

*Leave of Absence**Friday, May 26, 2006***HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES***Friday, May 26, 2006*

The House met at 1.30 p.m.

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

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, I have received communication from the following Members requesting leave of absence from sittings of the House: Miss Dianne Seukeran, Member for San Fernando West, for the period May 24 to June 05, 2006; Mr. Winston Dookeran, Member for St. Augustine, hon. Manohar Ramsaran, Member for Chaguanas and Mr. Ganga Singh, Member of Parliament for Caroni East, from today's sitting of the House.

Hon. Members, I also wish to inform you that pursuant to section 49(4) of the Constitution, I have granted leave to the Member for Couva North, 30 days extension, to allow him to pursue his appeal against the decision of the Chief Magistrate. Those 30 days will expire on June 24, 2006.

**FAIR TRADING BILL**

Bill to provide for the establishment of a Fair Trading Commission, to promote and maintain fair competition in the economy, and for related matters, brought from the Senate [*The Minister of Trade and Industry*]; read the first time.

**FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS (AMDT.) BILL**

Bill to amend the Financial Institutions Act, 1993, brought from the Senate [*The Minister in the Ministry of Finance*]; read the first time.

**PETITION**

**Princes Town Roads  
(Deplorable Conditions)**

**Mr. Subhas Panday** (*Princes Town*): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to present a petition on behalf of Clarene Greaves of High Street, Princes Town; Gowrie Roopnarine of School Trace, New Grant, Princes Town; Satdeo Maharaj of Charlotte Street, Princes Town; Nalini Roopnarine of Loney Road, Moruga Road, Princes Town; Prem Singh of Petit Café Village, Princes Town; Keisha Buntin of Matilda, Princes Town; Tommy Choonoo of Buen Intento Road, Princes Town and other

*Princess Town Roads*  
[MR. S. PANDAY]

*Friday, May 26, 2006*

constituents of Princes Town and the environs. I shall now ask that the Clerk be permitted to read the petition.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

*Petition read.*

#### PAPERS LAID

1. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the financial statements of the Trinidad and Tobago Civil Aviation Authority for the year ended September 30, 2003. [*The Minister of Works and Transport (Hon. Colm Imbert)*]
2. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the abridged financial statements of the Deposit Insurance Corporation for the year ended September 30, 2005. [*Hon. C. Imbert*]

*Papers 1 and 2 to be referred to the Public Accounts Committee.*

3. The Civil Proceeding (Amendment) Rules, 2006. [*Hon. C. Imbert*]
4. The annual audited financial statements of Export Centres Company Limited for the year ended September 30, 2004. [*Hon. C. Imbert*]

*Paper 4 to be referred to the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee.*

5. Draft White Paper on Local Government Reform, 2006. [*Hon. C. Imbert*]

#### PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE

##### (Second Report)

##### (Presentation)

**The Minister of State in the Ministry of National Security and Minister of State in the Ministry of Trade and Industry (Hon. Fitzgerald Hinds):** I wish to lay on the table the Second Report of the Public Accounts Committee of this Eighth Parliament.

#### ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

##### Coat of Arms

##### (Use of)

9. **Dr. Fuad Khan** (*Barataria/San Juan*) asked the hon. Minister of Works and Transport:

Could the Minister state what official vehicles are legally allowed to use the coat of arms instead of a number on the vehicle's licence plate?

**The Minister of Works and Transport (Hon. Colm Imbert):** Mr. Speaker, the responsibility for the use or display of the coat of arms rest with the Minister responsible for national emblems, who at this time is the Minister of National Security. The Minister of National Security therefore can authorize the display or use of the coat of arms.

**Dr. F. Khan:** Mr. Speaker, I know that a question once asked, cannot re-enter the House for a specific time. But with your leave, is it possible that I could re-ask the question to the Minister of National Security in the near future? How long would it take before I do that?

**Mr. Speaker:** Let me consider it and I would get back to you.

**Dr. F. Khan:** Thank you.

**Swaha Hindu College  
(Details of Contract)**

**10. Mr. Harry Partap (Nariva)** asked the hon. Minister of Education:

Would the Minister state:

- (a) Which firm was awarded the contract to build the Swaha Hindu College and whether there are sub-contractors involved in the project? If so could the Minister identify these sub-contractors?
- (b) Whether there was a performance bond on the contract for construction of the school?
- (c) If the answer to (b) is in the affirmative, would the Minister state whether the performance bond has been forfeited?

