmer's licence or something like that or whatever, there must be regulation in place to deal with class I chemicals, especially grammoxone.

The third issue is that the Food and Drugs Department inspectors could go to agricultural shops and seize chemicals that are not properly labelled and so on. When they take these chemicals to the Food and Drugs Department and to the Pesticides Department, there is no proper storage for these chemicals. Again, this creates a serious hazard for the people who are working there and who have to come into contact with these chemicals. I am saying that this is something that needs to be looked at.

There are also persons who are employed in agricultural chemical shops and they are responsible for repackaging bulk chemicals. There is no monitoring of these persons. These persons are exposed to serious health risks. While I know that there are laws in place to govern some of this, the laws are not implemented and these persons are not monitored. They are put under severe risks because these are persons who are looking for a little job. They go to these shops and work under less than optimum conditions. Some kind of monitoring needs to be done with these people to ensure proper standards, and also to ensure that these persons who are working in these shops do a medical examination once a year, or once every two years to ensure that they are not being seriously affected by the chemicals that they are dealing with.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, another matter is that you do not need any qualification to open any one of these agricultural shops. You could just open your doors and begin to sell these toxic chemicals and pesticides. You do not need any special qualifications for this. Not only that, there are persons who are recommending chemicals for farmers; they are also recommending how to use these chemicals and so forth. Many of these persons do not have any kind of basic education as to how to deal with these chemicals, and they are recommending them for other people. This matter needs to be looked at so that some standards could be put in place. We need a comprehensive education programme as far as the use of toxic chemicals is concerned.

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We have not paid attention in this country to pesticides and toxic chemicals and, because of this, our population is exposed to many hazards. We need to reverse that situation and to bring in the monitoring process so that our population would not be unduly exposed to these chemicals.

There is one final clause that I would like to comment on in this Bill and that is clause 5. I really do not know what the Minister is trying to do here. What is happening here is that there are two divisions, namely: the Food and Drugs Division and the Pesticides and Toxic Chemicals Division. Under the existing law, the Minister may designate a food and drugs officer to be the registrar for the pesticides and toxic chemicals. As far as I am aware—the minister could correct me if I am wrong—the registrar of the Pesticides Board is not a public service position. Even though that is so, you are legislating that the registrar would now be in charge and would be supervising, monitoring and giving directions to inspectors and so forth.

I feel this is interfering with the collective bargaining process; I feel that the way to have gone about that matter administratively was to go to the Chief Personnel Officer and the union and so forth. The staff of the Pesticides and Toxic Chemicals Division comes under the public service, so they should have gone to the CPO and to the union and so forth and create a position so that there would be proper reporting relationship. Whenever we come here to legislate something like this, to me that is interfering with the collective bargaining process and that is something that should not be encouraged.

I hope that the Minister has taken note of some of the things that I have said, and in his winding up he would be able to respond to some of the issues.

Thank you very much. [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. Fuad Khan (*Barataria/San Juan*): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise to enter this debate on the Pesticides and Toxic Chemicals (Amdt.) Bill and the Food and Drugs (Amdt.) Bill. I want to congratulate my colleague for making such a fine contribution. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when I was perusing the Bill, I really believe that the Minister would have come with a more complete dissertation than the one he has delivered. Maybe he is saving it for the finale.

The Member for Caroni Central has indicated that there is a lot amiss with the pesticides and toxic chemicals movement in our country. Looking at the legislation before us, when one goes through the Pesticides and Toxic Chemicals

Act one sees that the definition of “toxic chemical” now encompasses that of the chemicals that were used possibly by the so-called weapons of mass destruction like ricin, nerve gas, et cetera. I think that is what the Minister meant.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is a greater evil with respect to the toxic chemicals and pesticides that are being delivered to the households and the effect that they are having on normal individuals. Last night, I took the opportunity and liberty to search the Internet. There is nothing in these Bills to protect our population, and yet we are dealing with Bills that are looking at exported products.

There are approximately 650 chemicals that are identified as hazardous by the federal state, or international agencies, and they are hiding behind misleading words such as “inert” in pesticides products. I thought the Minister was going to tell us a little about how he was going to assist the population when one looks at these inert materials in pesticides and toxic chemicals that result in the destruction wholly and solely of the young child, as well as the adult.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am going to read a little extract here. There is something called: “Worst Kept Secret: Toxic Inert Ingredient in Pesticides”. This documents the hazards of so-called “inert” ingredients, over 2,500 substances that are added to pesticides but are not named on product labels.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member, would you please indicate the document from which you are quoting.

Dr. F. Khan: Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is from the website <http://www.monitor.net/monitor/free3/inerts.html>. Albion monitor /News.

The United States of America regulatory agencies have very few requirements—and we have none—for testing toxicological or ecological effects of inert inactive ingredient or inert active ingredient in pesticides. There are certain ingredients such as chlorothalonil, which is being classified as a human carcinogen, Coal tar and Chloropicrin, which is a severe respiratory tract irritant. There is also the inert ingredient in pesticides which is naphthalene and this is used in moth repellents and insect sprays.

When we are talking about pesticides and toxic chemicals, we do not only encompass toxic chemicals such as ricin and mustard gas, et cetera. These inert material in household products like pesticides, et cetera, could lead to severe hemolytic anemia, which is destruction of red blood cells, varying degrees of jaundice, and liver enlargement. Children could have severe jaundice resulting from naphthalene-induced hemolysis, which could result in permanent neurological

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damage. This report calls for a full label disclosure of all ingredients in pesticide products and household products. Consumers and workers should have a right to easy access to such information—usually under the Freedom of Information Act, which seems to be eroding us—so that they could make informed decisions and better protect themselves. These inert ingredients found in pesticides have a wide range of effects including neurotoxicity, carcinogenicity, teratogenicity, adverse reproductive effects and mutagenicity.

What happens to our population is that when these pesticides are used on vegetables, et cetera, we end up with fetal malformations. There is an increase in the incidence of basic health problems. I want to read out the percentages and they are as follows:

- The number of children suffering from asthma has increased to 75 per cent between 1980 and 1994. This disease has exploded by 160 per cent. Today, asthma attacks are the number one cause of school absenteeism.
- Endocrine and metabolic chronic diseases like diabetes have increased by 20 per cent from 1986 to 1995.
- Low birth weight and premature babies have been rising since 1980. Today, birth defects are the number one killer of infants in America.
- Neurological diseases such as multiple sclerosis have increased by 20 per cent.
- Brain cancers and other tumors in children's nervous systems rose by more than 25 per cent.
- Leukemia, which is a common childhood cancer, increased by more than 15 per cent.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what they are saying here is that this increase in the incidence of disorders is linked to pesticides abuse and common household products that are not labelled. As my colleague said, there is need for bio-monitoring. There should be a national tracking service of these diseases and link it to the in utero for fetal movement to see what is happening and, for example, how much exposure one has obtained, et cetera. There is no national tracking system for diseases in this country. When one looks at the Pesticides and Toxic Chemicals Act, I think this is the time to raise this issue so that the Minister or his advisors could at least look at the matter.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, most of the chemicals in this country are unregulated. Contrary to popular belief, the chemicals that are used in everyday products are

not regulated by the Government, in a manner similar to prescription drugs. With a few exceptions, we do not require chemicals to meet specific safety standards set by the Government, and chemicals are not evaluated by government's scientists, prior to them being used.

This national tracking system would determine whether disease outcome would be linked to the use of toxic chemicals, as well as pesticides and household products. Could you imagine someone in uterus, when chemicals and pesticides are being used on vegetables? No one regulates the content of pesticides in vegetables.

As the Member for Caroni Central said, anyone could go and buy grammoxone or pesticides in an agricultural shop. When you do that, and chemicals are sprayed on vegetables, et cetera, if these chemicals are not washed off properly they could get into the system and cross the blood brain barrier; the placenta barrier and destroy the baby in utero and then there would be a lot of malformation in children. It may seem like a moot point in a debate such as this, but we are here in this debate talking about amending an Act based on regulatory framework as it relates to pesticides and toxic chemicals.

I have perused the Act itself and there is not much in the Act that says what type of regulations or investigations, et cetera, is being used to determine this. Going through all these abstracts it showed where childhood cancer—and cancer is on the rise throughout the world. They have linked cancer to pesticides and the inert active part of pesticides.

There is one interesting thing that I pulled up. We have heard from the Member for San Fernando East at a breakfast meeting that there is going to be an aluminum smelter plant in this country. That website also indicated multi-national corporations ability to move around government ministers and ministries to justify and get their own means. Aluminum is a very toxic substance. I am reading from the Aluminum Toxicity website <http://karan.heskco.com/pages/aluminium.htm> and it says:

“Known sources of aluminum toxicity:

beverages from aluminium cans (soda POP and beer)

food cooked in aluminium cookware

use of aluminum-containing antacids

fluoridated water increases leaching from aluminium pots and pans.

Born with elevated aluminium passed from mother to fetus through the placenta.

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There is debate whether blood testing for aluminium has much value. Blood levels do not reflect the total body load of aluminium, because most of it is deposited in the bones, hair, et, cetera. Several hair tests may be needed before aluminium is revealed on the test.

Aluminum affects the nervous system in animal studies, electrical discharge of nerve cells have increased, it also inhibits important enzymes in the brain; it also inhibits the uptake of chemicals by nerve cells such as dopamine, norepinephrine, and 5-hydroxytrptamine.

Behavioral effects: Dementia resulting from kidney dialysis related to aluminum toxicity causes memory loss, loss of coordination, confusion and disorientation. It destroys the intestinal activity.

Possible conditions associated with aluminum toxicity: Early symptoms of aluminum toxicity include: flatulence, headaches, colic, dryness of skin and mucous membranes, tendency for colds, burning pain in head, et, cetera. There are other conditions such as Alzheimer's disease, and other neurological effects.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the area where the aluminium smelter plant is being built, people are expressing their concerns and saying that they need an environmental clearance certificate, and one could see why, and this is because of the toxic level of aluminum. It has also been said that many workers at the Water and Sewerage Authority have high levels of aluminium in their blood and some are suffering from dementia, et cetera.