**The Minister of Education (Sen. The Hon. Hazel Manning):** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My response is as follows:

(a) The Swaha Education Board has advised the Ministry of Education that the contract for the construction of the Swaha Hindu College was awarded by the Swaha Education Board to Satnarine Maharaj and Company Limited after suitably qualifying contractors were invited to submit bids.

This contractor developed difficulties during the foundation stage of the project and the contract was terminated by the Swaha Board by agreement. The Swaha Construction Company Limited was then contracted to provide construction management services for the project.

The subcontractors hired by Swaha Construction Company Limited to date are as follows: Adams Construction Company for foundation and block work; Wool Fabricators Limited, a structural steel contractor; Cordil Construction Limited for block work, septic tank and electrical kiosk; Crystal Fountain Company Limited; Electrical Trading Company Limited; Hanes Plumbing Life-time Roofing; West and Associates Limited; Rabco International; Mike Phillip Limited; CBS Woodworks; North Coast Construction Limited; Pharry Hardware and Construction; Bigbee Heavy Construction Company Limited; David O'Brien Company Limited; Seven Kay Oriental Tiles Limited; Satnarine Transport Limited; Nizam Suhat; OBC Limited; General Termites Limited; Bank Mark; R. King Construction and Repair Limited; L. Lutchmansingh and Company Limited; David Smith; Timothy Muldhar; Hanes Plumbing (1990) Limited; a total of 26 subcontractors to date.

(b) The performance bond was not posted by the terminated contractor. Following the conversion of the project approach to provision of construction management services, the need for the provision of a performance bond by a main contractor was removed.

In consideration of the above and in order to support project success, the Ministry of Education Project Management Consultant would be working along with the technical personnel of the Ministry of Education in monitoring cost and performance to ensure timely and effective completion.

In light of (b) above, question (c) is not relevant.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Partap:** Mr. Speaker, is the Minister aware that the main contractor is affiliated to Swaha Incorporated?

**Sen. The Hon. H. Manning:** Mr. Speaker, I do not know. I would find out and be able to report again.

**Mr. Partap:** Madam Minister, does the Ministry have any objection to the award of contracts to a construction company affiliated or formed by a religious organization to build schools belonging to those religious organizations?

**Sen. The Hon. H. Manning:** Mr. Speaker, that is a totally different and new question and if the Member could put that in writing—

**Mr. Speaker:** Yes, I was going to say so. I allowed you to stand if you had the information, but I do agree.

**Mr. S. Panday:** Could the Minister state whether there was open bidding prior to Swaha giving Swaha the contract?

**Mr. Speaker:** I did not get it. Could you repeat the question, hon. Member?

**Mr. S. Panday:** Could the hon. Minister kindly state whether there was open bidding or whether there was a bidding process put in place before Swaha Construction was given the contract from the Swaha Board?

**Sen. The Hon. H. Manning:** Mr. Speaker, those details I would have to go back to the Ministry to find them. If you put them in writing I would answer.

**Swaha Hindu College  
(Delay of Construction)**

**11. Mr. Harry Partap** (*Nariva*) asked the hon. Minister of Education:

Would the Minister state:

- (a) Why has there been a long delay in the completion of the construction of the Swaha Hindu College in Sangre Grande?
- (b) When will the school be ready for occupancy by the students?

**The Minister of Education (Sen. The Hon. Hazel Manning):** Mr. Speaker, my response is as follows:

- (a) The bills of quantities prepared by the quantity surveyor procured by the Swaha Education Board had several omissions along with the overmeasuring and under-measuring of some items of work. The Ministry, in order to assist the Swaha Education Board, met with the board's consultants to have the required documents corrected and the completed items re-measured. The Ministry of Education is also undertaking an independent review of the project which would be completed shortly.
- (b) When the review process described above is completed and the Swaha Education Board supplies the necessary documents—for example, revised bills of quantities justifying any increased cost and a detailed programme giving start and finish dates to the Ministry of Education—the final stages of the project would be completed after approval by the Ministry of Education. Work is continuing on the project and would be accelerated after the review process. Technical personnel of the Ministry of Education have been and will be monitoring works and

*Oral Answers to Questions*  
[SEN. THE HON. H. MANNING]

*Friday, May 26, 2006*

would advise the Swaha Education Board as may be necessary to support quality assurance and timely delivery.

The project is now 80 per cent completed and is projected to be completed by September 30, 2006.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Partap:** Thank you, Sir. Would the Minister state whether the problem with the toilets at the Swaha College has been resolved?

**Sen. The Hon. H. Manning:** Mr. Speaker, these details I would go back to the Ministry and be able to come back again.

**Elswick Presbyterian School**  
**(Status of)**

**12. Mr. Harry Partap** (*Nariva*) asked the hon. Minister of Education:

Would the Minister state:

The current status of the Elswick Presbyterian School in Tableland which was closed in September 2005?

**The Minister of Education (Sen. The Hon. Hazel Manning):** Mr. Speaker, owing to extensive land erosion, the building housing the Elswick Presbyterian School suffered structural damage and was deemed unfit for occupation. The Presbyterian Primary School Board of Education engaged its engineers to evaluate the severity of the erosion and to make suitable recommendations. On completion of this evaluation the engineers recommended that the infant block be completely demolished and replaced.

In light of the extent of distress seen on the staircase and the toilet block, it was also recommended that this be demolished and replaced. The Presbyterian Primary School Board of Education arranged for the students to be relocated to the Poole Presbyterian School, to allow for whole day classes rather than a shift system.

In its overall efforts to assist the Presbyterian Primary School Board of Education, the Ministry of Education is at present conducting the necessary demographic and geo-technical studies to facilitate decisions related to the reconstruction of the school in the near future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. S. Panday:** Could the hon. Minister state, firstly, whether the integrity of the main structure of the Elswick Presbyterian School is maintained; and, secondly, what is the size of that area of the school which has to be demolished?

**Sen. The Hon. H. Manning:** Those details, Mr. Speaker, I would get from the Presbyterian Board.

**Biche Presbyterian School  
(Re-opening of)**

**13. Mr. Harry Partap** (*Nariva*) asked the hon. Minister of Education:

Would the Minister advise when would the Biche Presbyterian School, which was vacated in 2002, be re-opened for use by the children of Biche?

**The Minister of Education (Sen. The Hon. Hazel Manning):** Mr. Speaker, the school was vacated and relocated by the Presbyterian Primary School Board of Education on Wednesday, February 07, 2001—when the UNC government was in office, and when Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar was Minister of Education—due to the presence of an unpleasant and offensive odour, and not in 2002 as erroneously claimed by the hon. Member for Nariva. Of the 153 students attending the Biche Presbyterian School at the time of relocation, 145 students went to the Cushe Government Primary School and the remaining eight students were transferred to the Biche RC Primary School.

The 53 students at Biche Presbyterian School who are currently accommodated at Cushe Government Primary School benefit from breakfast meals, lunches, bus transportation and textbooks under the School Support Services provided by the Ministry of Education. Through the joint arrangement between the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education, the students have already received hearing testing and vision screening is soon to commence.

Members should note that the decision to establish a denominational school has to be initiated by the relevant religious body. The Presbyterian Primary School Board of Education has not made any recommendations to date with respect to its intention to re-open this school. Nevertheless, the Ministry of Education in consultation with the Presbyterian Primary School Board of Education has taken all steps necessary to ensure that the children, who previously attended the school and the new entrants into the primary school system in the area, are being properly educated.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Dr. F. Khan:** The hon. Minister of Education, could I just ask—maybe you would have to go back to the Ministry for this answer, but maybe you would try

to answer it—what steps has the Minister or the Ministry of Education taken to investigate the problem that is occurring in the Biche Presbyterian School; and if any investigation has been done, what mechanisms have been made to repair that at this time. It has almost been five years.

**Mr. Speaker:** No, you do not need to. That is a completely new question. It does not arise out of the answer given by the Minister.