The Pesticides and Toxic Chemical Act does not address these problems. I am calling on the Minister to, at least, look at that matter. There is a different spin to this Act. I could start by saying that the Minister does not know what he is doing.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, with respect to the Food and Drugs Act, it is surprising that the PNM Government could come to the Parliament with such legislation at this time, knowing fully well what has happened over the last couple of weeks. I make reference to: "Cocaine bust at Foreign Ministry". This is an article by Samuel McKnight in the *Newsday* dated Tuesday May 11, 2004 and it says:

"The Government of TT will address the Senate today on a quantity of cocaine seized in diplomatic pouches from a courier at the Foreign Affairs Ministry last Friday.

Police believe they have busted an international drug-smuggling ring out of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and have called back three persons from

different missions whose names the pouches were addressed to, and who are currently being questioned.

The diplomatic bags, which carry mail and important documents from country to country, pass through Customs without examination, and are only authorised to be opened by the sender and the receiver—or in a special case where a crime is detected.

The cocaine weighed six pounds...”

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I read that article for one simple reason. Whilst pulling up chemicals and diversions on dangerous drugs, I came upon an article entitled: A supply of illicit drugs to the United States, et cetera, and this is a website <http://www.securitymanagement.com/library/dearep.htm>. What is indicated here is that since cultivation, production and distribution of illicit drugs are hidden from view, all too often there are little reliable data upon which to base these estimates.

Drug gangs in Mexico transporting cocaine to the United States of America have increased their involvement in the domestic cocaine distribution. They continued to produce not only heroin and marijuana, but increasingly, methamphetamine for the United States of America market. These groups expanded their foothold in the United States of America, replacing outlaw motorcycle gangs, et cetera. Couriers continue to flood through the USA airports with high-quality Southeast Asian heroin and South American heroin suppliers.

In major urban areas, and in many smaller cities and towns as well, drug distribution was accompanied by far too many homicides and drug-related violence.

Colombia-based drug mafias continue to dominate all aspects of the cocaine trade, from acquisition of cocaine base to cocaine production and transportation of drugs to wholesale distribution. These organizations, as well as smaller groups, were serviced by a complex infrastructure that transported cocaine by land, sea and air conveyances principally to the United States of America and Europe.

In recent years, this infrastructure has become heavily dependent on the smuggling services of drug gangs, which has enabled the drug gangs there to emerge as sophisticated and powerful international drug trafficking organizations within their own right. These powerful gangs have increased their involvement in the distribution of cocaine on their own initiative and in concert with the Colombian mafias. In addition to the Mexican drug gangs the Colombia mafias employed Caribbean-based transportation groups to ship cocaine out and into the United States of America and Europe.

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Traffickers continue to use intermodal means of transport, frequently concealing large shipments in commercial maritime containerized or bulk cargo. They also use fishing vessels, multimetric tonne shipments and specially designed vessels. Frequently, general aviation aircraft were used to convey cocaine to Mexico from South America.

Cocaine wholesale-level distribution and drug money laundering networks were comprised of multiple cells functioning in a number of major metropolitan areas. These cells maintained meticulous records and used available technology, including personal computers, pagers, facsimile machines, in their daily operations.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is maybe a coincidence because here we have a cocaine bust in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs—and the illicit drugs that we are speaking about today—we have the Colombian mafia here and they are saying that they are utilizing their Caribbean counterparts.

This report went on to say that methamphetamine trafficking and abuse is produced most commonly by using an ephedrine/pseudoephedrine reduction method or a P2P method. Approximately 51 per cent of the laboratories seized in 1996 were identified as, or suspect of, using pseudoephedrine compared to 45 per cent of ephedrine.

Pseudoephedrine/ephedrine was obtained from various sources. Illicit laboratory operators obtained pseudoephedrine in tablet form, and in a number of cases ephedrine, from over the counter products often designed for illegitimate use such as those products sold through mail order distributors.

There is also the use of the so-called Nazi method, which uses pseudoephedrine, sodium/lithium and anhydrous ammonia to produce methamphetamine. It has been identified in approximately 12 per cent of laboratories. Methamphetamine laboratory operations are often well armed and their laboratories are occasionally booby-trapped, et cetera. Not only were methamphetamine laboratories used to manufacture illegal, often deadly drugs, but the clandestine nature of the manufacturing process and the presence of ignitable, corrosive, reactive and toxic chemicals at the sites resulted in explosions. The most frequent method of methamphetamine use is by injection. Chronic, high-dose methamphetamine abusers are called “speed freaks”. They usually have methamphetamine parties or raves parties, et cetera. These are what these drugs are being used for.

Now, there is another group of drugs called the MDMA which is related to the methamphetamine. This is popular among college students and is often found at

all-night raves parties. Often, it was sold in tablet form, in dosage of 55 to 150 milligrams. MDMA was shipped by independent traffickers, and this is called the ecstasy drug. There is also something in this country, which is called Rohypnol. This drug is being sold over the counter in Trinidad and Tobago. There was an article written about this drug in the newspaper, but nothing has been done.

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Mr. Deputy Speaker, Rohypnol is a benzodiazepine; it is seven to ten times more potent than Valium and is very cheap. When Sen. Prof. Deosaran indicated that drug use in high schools is responsible for the level of behaviour, he is very, very close to the truth; on target. I noticed that the Minister of Education complimented him on his discourse and report. At the same time, I hope that she is convinced that what he said on the Police Reform Bills should be taken into consideration also. [*Desk thumping*]

The article continued:

“Abusers of dangerous drugs also used legitimately manufactured controlled substances diverted to the illicit market. Illegal or fraudulent prescribing and dispensing, as well as theft from legitimate channels, were employed to divert these drugs.”

This is a well-organized approach.

“Ethnic Pakistanis have established businesses in the United States that serviced Southwest Asia’s *hundi*...Invoice manipulation was used to move drug proceeds into and out of the United States. Russian immigrants, newly arrived in the United States, closed real estate deals with cash carried in shopping bags and used casinos to launder illicit proceeds generated from a variety of criminal activities. Other money laundering methods that drew attention included the use of the following: swaps (international currency transactions); payable-through-accounts held by foreign banks in U.S. banks; ‘smart cards’ for structuring deposits and transferring money internationally and cyberbanking for instant multinational layering of deposits.”

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this Bill puts these drugs, pseudoephedrine, ephedrine, et cetera on the list of controlled drugs. My colleague, the Member for Caroni Central, dealt quite nicely with that. You could put them on the list of controlled drugs, but only for a certain level of doses. The Minister has now actually criminalized cough medicine. He has brought a Bill to criminalize cough and cold medicines. People think that he was not advised correctly.

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I wonder what is happening in the health system today; whether this was done on purpose. If he does this, then no one could get a cough medicine over-the-counter (OTC). One would have to get a prescription, so the cost of the product would go up. I wonder if, basically, there are going to be more pharmacies or people buying pharmacies together in this country. At the end of the day, one has to realize that the pharmacies, themselves, would be making money. By moving the OTC drugs away from the consumer's hand and towards the pharmacies, the profit margin of the pharmacies would increase. I wonder if the Minister could answer that.

We touched a little on the commission of enquiry into the health sector. I think if the Minister really wants to make up with his leader, instead of bringing legislation to determine the level of drugs used to manufacture illicit drugs, he could use the legislation that the UNC passed in its budget of 2000, where we outlawed young people from the age of 18 years or below being able to obtain alcohol in establishments. Right now young people are receiving alcohol and alcohol products in certain areas and they are not being regulated.

This is a document from the University of Loyola in Louisiana in the United States. It goes into what they tell their students about illicit drugs:

“State law provides that anyone who is found guilty of manufacturing or distributing illicit drugs could be sentenced, depending on the type of drug, to a term of imprisonment at hard labour ranging from five years to life imprisonment (without benefit of probation or suspension of sentence) and may be fined from \$5,000 to \$50,000. An individual can be found guilty of distribution based upon the possession of a large amount of an illicit drug. Additionally, a person over the age of 25 who is found guilty of distributing certain illicit narcotic drugs to a person under the age of 18 is automatically sentenced to a term of life imprisonment at hard labour.”

Mr. Imbert: Where is that?

Dr. F. Khan: This is in Louisiana.

“A person who is at least 18 who distributes illicit drugs to persons three years his or her junior shall receive an enhanced sentence. Furthermore, any person convicted of an offense as a second or subsequent offense shall be sentenced to a term for twice that amount...”

Any person convicted of distributing drugs to a student enrolled in any elementary, secondary, vocational, special or postsecondary school shall be

punished by a term of conviction twice that set forth in the applicable statutes, according to the type of drug distributed.”

These are the types of laws we need. If you want to really stop the movement of illicit drugs, you may have to determine this.

The document continues:

“In addition to the State of Louisiana, federal laws prosecuted in the United States District Court have similar penalties...The penalty for violation of the drug laws of the United States includes fines ranging from \$1,000 to \$4,000 and terms of imprisonment ranging from up to one year for simple possession of certain drugs to life imprisonment...the state government can seize property used for transportation of illegal drugs, such as an automobile...”

used in the production and movement of those drugs. I draw your attention to the part that tells you about the on campus referral agencies for substance abuse programmes, counselling, career development and placement centres.

There is a dire need in our country that the students in our school system need to be aware of counselling methods for narcotics and narcotic addiction as well as they must be familiar with the 12-step programme of the National Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention Programme (NADAPP) and Alcoholics Anonymous. This is the only way forward for the movement against drug use in school.

The Minister could answer me afterwards, but I wonder whether there will be programmes placed in schools for people who are identified as possible addicts with personality type disorders, because there are such types, and be introduced to the 12-step programme early in life or whether the children and family of addicts can be counselled and given the same programmes in school at a very early age. You could start at any age. You could start at kindergarten and have different programmes going up. If the Government is serious about getting rid of the crime in this country, it would not force a police reform bill down the Opposition's throat or the people in this country, it would look at the source of the problem and deal with the young people in this country giving them programmes that will stop certain behaviour patterns. It would not need to bring legislation like this one.

Dr. Adesh Nanan (*Tabaquite*): Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Food and Drugs (Amdt.) Bill before the House today points to certain precursor drugs. I thought that the Minister would have given us some idea of the relevance of these precursor drugs and the final products. He made no reference to that, but spoke whimsically in terms of illicit drugs.

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In this amendment there are specific precursor drugs and in the right dosage they have positive effects on human beings. This particular amendment also points to chemistry. There is a lot of chemistry involved with respect to these particular drugs and how you get to the methamphetamine, which is the new cocaine, as it is called. I thought that the Minister would have taken the opportunity to show the country how we can move from these precursor drugs to, eventually, methamphetamine.