**Dr. F. Khan:** This arises from this.

**Mr. Speaker:** No, no, I have ruled. Please, proceed.

**Dr. Rafeeq:** Madam Minister, you mentioned that the establishment of a school by the religious boards has to done in consultation with the religious board and the Ministry. But this is not the establishment of a school; this is the replacement of a school. Why do you—

**Sen. The Hon. H. Manning:** When I talk about establishment I also mean replacement, disestablishment, anything having to do with the construction, removal, repairs and upgrading of schools. We meet the association of denominational boards almost on a weekly basis now, as we put a number of these programmes in place.

**DEFINITE URGENT MATTER**

**(LEAVE)**

**Children Support Systems**

**(Government's Failure to Provide)**

**Mr. Nizam Baksh** (*Naparima*): Thank you. Mr. Speaker, in accordance with Standing Order 12 of the House of Representatives I hereby seek your leave to move the adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing the following matter as a definite matter of urgent public importance; namely, the failure of Government to provide adequate social support systems for abused children.

The matter is definite because of the recent brutalization, sexual molestation and murder of Sean Luke Lum Fai and Amy Annamunthodo, as well as the rape, sexual molestation and ill treatment of several children at a home for children.

The matter is urgent because it is our duty to protect innocent children against such heinous criminal acts and because there is a compelling need to put mechanisms in place to ensure that crime against children do not continue.

The matter is of public importance because the rights of children, human rights and the rights of protection of children must be enforced to preserve society.



*Definite Urgent Matter (Leave)*

*Friday, May 26, 2006*

**Mr. Speaker:** I have read the Motion moved by the hon. Member for Naparima and whilst this Motion is one worthy of discussion, it really does not qualify under this particular Standing Order. So I can recommend to the hon. Member that he can either bring a motion on the adjournment or a substantive motion.

**STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS  
(DEFERRAL)**

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, I have given leave to the hon. Prime Minister and the hon. Minister of National Security to make statements today. They are not in the House at the moment so we would defer this item to later on in the proceedings.

**TOBAGO HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY (AMD'T) BILL**

Bill to amend the Tobago House of Assembly Act, No. 40 of 1996 to increase the number of secretaries from five to seven [*Minister of State in the Office of the Prime Minister*]; read the first time.

**CARIBBEAN EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL  
(PRIVILEGES AND IMMUNITIES) BILL**

Bill intended to grant certain privileges and immunities to the members, officials and experts in missions on behalf of the Council [*Minister of Education*]; read the first time.

**ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY  
(ABSENCE OF RULES)**

**Dr. Adesh Nanan** (*Tabaquite*): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the following Motion standing in my name:

WHEREAS the Environmental Management Authority has admitted that the absence of approved water pollution, air pollution and hazardous waste disposal rules prevents the authority from imposing standards for the discharge of dangerous substances into the environment;

AND WHEREAS aluminum smelters and accompanying power generation plants are earmarked to be constructed at Chatham and La Brea;

AND WHEREAS these said smelters can pose serious health risks to the residents of Chatham, La Brea and environs;

BE IT RESOLVED that this Honourable House call upon the Government to:

- (i) strengthen its environmental regulations immediately with respect to the water pollution, air pollution and hazardous waste;

*EMA (Absence of Rules)*  
[DR. A. NANAN]

*Friday, May 26, 2006*

- (ii) clearly define what types and levels of emissions can be expected from the said smelters, the potential health risks to workers and residents and how the pollutants from the said smelters will be disposed of;
- (iii) state clearly the economic benefits to be derived from the construction and operation of the said smelters.

The Environmental Management Authority is governed by the Environmental Act of 2000. You would recall that a part of the Environmental Management Act deals with the certificate of environmental clearance. It goes even further to point out the Certificate of Environmental Clearance Designated Activities Order. I would quote from the Certificate of Environmental Clearance Designated Activities Order, 2001:

	ACTIVITY	DEFINITION
21.	Establishment of a facility for production or refining of metals or their related products	The establishment, modification, expansion, decommissioning or abandonment (inclusive of associated works) of a facility for the production or reforming of metals or related products (including lead recovery from batteries).

**2.00 p.m.**

Mr. Speaker, this particular activity, the production of aluminium falls in this category, the establishment of a facility for production or refining of metals or the related products and this is where I place the aluminium smelter debate.

We have heard that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago has agreed in principle to the construction of two aluminium smelters; one at Union Estate, La Brea and the other at Chatham, Granville, Cedros. The Aluminium Company of America, Alcoa, proposes to build a 325,000 metric ton per year smelter in Cedros. A Chinese export/import company, in collaboration with the Trinidad and Tobago National Energy Corporation, which has formed a joint venture with [SURAL](#) of Venezuela called Alutrint, proposes to build a 125,000 metric ton per year smelter in La Brea.

Smelters are highly dangerous industries, more dangerous than anything already existing in Trinidad. They produce unmanageable toxic waste; place workers at risk of getting cancer and other diseases, and, Mr. Speaker, I will

briefly outline the process for the House because it is important to understand why we are having these emissions coming from these smelters.

**Mr. Achong:** You are a dentist, what do you know about smelters?

**Dr. A. Nanan:** I have spoken on several topics, so the Member for Point Fortin should just be quiet and listen carefully.

**Mr. Speaker:** I thought the hon. Member for Point Fortin would know that apart from your being a dentist, you are also a scientist, a physicist and a chemist; you are all encompassing. Please continue. [*Desk thumping*] [*Laughter*]

**Dr. A. Nanan:** Mr. Speaker, thank you for placing that on the record of the House.

**Hon. Member:** A dentist; a physicist and a chemist! [*Laughter*]

**Hon. Member:** He forgot international relations officer. [*Laughter*] [*Crosstalk*]

**Dr. A. Nanan:** Mr. Speaker, it is an unfortunate situation because when I am finished the Member for Point Fortin would have to go back to the constituents and explain why a smeller is going in that area. When I point out the health risks in this House and show the kind of hazards and health risks to the population; not only in Point Fortin and Cedros but the entire country as well as Tobago will be at risk. So I want him to pay attention because he would have to explain to the people in those areas.

Mr. Speaker, we are dealing with the production of aluminium; it is the first time in the history of Trinidad and Tobago that we are going to be dealing with fluorides. Yes, they have been used in the petroleum industry, but not in these large quantities. I would point out to the House this evening, as a dentist the benefits of fluoride, but I would also point out—

**Hon. Members:** Take that! Take that!

**Dr. A. Nanan:**—to the House when you use fluorides in large quantities it can be dangerous and deadly. I want to point out early in my contribution and I am calling now for the reintroduction of fluoride into the national water system. It was here 20 years ago, but it has been stopped and I would show you, Mr. Speaker, why it is necessary to have fluoride in the drinking water of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, you would recall, in Colorado, in 1902—

**Hon. Member:** No, the Speaker cannot recall that. He was not alive.

**Mr. Partap:** At least he could read. [*Crosstalk*]

**Dr. A. Nanan:** I am sorry, I am sorry, Mr. Speaker. In 1902 in El Paso County, Colorado, they examined the children of that particular town and they saw that there was a kind of brown staining of the enamel of the teeth of the children—and they named that **mottled** enamel. It is important to understand, as I build in terms of the chronology of events, why I made that call.

In 1928, in a town called Bauxite in Arkansas, a mining and manufacturing company—a subsidiary of Alcoa, it is important to understand that—took samples of the bauxite water and they found that there was 13 7/10 parts per million of fluoride and that was a possibility of causing that—[*Interruption*] I would tell you; with respect to that concentration. I want you to remember that concentration because it is important—

**Mr. Sharma:** Why is it only 7/10? [*Laughter*]

**Dr. A. Nanan:** Mr. Speaker, the concentration there was 13 7/10 parts per million and they recognized the appearance on the children's teeth and the kind of damage to the enamel. Recent research studies and observations in private practice—that is dental practices—continues to support the contention that fluoridation of the communal water supply is the most effective method of reducing dental caries in the general population and that is why I make the call.

Philadelphia, the first city with a population of over one million to fluoridate its water supply; the reduction in the decay missing and filling of permanent teeth (DMFT) has averaged 75 per cent at six years of age. It is unfortunate that the Minister of Health is not here—54.5 per cent at eight years; 42.6 per cent at 12 years; and 46.7 per cent at 14 years. A 50 per cent reduction in the decay has been noted in the **primary teeth**, and they observed when fluoridation is discontinued in a community there is a dramatic increase in dental **caries** incidents. In fact, after a lapse of two years, children drinking fluoride free water in Galesburg, Illinois experienced as much as 38 per cent increase in tooth decay.