The amendment points to isomers. In terms of chemistry and isomers, we are dealing with rotation of a plane of polarized light, dextrorotatory and levorotatory, by these particular drugs. *[Interruption]* I will point out to the Member for San Fernando East how it could be done with a small chemistry background. You would have heard from the Member for Barataria/San Juan about methamphetamine and makeshift chemistry labs would go very quickly into my discussion with respect to the actual product, because it is important for this House to understand that it could take simple products, as we heard about the OTC medication and the active ingredients.

I also want to point out to the Minister, before I forget, that he has left out a very important drug, a very common amino acid called phenylalanine, which can be easily obtained from any health food store. It is a very important precursor that can be easily converted to methamphetamine.

This amendment is also confusing. It states:

“Ephedrine and its salts, optical isomers and salts of optical isomers”

I do not know if the Minister is aware, but pseudoephedrine is an optical isomer of ephedrine. Is it his intention to say that pseudoephedrine is the drug? I spoke about optical isomerism, ephedrine has four optical isomers and every one of these isomers is active. The ordinary Vicks inhaler in the United States carries a drug called L-ephedrine, which is a precursor for methamphetamine. It is very simple. I will explain to you how easy it is. *[Interruption]*

The Member for San Fernando East is pointing to me. He is the head of the National Security Council so he must be aware. Everything I am telling you is on the Internet; any child with a chemistry background could read it. I am not telling the House about anything that is not available anywhere. These are simple chemical reactions. *[Crosstalk]* You can go to a pharmacy and buy large numbers of Vicks inhalers. If you open the inhaler, the particular cotton inside has different compounds. The main compound is the precursor for the methamphetamine. *[Crosstalk]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Minister is controlling the substances here and on the toxic chemicals listing, but is he controlling radiator fluid? The average chemistry student is looking for ether in the ordinary radiator fluid. Ether dissolves the drug in this particular Vicks inhaler. So you can extract it by using ether in the mixture. You extract it from the Vicks inhaler and put it in a soluble form. You mix it with ether, it becomes soluble and you hold that solution there. So you have the drug, now you have to purify it. Ordinary muratic acid, called hydrochloric acid, which you can buy anywhere to clean your drains et cetera—I do not know if you are going to put that on your toxic chemicals list—you mix it into the solution and then you form a salt, a chloride. With the chloride it is soluble again, it dissolves. [Crosstalk] I am relevant with respect to the Bill. You can use the ordinary lye, which is sodium hydroxide, and add that to the mixture.

Mr. Manning: “De man making drugs in the Parliament.” [Laughter]

Dr. A. Nanan: I am relevant with respect to the Bill.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, you use the ordinary lye, sodium hydroxide, to convert the chloride to remove the hydrogen and you get amphetamine. Amphetamine in the right dosage can be used as an appetite suppressant. We are dealing with methamphetamine, which is the methylated amphetamine. From aromatic chemistry knowledge, these precursors, because of that aromatic ring, is what is leading to the methamphetamine. You can use the ordinary available chemicals to get to methamphetamine. [Crosstalk] So you can get methamphetamine from household products in the right combination or sequence.

I spoke about the amino acid, phenylalanine; a very simple compound, Thionyl chloride, which is easily available. These chemicals are easily accessible; any lab assistant could buy Thionyl chloride. If you use Thionyl chlorides on that same amino acid you get the chloride again. If you mix hydrogen with lithium and aluminium, as my colleague said, and reduce that, you get amphetamine. If you use CH_3Cl , that is the compound, you go straight up to methamphetamine. It is not rocket science to get to these drugs; any chemistry buff or a person who has a knowledge of simple chemistry reactions can get to methamphetamines. That is why I entered the debate, to show how simple it is to access methamphetamine. [Desk thumping]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I did not intend to attack any Members today. I do not know if the Minister is aware, but phenylpropanolamine is included here. I have literature on it. You would recall, as Minister of Health, why it was recalled from the market. Phenylpropanolamine was recalled from the market because of a

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survey done in teenaged women with respect to the risk of strokes due to haemorrhage. It increases blood pressure. It has been removed from all children's cough medicine. There was an international email sent to everybody with respect to phenylpropanolamine and its adverse effects. The Minister has now included it in the Schedule, but it should have been already included. [*Crosstalk*]

With phenylpropanolamine, because of that benzene ring, it is another precursor than can be used, but it is less available over-the-counter because of the side effects of haemorrhage in teenaged women. It was supposed to have been taken off the market or from within the dispensary; so there is a limitation already. There are two ways to attack this problem, hon. Member: You could limit the chemicals that you can easily get, like muratic acid and lye, or you could limit the availability of those drugs listed here. So the Minister has to utilize a twofold approach with respect to the ordinary chemicals available and these particular precursor drugs.

Today, I also want to deal with how these drugs listed here operate on the body, because it is important. These drugs are what you call sympathomimetic drugs, they mimic the sympathetic system. They have the same effect as epinephrine or norepinephrine, which is found in the human body. It increases the fight or flight reaction. [*Laughter*] It prepares you that if you have to fight you run away.

Mr. Manning: Give my boy some. [*Laughter*]

Dr. A. Nanan: It has that effect as a sympathomimetic agent. That is why it acts on the alpha and beta-receptors. The beta-receptors are in the bronchioles. A lot of the medication being prescribed over the counter has this particular drug and it deals with asthma. It expands the bronchioles and you are able to breathe properly, that is why they are called expectorants and they are over the counter in small dosages.

There is also another area that deals with the alpha-receptors, which are in the nasal cavity, and you have vasoconstriction there. That is why the particular drug that is available in these over-the-counter medications, cause vasoconstriction and reduce the amount of nasal drip. They are available in inhalers that you can buy off the shelf. We are dealing today with drugs that can be used in small dosages as an assistant to complaints from the public. So it is important that when you look at this particular area and you want to move these drugs into the dispensary, you are going to have a gap, because a lot of people rely on these drugs that deal with asthma, simple remedies that you can get over the counter, non-prescription items. The Member for Caroni Central was quite right with respect to the availability of these drugs.

For allergic rhinitis there is a specific combination of drugs that you would use, like pseudoephedrine as well as an antihistamine, because you are dealing with a runny nose as well as nasal congestion. That is why it is important to know how people become hooked on metamphphetamine. Methamphetamine is a derivative of amphetamine. Amphetamine, in small quantities, acts as an appetite suppressant. It also has an initial euphoric effect, so a person who starts off taking methamphetamine would have clear thinking and would be able to rationalize very quickly. A lot of students are using methamphetamine because of this possibility, but you have sleep deprivation. [Crosstalk] Over a period of time, because of sleep deprivation you go into a state of what is called “shadows”; so you start to see shadows. You have hallucinations and you go into a state of paranoia. [Crosstalk]

Methamphetamine addicts have jaw clenching. They have a lot of twitching of the muscles of the face. Their teeth are under tremendous pressure and become eroded, because of the methamphetamine. You have a lot of clenching taking place, so your teeth are destroyed because of the pressure of the muscles of the jaw. Because of the initial euphoric effect, you get a “high” and the opportunity to perform at a higher level for a two-hour period initially, and as the day goes on you tend to go into a state of stupor. Eventually, you become hooked on the methamphetamine because of the hallucinating factor. It is important to understand how the addicts initially start and where they are now. We heard of treatment centres from the Member for Barataria/San Juan.

With respect to methamphetamine, I did a lot of chemistry research before I came to the debate, because we need to understand how these compounds rotate. The reason they are called normal isomers is because all the carbons that are in this compound are on the same plane. That is why you have all these things like N-methyl in this particular amendment. It is only the alcohol group that is rotating in these particular compounds and that is what makes the difference. [Interruption] [Crosstalk]

Of course, you will recall that an OH group close to a benzene ring has a lot of acidic power, so it is very difficult to remove an OH group from that particular benzene ring, but we will not go into that aspect of the chemistry. [Crosstalk] The carbon attached to a benzene ring has a lot of acidic power. That is why although it is a basic group, it is very difficult to remove. That is why I said that you have to use Thionyl chloride to remove that OH group; ordinary agents would not remove that group.

I have the chemistry background. [Crosstalk] You will understand; it is simple chemistry I am speaking about. It is just expanded into the higher compounds.

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[*Crosstalk*] I am sure the Member is aware of it. The Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West, as the Minister of Health, must be au courant with this kind of information, because if he is not, then he would not understand why he is bringing the amendment and how the particular teenagers in this country can become hooked on this. [*Crosstalk*]

I am moving on from isomers now because I do not have much time. I have to deal with the other Bill, too.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, you also have phenylpropanolamine, which has been recalled. The reason it was in a particular preparation on the market is because it is also a sympathomimetic drug, so it has the same flight or fight possibility. It was included in cough preparation because of the same asthmatic relief. [*Crosstalk*] As I said before, pseudoephedrine is an optical isomer of ephedrine. The amendment speaks to the particular drug and its salts, which can be either the hydrochloride or sulfate depending on the dosage. Basically, whether it is the main compound or the salt, they more or less have the same properties, which are sympathomimetic and they can be used in medication in certain small quantities for that reaction.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, pseudoephedrine sulfate was found in Drixoral, a compound of which, I am sure, many of my colleagues are aware, that when you have a cold, you can use Drixoral. For that reason pseudoephedrine is included in Dimetapp, a medicine used for children. So they have replaced phenylpropanolamine with pseudoephedrine, because it acts directly on the alpha-receptors and does not cause this kind of hemorrhaging that you see with phenylpropanolamine.

I also want to make reference to another cough medicine, Phensedyl Cough Linctus, that many people are aware of, which they buy off the shelf. So you are moving away with all these remedies that people are accustomed to and they would have to seek alternative sources. They will either have to go to the health food store and get recommendations, and move into another realm of medication. Homeopathic or bush medicine might now surface in this country. The Minister has to be aware, when he is bringing an amendment, of the consequences of such an amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I also want to deal with the Pesticides and Toxic Chemicals (Amdt.) Bill. The Minister gave us a lot of information and I took down a lot of information with respect to this Bill. He spoke about the Vienna Convention with respect to the trafficking of illicit drugs, but there is also the Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs). I do not know if the Minister

is aware of that particular convention. When I saw the amendment, I looked for the relevance of POPs to it. It is very relevant because the amendment speaks to toxic chemicals. These POPs are compounds that can remain in the environment for a long period of time and have deleterious effects.