I will just give a brief indication of how it operates because it is important to know that that is what they call the **cariostatic** activity of fluoride, for the Member for Point Fortin who seems not to be aware. The ingestion of fluoride results in its incorporation into the dentine and enamel of unerupted teeth. [*Interruption*] This makes the teeth more resistant to acid attack after eruption into the oral cavity. [*Interruption*] In addition, ingested fluoride is secreted into saliva. Although it is

present in low concentrations in the saliva the fluoride is accumulated in [plaque](#) where it decreases microbial acid production. *[Interruption]* I made a call for fluoridation of the water system in the interest of the children and the reduction in tooth decay and I need to show why. I said it reduces the acid produced by the bacteria and what you have is remineralization of the enamel. I also said it used to happen 20 years ago in this country and it is time that it should be considered again to be reintroduced into the system.

**Mr. Hinds:** All this from a man who gets three patients a year.

**Dr. A. Nanan:** Let us examine the situation in Cedros. The proposed aluminium smelter will sit on the very apex of an [aquifer](#) which feeds the peninsula and surrounding areas with drinking water. Now I will be asked, you said that fluoride is very good to prevent tooth decay and the plant would be producing fluoride, but, Mr. Speaker, I said it is the first time that fluoride would be used in a process in such large—that it would be a by-product of an industry and the important aspect here is that hydrogen fluoride gas emanates from an aluminium smelter and it is important to understand where the fluoride comes from.

In the process of smelting, one of the chemicals being used in the [electrolysis](#) phase is sodium aluminium fluoride and that chemical triggers the formation of this dangerous and pungent gas hydrogen fluoride. And you have by-products sodium fluoride, aluminum fluoride, and sodium aluminium fluoride particles, but the quantities are so large that instead of having a beneficial effect on the population you would have a destructive effect. *[Interruption]* The Prime Minister might be the initiator of genocide *[Laughter]* with this particular measure. *[Interruption]*

This hydrogen fluoride gas damages in large quantities; damages the bones; damages teeth in large quantities, as I said before.

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** That is a better job for you.

**Dr. A. Nanan:** It inhibits protein [synthesis](#). It prevents formation of DNA, so it is really having a detrimental effect on the body and we are dealing with the safety of workers and the people of that area. Sodium fluoride in large quantities; a teaspoon full of sodium fluoride is lethal.

If an infant swallows *[Interruption]* a tube of toothpaste, that can be deadly, for we are dealing with parts per million. When we are dealing with parts per million the fluoridation of water is approximately one part per million, but when

*EMA (Absence of Rules)*  
[DR. A. NANAN]

*Friday, May 26, 2006*

we are dealing with the toxic emission from a smelter we are dealing with large quantities and that is the difference between the small beneficial effects of fluorides and larger quantities, it can be lethal toxic, cancerous. [*Interruption*]

You would recall, Member for Diego Martin East, that sodium fluoride was used in nerve gas. The Russians used sodium fluoride; the Germans used sodium fluoride; it is a component of [sarin](#), that nerve gas; that is the kind of effect of sodium fluoride in large quantities, and you are perpetrating upon the people of the peninsula an aluminium smelter that would produce tons of hydrogen fluoride. We have not had any statement from the Government in terms of the emissions and that is why this Motion is asking what will be the emissions and what will be the level of emissions; what will be the kind of tons of hydrogen fluoride being emitted from the [stacks](#) of the smelter.

Not only would you have hydrogen fluoride gas release—and I am sure that the chemists in this House would recall that you can use hydrogen fluoride to [etch glass](#); that is to tell you how corrosive hydrogen fluoride is. And hydrogen fluoride, not only if you swallow it in a gaseous form, is one of the water soluble corrosive gases.

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Who is the chemist?

**Dr. A. Nanan:** Member for Ortoire/Mayaro.

**Mr. Speaker:** Members, the honourable and distinguished Member for Tabaquite has given way for the Prime Minister to make a statement and I now call upon the Prime Minister. [*Desk thumping*]

#### LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM

**The Prime Minister and Minister of Finance (Hon. Patrick Manning):** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am thankful for the opportunity to make the following statement to this honourable House and the nation.