They are a set of chemicals that are toxic, which is relevant to this amendment. They persist in the environment for long periods of time and bio-magnify, which means that as they move up the food chain their toxicity increases. They have been linked to adverse effects on human health and animals, such as cancer, damage to the nervous system, reproductive disorders and disruption of the immune system. I know that we are signatories to this particular convention, but are we taking steps to ratify this convention with respect to the national position? With respect to the board the Minister told us he is setting up, with the inclusion of an Environmental Management Agency (EMA) member, is he going to deal with the POPs Convention?

What are these pollutants? They are listed as the dirty dozen. We are industrialized and a lot of the chemicals used in industries are what you call POPs. The ordinary hexachlorobenzene—I went back to chemistry—toxaphene, called DDT, is a pesticide. Have we actually identified if there are any sources of DDT in this country that have not been dealt with? DDT was used in the past but are there stores of DDT that need to be handled, whether in drums or elsewhere? There is a lack of attention by the EMA. You are going to put a member on your board but, right now, the EMA is not having a positive effect on the environment. In every area we are seeing a lack of response by the EMA.

The Member for Diego Martin Central came to this House and asked for more money for the EMA to draft the hazardous rules. When we left office in late 2001, the Water Pollution Rules were drafted, laid in Parliament and lapsed. We are in 2004 and the Water Pollution Rules have not been brought before this House. What signals are we sending? Are we pandering to the multinational corporations? Is the Government afraid to deal with water pollution? When I was the Minister of the Environment I had a strong lobby that we should not introduce the Water Pollution Rules, because they might have certain effects on the multinational corporations, but there are always discussions that can take place. Has the Minister shelved the Water Pollution Rules? Having these persistent organic pollutants, you must have some mechanisms where you can deal with them, because we see that they bio-magnify up the food chain.

Hazardous waste and air pollution are other areas. We are an industrialized country, we must take steps to deal with these areas. The Water Pollution Rules,

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the Air Pollution Rules and the Hazardous Waste Rules are important. What is the position of the United States? They have taken strong domestic action to reduce the emissions of POPs. None of the pesticide POPs are registered for sale and distribution in the United States. Are we a dumping ground for these particular POPs? We do not know.

In 1978 the US Congress prohibited the manufacture of new PCBs and severely restricted the use of the few remaining stocks. To make matters even worse, the United States has provided technical and financial assistance to countries where these persistent organic pollutants are prevalent. Are they not accepting help from the US to deal with these POPs? This opens up a whole area of solid waste management. I did not want to go into that area, because it is a very thorny one with respect to the Solid Waste Management Company Limited (SWMCOL). A national solid waste management system is necessary for the country. It would incorporate the Beetham and Forres Park landfills.

Incidentally, as we are speaking on toxic chemicals, do you know the kind of chemicals emanating from those two landfills? Do you have any idea of the kind of effects on the people, the kind of deleterious effects on the children in those two landfills in those two particular areas? It is a whole history that I would not want to go into in terms of the negative effects of these toxic chemicals in the atmosphere. They are transmitted in the atmosphere and, of course in the water. Is the Water and Sewerage Authority (WASA) taking any stock of this particular situation with respect to these persistent organic pollutants? We have to ask these questions.

The national solid waste management system would take into consideration these two particular landfills. I do not know what plan the Minister has for a national solid waste management system. [*Crosstalk*] I know that, but I do not want to go into that debate right now. I want to stay within the confines of the solid waste management system. The Member reminded me that we have been told that the Community-based Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme (CEPEP) will move into phase two. Is it that in phase two there is going to be landscaping in the projects? From what I have seen of their landscaping, is it to expose the land? They have now moved away from leaving a small amount of grass in these areas, to no grass at all. Is that landscaping or scraping the land? We have to ask the question.

You have to take into consideration your industrialized position and our natural gas utilization, which was very eloquently spoken about by the Member for Barataria/San Juan, in terms of the aluminium smelter environmental

concerns. Persistent organic pollutants can have harmful effects and do not have a short half-life. These things remain for a long period of time. As I speak about half-life, I see the Member for San Fernando East agreeing with me, with respect to radioactivity, but that is another debate that I will not go into. [*Laughter*]

With respect to the chemicals in our waterways and atmosphere, we must be cognizant of the fact that when we are dealing with toxic chemicals, they have harmful effects. You can utilize toxic chemicals for fertilizers to control the pest population, but you also have toxic chemicals in dosages that have harmful effects. The side effects of these toxic chemicals are destroying the population surreptitiously or very quietly or latently.

I thought the Minister would have shown us some link as to why he wanted to take these two Bills together. In my humble view, he did not make the link between the two. We are dealing with toxic chemicals which can damage human life on the one side and the drugs which can be beneficial to the public on the other side. I do not know that there was any link shown by the Minister.

As I am dealing with the area of food and drugs, and we are dealing with “new cocaine”, do we have the ability in this country to test the grade of cocaine that washed up in Manzanilla? Was all the cocaine that washed ashore found? Why is the Manzanilla Police Station closed down? That leads me to a few lyrics that I put together; no disrespect to the Government.

Dr. Rowley: Are you going to sing again?

Dr. A. Nanan: No, I am not singing.

Cocaine in Diplomatic bag, the Government has a drug tag.

Proud T&T's name is now etched in shame.

I also want to go for a few lyrics on the police station, because I had those too: [*Laughter*]

Police station in disarray, we can only pray.

Bandits with guns and knives threatening all of our lives.

Kidnappers free to roam, our children must stay home.

No resources for the police, criminals are having a feast. [*Desk thumping*]

We have to ask the question: Why is the Government not dealing with the situation of cocaine on our shores? It is not a new phenomenon; it is not that it just happened.

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The UNC government dealt with this particular matter, in terms of the radar to survey our coastline and border patrols. In fact, in Tobago when it surfaced, some things that were on the drawing board which were scrapped by the Government now in power were the helicopter surveys of the islands, probably one pass a day, mounted patrols for inaccessible areas and marine patrols. Simple measures would deal with our borders.

When we look at the areas in this country where the cocaine comes in, the West and we see it now on the East coast. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Bring it back to the chemistry, I was enjoying it.

Dr. A. Nanan: The Bill deals with old and new cocaine. I really do not want to go into the chemical composition of cocaine, because that would take me another half an hour. Whether it is old or new cocaine, it is still an illicit drug, so that is the main point here with respect to the amendment. We are dealing with illicit drugs, so that is the real connection, whether the amendments to the Food and Drugs Act are for drugs that can be beneficial as well as harmful if converted from a precursor to the methamphetamine, and the other issue is the Pesticide and Toxic Chemicals (Amdt.) Bill.

We have to ask the question: Are these Bills relevant, in terms of the situation in the country, as it stands now? Our citizens are terrified. The Government is coming with proposals. I have some lyrics about the Government that I really do not want to share with you as yet; we will leave that for the next debate. We are dealing with methamphetamine coming in which, we agree, needs to be controlled, but we need to look more carefully at this amendment and make sure that the net is widened to capture all the areas that could be lacunae. We also need to deal with the toxic chemicals and the Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will not go on, because I think I have completed my contribution with respect to this particular amendment. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Subhas Panday (*Princes Town*): Mr. Deputy Speaker, may I congratulate you on the impartial manner in which you are conducting this House. [*Desk thumping*] You are always welcome to be there and there is a possibility that we may go to tea with you, but not otherwise. [*Laughter*]

Having heard my colleagues on this side and having had that academic contribution, all I want to say is that in the Pesticides and Toxic Chemicals Act of 1979 there is a definition which my friend, the Member for Caroni Central, alluded to. That definition has been extended to mean:

“any chemical, other than a pesticide, which through its chemical action on life processes can cause death, temporary incapacitation or permanent harm to humans or animals, and includes all such chemicals irrespective of their origin or method of production or whether they are produced in facilities, munitions or elsewhere;”

What it has done is expanded what is a toxic chemical. The legislation is attempting to control it, but we must ask ourselves, at this point: Do we have the facility to introduce the legislation? Could this legislation be implemented? Do we have the resources to do so?

If one looks at the history of this legislation, it started in 1979 and was amended in 1986. If one looks at the regulations one would see that, at the present time, there are organochlorine pesticides in water, et cetera; pesticide formulation analysis; metals in water—iron, copper, lead, zinc; paraquat in vegetables; organophosphorus pesticides in vegetables and total phosphorus in water. On the toxicological side there is cyanide identification and disinfectant identification. So we are introducing more chemicals to that list of toxic chemicals.

How do you implement the law? The Act says that the place where the Government has to go to determine these toxic chemicals is the Forensic Science Centre. Not only do the police and the Government access the Forensic Science Centre, but if one looks at the Pesticides and Toxic Chemicals Act of 1979 Regulations it says that members of the public can also access the services of the Forensic Science Centre, at a fee of course.

In Regulation No. 2 it states:

“The fees detailed in the Second Column hereunder, are chargeable by the Board for services detailed in the First Column, that are performed at the request of members of the public:”

When one looks at the Forensic Science Centre one sees it is overloaded. It cannot perform the duties because of the amount of work it has at this time.

The equipment at the Forensic Science Centre is not the most up-to-date, as we have in the State enterprises and other private enterprises. Furthermore, there is the problem of a lack of personnel; there is a shortage of forensic science officers at the centre. As a matter of fact, there is only one handwriting expert there. Because of the lack of equipment and resource personnel one finds that the Forensic Science Centre is incapable of performing its functions.

When the police apprehends someone and they bring the exhibit to the court, before that case could commence, unless the person pleads guilty and accepts that

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it is a narcotic, the prosecution has to prove that it is a narcotic. Therefore, on the first day that the matter is called, the exhibit is ordered, sent to the Forensic Science Centre to be tested and the analysis report must be obtained before the case can commence. Many a times most of the persons who are arrested with one joint, although it is a very small amount, it still has to go to the centre. Bail is imposed and 90 per cent of the time you have people with one stick of marijuana being incarcerated on remand with hardened criminals.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when that exhibit goes to the Forensic Science Centre, you could bet your bottom dollar it is not coming back before nine months to one year. So you have a young person who is not a hardened criminal sent to the prison on remand for one stick of marijuana and he stays in custody for one year, before the matter is determined. Sometimes when the matter is tried he is proven innocent, as has happened in matters in which we have complained about. When that young person goes to prison for that one stick of marijuana, because of the problems at the Forensic Science Centre, he interfaces with hardened criminals and we make criminals because of that system.

So when we bring this piece of legislation we ask ourselves today: Are we putting better infrastructure in place? Are we increasing the staff to ensure that these things could be tested in a timely manner? Even so, in the Magistracy, one observes that the law has expanded so much, but the number of magistrates has remained the same, so you find that cases are adjourned for very long periods and we cannot get off the ground. Similarly, we ask the question: Would it continue this way at the Forensic Science Centre when more work is directed there and to other divisions and we are not putting resources in place?

Legislation is one thing; the problem we have is implementation. We have the DNA Act that was passed. Regulations have not been prepared and although we have beautiful legislation on the law books, all they do is adorn the law books and there is no implementation. In those circumstances, we are asking that we put mechanisms in place to ensure that there is implementation to legislation, otherwise we are spinning top in mud.

I also alluded to the handwriting expert; that is a problem. There is one handwriting expert to cover the whole of Trinidad and Tobago; cases take three and four years to get to him, because he is always so busy. Sometimes you have to summon the chemists and analysts to come to court and when you bring them there is nobody remaining at their offices to continue doing the work. We are asking that these things be put in place.

There are a number of arms-related crimes in Trinidad and Tobago; many robberies concern the use of weapons. The same thing occurs at the armoury. When somebody is arrested unless he pleads guilty, that he had a gun, and what you produce as bullets he admits that they are ammunition, again, they would have to go to the armoury. At one time we had a Mr. Walker at the armoury. Because there is only one person who could do the ballistic report at the armory, whenever that person has to go to court, the work slows down. In any event, it takes over a year, 18 months, for you to get a ballistic report; again, you have people crowding the jails and crime is running at a pace. We are asking that these matters be addressed.

What is astonishing is that the public can access the facilities of the State to have things tested like organochlorine and organophosphorus pesticides in vegetables. There is a fee, for example, to determine extraction, clean up/GC, et cetera, \$70 or \$120, as the case may be. One would think that since vegetables are foods that people eat, the tests should be free. A man may feel that there is chemical residue on his vegetables; if he is a civic-minded person and he wants to take it to the Forensic Science Centre to ensure that the population is not being fed poisoned food, I do not see why he should have to pay a fee.

4.00 p.m.

They encouraged farmers to bring vegetables and fruits to the Forensic Science Centre to have them tested so that our population will be protected. Instead, we observed in order to determine whether there is a residue of paraquat in vegetables, and whether there was iron exchange, there is a cost of \$125 to have that tested.

People would not be encouraged to have their vegetables tested if they have to pay for it, and we must go further and not only implement legislation and put regulations in place, but encourage people to utilize the regulation and make it consumer or client friendly.

As a matter of fact, people have said that instead of having the farmers who have to work hard all day to produce their vegetables that the various agencies of government should go out into the fields and have them tested to deal with pesticides and chemical residues on the vegetables.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am reading from the Provisional Collection of Taxes (No. 2) Order, 1992 which says:

“(3) The fees specified in the Third Schedule shall be paid by private clients in respect of services provided by the Trinidad and Tobago Forensic Science Centre,”

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And it goes on to deal with the matters before this honourable House today.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the amendment to this legislation speaks about strengthening the regulatory framework as it relates to pesticides and toxic chemicals. If one looks at the Regulations to the 1979 Act, as amended by the 1986 Act, one would see that we speak about importation and exportation of pesticides and chemicals. Legal Notice No. 226, made by the Minister under section 12 of the Pesticides and Toxic Chemicals Act, under the rubric: The Pesticides (Importation) Regulations, 1987, lays the groundwork for an importer who wishes to import these pesticides. It speaks about importation by dry bulk container and it defines that it means a freight container for the carriage of these solids.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, one observes that having regard to the restrictions in the Regulations, one sees only very big companies can import, the small man can hardly do so.

If one looks at another Regulation, Legal Notice No. 227 of 1987 it also defines and sets out the definition of premises and what structures are to be in place and it speaks about before the premises could be licensed that you have to make sure that:

“15. Premises shall be constructed as follows:

- (a) the site shall not be such as to cause or allow entry to run-off and liquid effluent into adjoining or adjacent property;
- (b) facilities for run-off from the premises, especially from the storage areas, shall be constructed so as to avoid contamination of public waterways, and such run-offs shall not enter septic tanks;”

It goes on to say in (d) that:

“(d) buildings shall be of sound materials and shall be constructed in such a way as to minimize contamination of adjacent premises;”

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it appears that a lot of funds have to be expended in order to set up premises for the production and storage of chemicals. One would find that small people are unable to meet the standards of the Regulations and this takes me to a point of the cane farmers in Trinidad and Tobago.

Before Caroni (1975) Limited was disbanded because the price for cane was so cheap—\$170 per tonne which is 2,000 pounds of cane—the farmers tried to minimize their cost and because Caroni (1975) Limited had the infrastructure as required by the Regulations, they came together with the farmers who asked them

to import because they are big. They also asked them to store because of their large storage areas.

Remember that cane farmers were the only persons who sold their canes in January and got a part of the payment, and later in the year got the other half. The farmers after reaping their canes wanted to rehabilitate their fields in July and August so they took the chemicals from Caroni (1975) Limited and set it off against the remaining money.

Caroni (1975) Limited used to purchase in bulk directly from the producers abroad and could have sold to the farmers at less than the open market price, all with a view to reducing the cost of production. At that time, the cost of production of cane was more than they were getting and the only reason they stayed in that industry was because they priced their labour for overtime. On Saturdays and Sundays they took their children into the fields and never priced their labour. They had to stay in that field because they could not go anywhere, so they tried to reduce the cost of production and there was a fundamental process in doing so.

With Caroni (1975) Limited now disbanded, farmers will find it very difficult to produce cane without suffering a greater loss and this is something we must look at having regard to the Regulations and the law that confront those poor farmers.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, even if the sugar workers had been given land, unless structures are put in place to assist them, that land would be of little or no use to them. So we are asking the Member for Arouca North, who is in charge of Caroni (1975) Limited, to tell the farmers what steps have been put in place to assist them in relation to fertilizers, pesticides and chemicals.

It would appear that those who did not steal all the chemicals at Caroni (1975) Limited—something has happened to them because all have disappeared—at this time June, July and August, farmers do not know where to turn.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, with these few words, I thank you very much.

Mr. Narine: The Member for Princes Town has ended, but Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to inform him that we have already ordered mixed fertilizers and not urea for farmers. For many years they have been asking for it and we have ordered the 26026 fertilizers. The sugar industry team has already given the okay to get the chemicals for them and they have ordered the company that does the aerial spraying to do so from now. So something has already been done about the information for which he is asking.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Chandresh Sharma (Fyzabad): Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is sad to know that only Members on this side have been contributing to this debate. One would appreciate the importance of a debate of this kind, moreso when you heard the Minister talking about fertilizers.

It is much too late. Caroni (1975) Limited is closed, the PNM has sent home 10,000 persons, 30 per cent of the citizens are living under poverty and many families cannot afford food, and the Minister is today talking about fertilizers available for next year's crop by which time so many more would have gone.

The matter before us is a very important one that requires a larger effort from the Government. In presenting the Bill, the Minister said very little, in fact, he said almost nothing. This confirms that the PNM lacks vision, they come here on Friday to satisfy the national community and to earn their keep because we do not know what funds are spent for today's sitting.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the early 1960s you would recall—because I understand you were actively involved in teaching then—that Rachel Carson arrested the world's attention with her book on the dangers of pesticides. Have we made significant gains in our effort to reduce the amount of pesticides in our food production systems? Of what obtains in Trinidad and Tobago, the answer is no.

I want to establish the link between food and development.

[Interruption from the Public Gallery]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, the sitting of this House is suspended now for tea, and we shall return at 4.50 p.m.

4.15 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

4.50 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Mr. C. Sharma: Mr. Deputy Speaker, during the tea break I could not help but reflect that the time has come when the proceedings of this House should be broadcast to the national community. *[Desk thumping]* And moreso today, the degree of calmness that is in this House thanks to you. That level of maturity, fellowship, and Christianity that you displayed goes a long way.

What obtained in the Public Gallery prior to the tea break was very sad, and it must not go down as if PNM supporters can heckle other supporters and get away with it. This dog kennel attitude must not be tolerated here. *[Desk thumping]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was making the point that this Bill is an essentially very important one, and showing the quality of life that obtains as a subsequent abuse of insecticide.

Researchers have gathered new evidence on the importance of the first years of life of children's emotional and intellectual development. As you know more than 30 per cent of our national community presently live under the poverty line, this means that about 200,000—300,000 children are facing a greater risk of impaired brain development due to the exposure to a number of risk factors associated with poverty, and this, by extension, is related to the use of insecticides and pesticides. So I was hoping that the Minister would have presented his concern, and that of the Government but, unfortunately, he did not.

Recent advances in the study of brain development shows a sensitive period when the brain is most able to respond to and grow from exposure to environmental stimulation. This window of optimal brain development is from the first year of a child's life to three or four years.

The point to be obtained from this argument is that the use of insecticides and pesticides must be managed properly. In fact, the First Human Study to Show Benefits to Newborns from Federal Ban on Home Use of Two Insecticides—and you would notice even though Members on this side raised the concern about the danger of the use of grammoxone as one that has been killing people, who may have consumed it knowingly or unknowingly by spraying it on vegetables which get into the market, the Minister made no mention of it.

The study says that:

“A federal ban on two insecticides has resulted in a significant reduction in their impact on newborns' birth weight and length, according to a new study funded by the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences of the National Institutes of Health, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and other private foundations.

The results of the study—the first one to demonstrate the benefits of the ban during pregnancy in human subjects—will be published in *Environmental Health Perspectives*, the monthly peer-reviewed journal of the NIEHS.”

For those who are interested, the website is: ehp.niehs.nih.gov.

“The study, released by the Columbia Center for Children's Environmental Health, part of the Mailman School of Public Health at Columbia University, measured the impact on fetal growth of two insecticides...whose use in households was banned by the federal government starting in 2000.”

So recent studies demonstrate that we ought to become very concerned and take action.

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“The insecticides had been among the most commonly-used agents for residential pest control.”

So we have to be extremely careful of what we allow in our homes and I will come to that in a few minutes.

“In the study, researchers measured the levels of the two insecticides in blood drawn from the umbilical cords after delivery, both before and after the ban, and correlated those levels with the babies’ birth weight and length. All blood samples were frozen and stored at -70 degrees Centigrade...”

I will leave out the scientific argument.