The matter of constitution reform is one of the most important issues facing our country at this time. We on this side note the growing comments in the media and from the national community on the need for the country to embark on this process.

A draft of a new Constitution has already been prepared by a group of distinguished leading citizens calling themselves the Principles of Fairness Committee. The Government intends to examine this document very carefully. At the same time, we are in the process of producing our own draft which we expect to be ready by July 2006. This document will join all others in the public domain

and provide the national community with the opportunity to further the debate on this fundamental matter.

We have also already placed in the public domain some of our ideas for the modernisation of our nation's Constitution. These include our thinking on the way forward for local government. On this occasion, I wish to focus on my administration's proposals for local government reform, which we consider to be an important first step towards the larger process of constitution reform.

We are of the view that significantly improved local government is indispensable for the deepening of the democratic process and for the better delivery of services to the people of the nation. It is also critical for greater national efficiency and productivity which will in turn increase the competitiveness of Trinidad and Tobago in the global arena.

We signalled our position quite early in our party's manifesto of 2002; and in Government, we embarked on a most transparent process to chart the way forward. A Draft Policy Paper was formulated by the Ministry of Local Government in 2004, incorporating previous reports on local government reform as well as the views, opinions and suggestions of individuals and institutions, including municipal corporations.

After review, this paper was approved by the Cabinet and published as a Green Paper for public comment. Thereafter, widespread consultations were held on this important matter. Specifically, a two-day National Consultation and four one-day Regional Consultations were held between August and September 2004. More than 1,000 persons from a wide cross section of the national community attended these consultations. They represented over 35 groups, organizations and institutions including community-based organizations, non-governmental organizations, village councils, women's groups, religious bodies, trade unions, political parties and the business sector. Focus group discussions were also held on the Green Paper. In addition, the commentaries and suggestions of individuals and institutions were received and reviewed by the Ministry of Local Government.

The Green Paper was laid in the other place on October 22, 2004 and in this honourable House on October 29, 2004. The consensual issues and positions that emerged from the consultations were reported to the Cabinet in August 2005, together with the findings and recommendations of the Local Government Inter-ministerial Transitional Task Force (LGITTF) on functions and responsibilities to be decentralized to local government bodies. The Cabinet agreed that a Revised

*Local Government Reform*  
[HON. P. MANNING]

*Friday, May 26, 2006*

Green Paper be produced incorporating both reports. In April 2006, a draft of this document was presented to the Cabinet and found acceptance.

Mr. Speaker, I now wish to bring to the attention of this honourable House some of the proposals for local government reform contained in the Revised Green Paper:

Firstly, we propose that there be an arrangement for the sharing of power between central and local government in Trinidad and Tobago. Under this system, the central government will be essentially the policy making body, whilst local government will be the principal executing arm of the State. For obvious reasons, this arrangement will not apply to some portfolios like national defence, foreign affairs, foreign trade and the energy sector, all of which must remain under the full purview of the central government.

Apart from these, the new concept envisages revised arrangements for some other areas. Some functions will be discharged by the central government by way of national arrangements like the Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission (T&TEC), the Water and Sewerage Authority (WASA), the Civil Aviation Authority, the Airports Authority and the Roads Authority. Other functions would be discharged by the local government bodies which would be restructured and given a significant project management capability. This will be utilised to dispense services through the use of private sector arrangements.

This system of power sharing will ensure the decentralization of authority that we have needed for some time in this country. It has been found, both here and abroad, that proximity between decision makers and those served are more likely to result in effective and efficient delivery of public goods and services. The decentralization of functions and responsibilities to local government bodies, rather than the devolution of power, is therefore being advocated as the core of our model of local government reform. In our view, the devolution of authority which involves the decentralization of policy decision making can lead to the fragmentation of the unitary state. So we opt for decentralization rather than devolution.