“They found that prior to January 2001, newborns with combined insecticide exposures in the highest 26th percentile had birth weights averaging almost 200 grams (almost half a pound)...”

You see how dangerous it is, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and we heard nothing from the Government on control, on ban, and on education. In fact, the Ministry of Health should have documentaries and advertisements at this time informing people rather than spending \$5 million and \$6 million on forcing people to put pressure on Members of Parliament. The citizens ought to know where the Government is spending the taxpayers’ money. It is misleading the national community on insignificant things and not educating them on things that affect them in their daily lives.

“The researchers also noted a highly significant inverse association between the combined exposures and newborn birth length. However, when they looked at the relationship between insecticide exposures and fetal growth after January 2001, the exposure levels had been reduced substantially, and the impact on weight and length was no longer apparent.”

So you see this research was available as of 2001, and in 2004, the Government is presenting a bill with no valid information from which the national community can benefit and the point has to be made that it does not understand its role in the Parliament. The legislation is to add value to people’s life, and the Bill the Minister has brought does not add value to anybody’s life except a few dollars in their pockets.

““This human study confirms the developmental impact, shown previously in animal studies, of these insecticides,’ said Dr. Robin M. Whyatt, an Assistant Professor at the Mailman School and principal author of the study. ‘It also demonstrates the positive effect of the federal ban...”

This is a very important statement. We need to start looking at what insecticides and pesticides we are going to ban, and which ones we are going to control. The national community needs to be educated. We have made the point that this Government pays very little attention to agricultural development and the ECIAF institute is a classic example. The sum of \$1 million was spent on cosmetic facelift and \$600 million for the University of Trinidad and Tobago. Where is the priority?

The study goes on:

“The differences in fetal growth seen here are comparable to the differences between babies whose mothers smoke during pregnancy and babies whose mothers don’t,” said Whyatt.

Tobacco is treated with insecticide and pesticides so we need to look at the total development. The Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources have to come together and it is very sad that the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources did not see the importance of contributing to today's debate.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was making the point earlier about a simple insecticide that we use in our homes—fly spray. Fly spray is toxic to the nervous and reproductive systems. It is also an insecticide and we have known for decades that insecticides such as DDT damage the human nervous and reproductive systems. In the supermarkets today there are shelves and shelves of these sprays with no guidance to the consumer.

Modern fly sprays are less toxic than DDT because they do break down. There is no doubt that they are still toxic. The fact that fly sprays are sold in the supermarket does not mean that they are safe.

Recently legislation was passed at the insistence of the Opposition who forced the Government to agree to indicate the dangers of tobacco and that persons under the age of 18 should not smoke, and we caused them to do the same thing for alcohol. We are now asking the Government what measures it is considering, and we suggest that where insecticides and pesticides are sold in supermarkets and agricultural shops that some kind of notice be offered to buyers.

At present only substances put on the market after 1981 have to undergo safety testing for acute exposure. This leaves over 100,000 chemicals for which there are no health data.

Insecticides are necessary to combat malaria, and to prevent crop failure, but there is no compelling reason to use them in the home. That is a very important

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development. There is no need to use much of it in homes, but we have seen no government control or education.

What is in a can of spray? We should become familiar with it. There are two main types of pesticides that are used in the home as fly sprays or cockroach bombs and both are nerve toxins, and the exposure to the human nervous system is increasing and the damage in many instances is irreparable.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in Trinidad and Tobago we have a number of homes all over the country—more in the UNC constituencies—that are without pipe borne water. And it is not that there are no pipes because under the UNC administration many areas obtained pipes, but since the PNM came into office, many areas are not getting water, or they are getting it once a week and people have to resort to ponds and wells. You would have seen it in the newspapers and it was also highlighted in the electronic media.

Insecticide residues are found virtually everywhere; in our homes, and on our carpets but the concern I have is agricultural products, heavily sprayed fruits and vegetables. One reason for this is that the incentives offered by the Government are very low and hard in coming. There is a lot of red tape to get subsidies; there are few extension officers available so people are left on their own trying to earn a keep.

Of course, with the closure of Caroni (1975) Limited and the PNM's destruction of 10,000 lives, they now have to find other ways of earning their keep and many have turned to agriculture. The PNM Government offered them lands, and today not a single person has gotten land. These farmers are forced to grow vegetables on small land holdings where they have their homes to supplement their income to make sure that there is food on the table, and in the process there is heavy spraying during growing season.

Because they are unemployed, they now have to keep the food for longer periods and they are using a lot of chemicals for which there is absolutely no guidance. The Government is aware of this and is further punishing the people. This applies to meat as well: beef, lamb, poultry and so forth. So even the animals are being fattened with heavy use of chemicals for market purposes, so we have to be extremely careful.

There are other household toxins. Pesticides are really the tip of the iceberg. Many other household chemicals are toxic to the nervous system, the liver, kidney and reproductive system. Trinidad and Tobago has a very high incidence of liver and kidney failure in recent times and a large amount of it would be related to the exposure of insecticides and pesticides.

Moreso, over the last two or three years, with more people being forced to go to the land, with more people living under the poverty line, foods now have to stretch for longer periods and they are using all kinds of unscientific methods to preserve food.

5.05 p.m.

What is this responsible for? Breast cancer. The research has also shown a decline in sperm count. They include plastic containers; baby bottles; the lining of food tins; certain chemicals in children's toys; plastic mattresses and bleaches. You see the importance of this Bill. It is really unfortunate that the Government just came to hoodwink this House and say that it is a short Bill with neither this nor that. Only a fraction of household chemicals have been tested for long-term safety. Much of the chemicals come into our homes by way of the items I have identified. They are not tested for any safety. This must change.

I suggest that the Government must make a concerted effort, instead of wasting so much money in non productive areas like the Community-based Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme (CEPEP) and the Unemployment Relief Programme (URP) and \$6 million for the anti-crime legislation. They must educate the national community by way of documentaries, workshops and encourage more organic food. They must also start treating people who live near to farms and gardeners who use large amounts of pesticides on a regular basis.

One cannot help but see the games that the Government plays. In the case of the Biche High School which was built by the UNC, out of spite and malice the Government chose not to open the school. The argument is that people are exposed to chemicals that would harm them. There is no evidence of it. About 100 feet from the Biche High School is the Biche Presbyterian School that has been there for more than 100 years. Not a single child has been affected. The scientific evidence is showing that persons who live near farms where large amounts of pesticides are being used, are exposed. The Government does nothing. In the incident at Wallerfield where the batteries were buried, the UNC government treated those people and relocated them.

More and more insecticides and pesticides get into our sources of drinking water. Not everybody is obtaining pipe borne water. There are people who have to go to ponds and the Government has to find a way to assist those communities. They must show them how to take the water from the ponds and when they take it home, how to treat it before consumption.

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Recently, you saw that people were dying at the hospitals from diseases spread by mosquitoes. We want to see some effort by the Government alerting the national community about how to treat with these and to use environment-friendly chemicals. There is a high incidence of cockroaches and mosquitoes at homes. As a result, we have to advise people about the correct applications of screens on their windows; how to keep their kitchens and surroundings clean and what chemicals can be used for rat bait. Fly spray made from light mineral oil, lemon juice and citronella must be introduced.

I want to talk about some reasons we should not use pesticides and to reduce them. Pesticides do not solve problems with pests. They do not change the conditions that encourage them. Pest infestations are stopped by changing the conditions that have allowed the pests to thrive in the first place, and not by repeated applications. This is a very important statement. It is almost political. The PNM is encouraging all kinds of things to thrive in this country such as kidnapping, murders and rapes. They have to change those conditions.

Pesticides are hazardous to human health. Every year enormous quantities of pesticides known to cause significant health problems, are used in Trinidad and Tobago. These health problems include injury to the nervous system; reproductive system and immune system. They can cause birth defects and cancer. In the market more than 350 pounds of pesticides are used per year. For a country as small as Trinidad and Tobago it is extremely high. Much of our produce was stopped from being exported to the United States. I was in the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources. It was largely because of my work that we were able to cause produce to re-enter the United States. That was a collective thing.

Pesticides cause special problems for children. For their size they consume more food and drink than adults and these can be contaminated with pesticides. Children play in ways that increase their potential exposure. Their growing and developing bodies are particularly sensitive. I want to elaborate on this. About 20,000 children just wrote the Secondary Entrance Assessment examination (SEA); another 30,000 are writing Caribbean Examinations Council examinations (CXC). These children would be on summer vacation very soon and they would consume more food and water. They would be exposed to more things. It is a good time for the Government to revisit what it does and how it prepares for children who are going on vacation. What would they be exposed to in the summer camps? The Government should give incentives not just to PNM support people, but all the offices of the Members of Parliament. Let us visit all summer camps and expose

them to knowledge. Let us develop this country collectively. You could obtain our support. Treat us fairly; stop discriminating against us and more can happen.

There is evidence that pre- and post-natal exposure to pesticides increases the risk of childhood cancer. I do not know if you are conversant. Many children have diseases that we never knew about. Two or three days ago, a 14-year old student from a school in San Fernando had to undergo an operation. Minister of Health, the operation could not have been done in Trinidad. Your Government gave no money. The family had to raise more than \$100,000. The child went to Miami but, unfortunately, the child died. On Monday, the body would be returned to Trinidad.

Early exposure to pesticides may increase risks of chronic diseases later in life. You cannot dismiss this. "Leh we have Parliament Friday. We stop Sharma from talking last week so leh we further embarrass ourselves." Do anything. Come up with something. Minister of Health you have nothing to do; come up with something.

Pesticides often contaminate food. In Trinidad and Tobago, the relevant agencies have no ability to measure that. They go after the event. Studies have shown that more than 67 per cent of the samples of fresh fruit and vegetables for tests were contaminated with at least one pesticide; 40 per cent was contaminated with more than one; almost 90 per cent was contaminated with more than two. When you buy fruits and vegetables you do not know what it has been exposed to. There is nothing to tell you how to treat it. How to wash it. Should you wash it with hot water? Should you treat it in a particular way before consuming it?

It seems as though the Government wants to get rid of people by using every approach available to it. Pesticides are particularly hazardous to farmers and farm workers. You have CEPEP contractors, do not mind they are PNM, but they are being exposed to all kinds of things. No education. Tomorrow would be Labour Day. I hope that they would march in Fyzabad. There are no comprehensive systems for keeping track of the numbers and types of pesticide illnesses in Trinidad and Tobago. It is time that the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development and maybe, the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources start to document the ills of the use of grammoxone or any pesticide.

Research indicates that farmers and farm workers face risk of both acute pesticide poisoning and long-term illness. What is the purpose of spending hundreds of millions of dollars in the Ministry of Health? *[Interruption]* That is why you are having an enquiry there. If you do your work you would save that.

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You are in serious trouble. Studies have shown that the use of herbicides and organic insecticides are associated with an increased risk of a variety of cancers including leukemia and prostate cancer.

For a moment, we cannot think that insecticides and pesticides only affect human beings. Pesticides are hazardous to pets. The herbicide 24D used by many lawn treatment companies is associated with cancer in animals. We have to look at how our pets are treated. In many instances pets are indoors and this can result in children and adults picking up the illness from the pets. Pesticides contaminate water and air. This is a classic example in Trinidad.

I remember the PNM removed the Oil and Water Board. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think you appeared in a matter.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I do not want to get into that.

Mr. C. Sharma: I agree with you.

Major rivers, ponds and drinking water are contaminated with pesticides. Recently, in Guapo, in Trinidad air studies have shown contamination as well. Pesticides are hazardous to fishes and birds. More than 300 pounds of pesticides are known by the EPA to cause harm to fishes and birds only in the United States and that triggers down to Trinidad. We have to be careful with the fish that we are consuming.

The corporations that reap immense benefits from the sale of pesticides they manufacture also conduct the safety tests on their products. I cannot recall any company that sells pesticides or insecticides educating the national community. I may be wrong. In fact, I hope that I am wrong. Pesticides have too many secrets. Maybe, the Government is promoting the secret. It is important that we know where and when pesticides are used in our communities. The Government is not leading the fight against that. It must start demanding that consumers, children and teachers become aware of what obtains in terms of use. We need to know how much and the ingredients that are used. I have indicated reasons we must limit the use of insecticides and pesticides.

I want to talk about the relationship between pesticides and cancer. Pesticides are compounds used to kill pests; herbicides are used to kill weeds; insecticides are used to kill insects; fungicides are used to control diseases on crops. There are pesticides that turn to gas when released. They are used in enclosed spaces or to treat soil. What is the finding here? Farmers are heavy users of pesticides. They appear to experience an excess of certain types of cancer. In surveys around the

world, male farmers have increased death rates for cancers of the lip, stomach, brain, prostate and connective tissues as well as leukemia. Most of our farmers are males. Specific agricultural exposures that might be responsible for this increase have not been clearly identified. There seems to be much secret in the use of these things. I call on the Government to identify the importance of it and to see it as life-saving.

Both men and women on farms have potential exposure to pesticides, animal viruses, dust and fuels and oils in engine exhaust fertilizers. You heard the Minister talk about the fertilizers that would be introduced. That is only to capture the national attention that something is happening. It does not say the fallouts from them. Cancers associated with pesticides include Hodgkinson disease, leukemia, soft tissue and lung and breast cancers. Some of these cancers such as Hodgkinson disease and soft tissues are increasing in the general population not only in the United States, but also in the Caribbean suggesting that a common set of exposures may be involved. We can look at what obtains in the United States where the research is current and see what we can apply to Trinidad and Tobago. Further research is needed to clarify the relationship between cancer and agricultural exposures including pesticides. There is a connection between cancer and agricultural exposure.

What can we do to prevent the problem? The major routes of exposure to pesticides are the skin and eyes. Other routes include breathing and ingestion. The primary tasks associated with exposure include the handling, loading, mixing and application of pesticides to crops, lawns, gardens, insects and livestock. It is important to understand that it starts with exposure to the skin and eyes then it goes to breathing and ingestion.

What are some of the things that we can do? You notice that I am identifying the problems and also offering solutions. I hope that the press would take it and print it as a public service, just as they are carrying that ad about "pressure your Member of Parliament". [Interruption] Give us money too. Just as you are running \$5 million, give us some money and we would put the ads. Who is the Minister of Finance? Member for San Fernando East, would you consider ensuring that money comes to the Opposition so that we can carry our case? Not after the 29th because I know that you are stretching us. I must inform you. I am the treasurer of the party. "We eh have no money. So, run someting." We need to ensure that we participate widely.

Use the same precautions recommended for agricultural pesticides when using them in and around the home. More than 60,000 children would be at home at the

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end of this month. I call on the ministry to publish the guidelines both in the print and electronic media. Read the label instructions on the container carefully before beginning any application. I appeal to all the agricultural shops to consider when selling smaller amounts where the label would be absent, because you have broken down from a large quantity to a smaller amount, to give some information. Use only the amount directed. Personal exposure can be decreased through the use of personal protective equipment. This is an important point.

The Government must start subsidizing the protective gears such as overalls and goggles to protect the eyes. The parts of the body that are most commonly exposed are the hands, arms, head and face. Gloves should be considered. If storing chemicals keep them in their original containers and ensure that they are clearly labelled. Refasten all lids tightly. Store in areas away from children and pets. If discarding call—I was going to say the local government department, but everything in this country has collapsed. If you have some chemicals to get rid of there is not an agency you can call. There is something you call Dead Dog Removal. When there are no dead dogs to remove they drive down somewhere to report that they moved one to show that it is working.

Clothing including hats, shoes or boots can provide a continuing source of exposure, if pesticide residue is not completely removed. It is the Government's responsibility to cause the education to reach the people. Laundering would be very important and I do not mean money laundering. If you spill pesticide change clothing and wash the affected area immediately with soap and water. Remove work boots that have been exposed to pesticides before entering your house because you would take it there. This applies to schools. In most of the senior comprehensive schools and some junior secondary schools, agricultural science is taught and chemicals are used. In many of the schools that I have visited and communicated with, no safety apparatus is available. It seems as though the Government has a concerted effort to destroy the next generation. By 2020 I am not sure who would be here.

If the clothing has been soiled with pesticide it should be pre-rinsed either by spraying or hosing down before washing. Farmers are forced to rinse it in the pond and sometimes the same one that other people have to use for domestic purposes. They contaminate the pond with the fishes that reach your kitchen. I know that you like cascadox, so be careful. Use hot water for washing as it removes more pesticides than cold water. This is not practical in Trinidad. What do you have to do? You have to go with a stove in the garden. With all this LNG and CNG, the time would come when the government should consider running the

CNG lines in the communities, where they can use that gas to heat the water, instead of the Prime Minister wanting to run pipes up the islands. They could also go into small industries. When they have the fuel there, it would add value to their produce.

I want to raise a point about physicians. The increase in poisoning from insecticides and pesticides in Trinidad is very high. It has increased significantly within recent times and resulted in death and irreparable damage. We have seen the Ministry of Health discriminating against the doctors. You would recall Dr. Adoo, a Nigerian doctor who became very known for his research in gramoxone. At one time there seemed to be a high level of consumption of gramoxone by people. Dr. Adoo got married in Fyzabad and I got acquainted with his work. Since his death nothing has happened with his research. The Ministry of Health is causing no investments to go that way. There are a number of doctors waiting for more than one year to be employed and the Minister of Health is doing very little about that. The reason is that since last year July, while doctors have been waiting for their internship or becoming house officers or registrars, they have brought Cuban doctors who are not acquainted with any of these poisonings and cannot treat any person who is so affected. It is a calculated effort not to promote agriculture and provide any education about the use of insecticides and pesticides. I would like the Minister to indicate in his response, the number of doctors who are waiting to be hired; the reasons they have not been hired and the number of doctors hired after those who have been waiting.

I would refer to a study in Canada. I thank Dr. Fuad Khan for giving me this.

In 1997, the Ontario College of family physicians requested a review of the evidence on pesticides and human health effects. The increasing effect by the public created a demand for physicians' knowledge in this area.

That is why I referred to the work of Dr. Adoo.

The Cochrane approach which uses a pre stated methodology to search the literature and assess the quality of studies, was used to assess the evidence on the effects of pesticides on the paediatric and adult population in Canada.

They are talking about how the insecticides and pesticides affect the people in Canada, and the same insecticides and pesticides are being used in this country. The study would be relevant and the importance would be critical for us to review.

This review led us to conclude that there are serious problems with the amount of pesticides that the population is exposed to, particularly the

paediatric population. There are great shortcomings in the way in which risk is being assessed, underestimating the amounts and effects of pesticides on the human population.

In the research it is fair to conclude that the number and quality of studies done on each specific health outcome, varies particularly in the ability to quantify exposure to pesticides. However, the combined evidence from animal and human studies is sufficient to create concern regarding the health effects of pesticides, at the levels that we are currently exposed. We would never have the opportunity to randomly and blindly assign human subjects to pesticides and compare their health to those that are not exposed.

Thus, as in most areas of medicine we must rely on observation studies that can provide very sound evidence in conjunction with animal studies.

When you look at hospital admissions with the number of persons who come with diseases related to exposure such as cancer, kidney failure, heart ailments, migraine headaches and others, the point has been made that there is serious requirement for the Government to revisit this Bill brought to the House, and to demonstrate a caring and concerted effort to treat these fallouts. Producers must also demonstrate theirs as well and by that I mean those who cause them to be sold. We have waited for decades to take action in situations where such evidence obtains. To this date we have not seen this Government indicating anything. There has been a serious delay in taking any action. There has been a large call for us to revisit smoking in public places or a ban on cigarettes. There is direct link with cancer, cigarettes and other toxins. The public pays high costs for these delays.

The time has come when the Government must introduce precautionary measures that can alert the national community on how to treat with those issues.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, the speaking time of the hon. Member for Fyzabad has expired.

Motion made, That the hon. Member's speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. [*Mr. G. Singh*]

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. C. Sharma: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I graciously thank this House. I wanted to test the mettle of the PNM. When I know that you are sitting in that Chair, being my neighbour in La Brea and knowing that tomorrow we would break bread in Fyzabad, I know that they would not risk doing differently. Having earned the extension I shall not take advantage of it.

I would conclude very quickly. Studies of fungicides, herbicides and insecticides demonstrate that each of these compounds is more toxic to the newborn than the adult and we are a childbearing population. This has very practical implications. The present acceptable levels of adcarb on watermelons is such that a 10kg child could easily consume enough to experience acute toxicity including vomiting, seizures and heart failure. We do not know what the watermelons are treated with. Children like fruits. Pesticides are effective in killing pests through their neurotic effects. Infants appear to be susceptible to these pesticides because they have incompletely developed systems and their livers cannot treat with those chemicals.

You would obtain our support on this Bill since you have not caused any large press releases to go. You have not pressured us to vote on this one. Have you? I ask the Government not to play games with people's lives. Do not feel that you are the Government and you control everything in this country. Your time is short. You were here and we were there, but we would change one day. Very soon. The population is on an outburst. By 2020, whatever period, it does not matter. You must not destroy those who would be allowed to sit in this Parliament in 2020.

I thank the Members who sit on the House Committee such as Mr. Kenneth Valley, Mr. Ganga Singh, Dr. Adesh Nanan and others; they are doing a good job. In my office in Fyzabad, although it has been broken into frequently by agents of the PNM, I now have Internet access to global knowledge to see what obtains. The Minister has access to much information. This goes for all of us. We must come more prepared to this House and bring information that can add value to the lives of people.

Thank you.

The Minister of Health (Hon. John Rahael): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I thank the Members on the other side who contributed to the debate. The Member for Caroni Central made a contribution relative to the Bill. I thank Members as the Member for Fyzabad has indicated, for the support of this Bill. I would be short in my response.

The Member for Tabaquite made an academic contribution which I think is worthy of a class in chemistry, at the University of the West Indies. Let me indicate that the purpose of this Bill is to measure and monitor the use of pesticides, as they are being imported in Trinidad and Tobago. The fact that we would have some control over these chemicals, would ensure that the chemicals are not put to use for illicit drugs. By monitoring and measuring not only for local

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consumption, but also export, we would ensure that the usage is put to what it is intended for.

The Member for Caroni Central raised a question with respect to the definition of the drugs on the amendment. It can be read to include drugs. I think that we have circulated an amendment to ensure that the question of drugs being defined as a chemical would not be mistaken. In Committee Stage we would move that amendment. I thank the Member for Caroni Central for his contribution with respect to clause 4.

With respect to over-the-counter medication that is being sold, the question was the extent that certain chemicals are used in some of the prescribed drugs. The Drug Advisory Committee is empowered to advise the Minister on drug standards; the schedule and condition of the sale of drugs. Accordingly, considering each application, the Drug Advisory Committee looks at the quantity of all the ingredients in the drug in question. They would advise the Minister in order to indicate what drugs should be sold over the counter. Once that is done the question of any increase in the cost at the pharmacy does not exist.

Dr. Rafeeq: Thank you for giving way. We are passing law and there is nothing that I can find in the laws that state that the Drug Advisory Committee can give any advice out of the law. The Drug Advisory Committee can only advise you within the law. If the law says that these things are illegal or must be sold by prescription, the Drug Advisory Committee cannot advise otherwise. Where is the authority for them to do that?

Hon. J. Rahael: The Drug Advisory Committee has always been the committee that recommends what are prescription drugs and what are not. That would continue.

Dr. Rafeeq: Thanks again for giving way. They can only advise you within the law not outside the law. If they have been doing that they are wrong. You are now putting this as a Third Schedule drug, then, it would remain so in law. They cannot advise you otherwise. They do not have that authority in law.

Hon. J. Rahael: The advice that I have from our attorneys is that based on the dosage, the Drug Advisory Committee would determine what drugs are on prescription. I am not a lawyer. I am going on the advice of our legal advisor and the Attorney General's Office.

Dr. Rafeeq: I accept that. Have it checked.

Hon. J. Rahael: I thank you for the point that you are making. I can only go with the advice that I have from our legal advisors. Nevertheless, we would check it to verify.

The claim that the registrar of the Toxic and Pesticide Board is not a public officer and as such, the public officers would have to report to a non public officer is not accurate. The Registrar is in fact a public officer.

Dr. Rafeeq: Is the registrar a public service post?

Hon. J. Rahael: That is the information I have on the advice of our legal manager.

With respect to the Quality Health Service Act that you raised, it has been reviewed. We met that there and it is deemed to be in breach of the Constitution. We are now working on drafting the Bill to ensure that all rights are protected. *[Interruption]* If we think it is necessary we would afford it to you. Let us hope that you would give the support. I hold you for that undertaking.

With respect to the Ambulance Act, I advise that both the Ambulance Act and the regulations have recently been finalized and are shortly expected to come to this House.

The Member for Caroni Central made the point about the Emergency Medical Services (EMS) and the management of the ambulances. I agree with you totally that the management of the EMA should be in private hands. That is ready and we hope to tender shortly.

With respect to tissue transplant, regulations have been finalized and by the end of this month, we hope to publish those regulations. Once that is published we would be able to go through with it.

You raised the question of the Funeral Homes Bill. That is also now being reviewed at the ministry. The issues affecting the funeral industry are being addressed. We are working on all these Bills and we would be coming shortly to Parliament to deal with most of them.

With those few remarks in response to the contributions made on the other side, I beg to move.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a second time

Bill committed to a committee of the whole House.

House in committee.

Clauses 1 and 2 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

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Question put and agreed to, That the Bill be now reported to the House.

House resumed.

Bill reported, without amendment, read the third time and passed.

PESTICIDES AND TOXIC CHEMICALS (AMDT.) BILL

Order for second reading read.

The Minister of Health (Hon. John Rahael): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move,

That a Bill to amend the Pesticides and Toxic Chemicals Act, 1979 to strengthen the regulatory framework as it relates to pesticides and toxic chemicals be now read a second time.

Question proposed.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a second time.

Bill committed to a committee of the whole House.

House in committee.

Clauses 1 to 3 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 4.

Question proposed, That clause 4 stand part of the Bill.

Mr. Rahael: Mr. Chairman, I beg to move that clause 4 be amended as follows:

- (a) In the definition of “toxic chemical” insert after the word “pesticide” the words “antiseptic, disinfectant, drug or preservative”.
- (b) Delete the words “whether they are produced in facilities, munitions or elsewhere” and substitute the word “use”.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 4, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 5 to 10 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Question put and agreed to, That the Bill, as amended, be reported to the House.

House resumed.

Bill reported, with amendment, read the third time and passed.

Adjournment

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ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move that this House be now adjourned to Wednesday, June 23, 2004 at 1.30 p.m.

I wish to inform Members that on that day the Government plans to debate two Bills: the Family Proceedings (Amdt.) Bill and the Shipping (Marine Pollution) Bill. The Government also plans to have the second Bill referred to a Joint Select Committee at the second reading.

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 6.05 p.m.

WRITTEN ANSWER TO QUESTION

Motor Vehicle Drivers Charged

(Details of)

The following question was asked by Mr. Subhas Panday (Princes Town):

- 103.** (a) How many motor vehicle drivers have been charged with the offence of exceeding the speed limits in Trinidad and Tobago between January 01, 2002 to the present time?
- (b) Could the Minister state the date, time and place where these drivers have been charged?
- (c) What steps are being embarked upon to increase the frequency in the execution of more speed traps?

The following reply was circulated to Members of the House:

The Minister of National Security (Sen. The Hon. Martin Joseph): The answer to question No. 103 (a):

The Commissioner of Police has advised that over the period January 01, 2002 to May 20, 2004, a total of fifteen thousand, three hundred and fifty (15,350) Motor Vehicle Drivers were charged with the offence of exceeding the Speed Limit in Trinidad and Tobago, as follows:

Year	Persons Prosecuted
2002	7,586

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Year	Persons Prosecuted
2003	4,907
2004 (May 20, 2004)	2,857
TOTAL	15,350

(b) All speed detection exercises are conducted between the hours of 6:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. As a consequence, those 15,350 Motor Vehicles Drivers who have been charged for the offence of exceeding the speed limit were detected while driving between those hours in the following thirty (30) locations throughout Trinidad and Tobago:

- Beetham Highway between Servol and Barataria
- Churchill Roosevelt Highway between El Socorro Intersection and Barataria Overpass
- Audrey Jeffers Freeway, Mucurapo between Hasely Crawford Stadium and the Mucurapo Link Road
- Priority Bus Route, from CGA to UWI
- Western Main Road, Cocorite from Bayshore Towers to Columbus Circle, Westmoorings, between the Diego Martin turn off and the St. James Overpass
- Solomon Hochoy Highway in the Corinth Golconda Area in the vicinity of the Marabella Junior Secondary School and in the vicinity of the refinery
- The Churchill Roosevelt Highway in the vicinity of Bestcrete and in Mausica and in the vicinity of Santa Rosa
- Sir Solomon Hochoy Highway in the vicinity of Seereram Brothers and in the vicinity of Indian Trail Flyover
- Uriah Butlter Highway in the vicinity of the Divali Naga Site and in the vicinity of the Bird Sanctuary
- Eastern Main Road, Turure, Sangre Grande in the vicinity of the Turure Cemetery
- James Smart Village, Sangre Grande
- Brooklyn Settlement, Sangre Grande

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- Valencia Stretch in the vicinity of St. Albans Quarry, Sangre Grande
- Augustine Village, Rio Claro
- Libertville, Rio Claro
- Union Village, Mayaro
- Manzanilla Main Road, Mayaro
- Guayaguayare Road, Mayaro
- Along Claude Noel Highway, Tobago
- Sir Solomon Hochoy Highway near Petrotrin Pond, just after St. Margaret Hill
- Renzi Kurtin Highway near Todds Street intersection
- M2 Ring Road, Debe
- Siparia Erin Road, Quarry Village
- K.T.O Stretch, Guapo
- South Trunk Road, Oropouche
- Dunlop Stretch, Point Fortin
- Rock Road, Penal
- Chinese Village, La Brea
- Clarke Road, Penal
- Los Bajos Stretch, Palo Seco

The Commissioner of Police has indicated that the process of accessing the exact dates and times is a lengthy one which entails going through several volumes of Registers. Given the available manpower such an exercise cannot be completed in under six (6) months.

- (c) In order to increase the frequency in the execution of more speed traps, the Commissioner of Police:
 - (i) has increased the number of speed detection exercises in the Central, Southern and Northern Divisions since, (based on an analysis of the statistics), those are the areas in Trinidad and Tobago in which vehicular casualties most frequently occur;

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- (ii) has instituted a traffic plan in all Police Divisions which addresses the manner in which Police Officers should deal with all traffic offences including speed offences;
- (iii) has identified and marked off additional speed trap areas for speed detection exercises;
- (iv) has identified additional Police Officers to undergo training in speed detection to cater for the anticipated increased number of exercises;
- (v) is awaiting legal advice on the legality of the use of speed detection devices in Trinidad and Tobago.”