Secondly, through local government reform, we intend to improve representation of the people's interest in this country. We are proposing an enlarged Senate of Trinidad and Tobago to include all mayors and chairmen of municipal corporations. Though without a vote, they will have the additional opportunity to speak out on matters specifically affecting their cities and regions. Their contributions will serve to enhance the representational function now being



discharged by parliamentary representatives. The people's interest will therefore be better served. Community concerns and issues would then be vigorously aired in the nation's highest forum, providing the opportunity for much greater influence on national legislation, policies and programmes. Very significantly, indeed, this proposal will ensure a greater voice for the people in the nation's Parliament, thereby strengthening their participation in the democratic process. The feeling of being away from the centre will be significantly diminished.

Thirdly, Mr. Speaker, we propose to introduce executive councils in the local government system of Trinidad and Tobago. This is inspired by the experience gained in operating the Tobago House of Assembly (THA) model. These executive councils shall constitute the leadership of local government bodies, with the elected and nominated officials performing assigned roles and functions and being responsible to the local government body for management of particular departments or portfolios. The executive council shall take collective responsibility for management of the local government body as it implements the policies of the central government.

Our fourth proposal, Mr. Speaker, recommends a review of local government boundaries. At the level of the central government, there is an administrative district arrangement, the boundaries for which do not now coincide with those of local government. This position ought to be reviewed, since it is our view, that if both sets of boundaries are coterminous with each other, an opportunity is presented for the local government bodies to discharge a coordinating function in respect of the administration of certain central government responsibilities, like education and the delivery of social services. There is concern over the number of administrative districts caused by use of different boundaries by separate government agencies; aggravated by the fact that communities are virtually carved up in different ways depending on the application for which the boundary is used. There is therefore the need to establish new districts through a process of rationalisation, thereby enabling greater participation by the people in the affairs of their community.

Our boundary demarcations must be functional, rational and user-friendly. They must facilitate regional identification and mobilization, programme co-ordination and administration among the various agencies, as well as efficient and effective service delivery to our communities. One of the proposed strategies for reviewing and rewriting the local government boundaries is a thorough examination of a number of factors including the emerging new growth poles, new patterns of settlement and new centres of industrial and commercial activity.

*Local Government Reform*  
[HON. P. MANNING]

*Friday, May 26, 2006*

The intention is to ensure more effective national and regional planning as well as the growth of sustainable communities. This proposal could affect the size, number and type of local government bodies.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, we are proposing a degree of self-financing for local government bodies. The expectation is that through the collection of appropriate rates and taxes, all local government bodies should be able to finance a greater part of their annual budgets than currently obtains. We would therefore need to put in place the administrative and legal requirements to establish Property Taxation/House Rate Collection Units and Systems in those local government bodies where they do not now exist. We must also develop a realistic formula for the allocations from central government based on demographics and social and infrastructural needs.

Mr. Speaker, I have outlined five concrete proposals contained in our Revised Green Paper for the reform of Local Government in Trinidad and Tobago. We would now proceed to get the views of the relevant departments of the Opposition, as had been promised, and further the consultations with the entire national community on our recommendations. We want the strongest possible participation in this fundamental matter.

Consequently, the Revised Green Paper on Local Government Reform 2006 shall now be published as a Draft White Paper. We therefore open the way for further national dialogue on this issue and the Government shall ensure that the deliberations are as comprehensive as possible. I call on all citizens to enter the discussion and to make their views known to the Government. This matter is very directly related to the welfare of the people.

This issue involves the way we run our country and how efficiently we utilise the nation's revenues from our human efforts and our God-given resources. Additionally, Mr. Speaker, and very importantly, this entire process must be seen as a precursor to the greater, more complex and very challenging matter of Constitution reform. If we get this right, we would be better prepared for the much bigger hurdle.

**2.30 p.m.**

Mr. Speaker, in light of the importance of this matter and recognizing that it is not in the best interest of the country to simply continue with the present arrangement, we feel that we should clearly chart the new way forward before the impending local government elections are held. The life of the existing councils will expire on July 13 of this year. We should seriously attempt to give those who

would be our newly elected local government officials a fresh start in a newly energized, dynamic and progressive system. We should not be satisfied to continue with a situation that denies the full effectiveness of our representatives and the more efficient deployment of local government resources.

We must be wary of the growth of disillusionment with the democratic process by the people in our communities who, in today's modern world, understandably, have increasingly high expectations for improved performance from their representatives and their government agencies. We must, therefore, also recognize that those who come forward to serve at this level must satisfy the demands of a reformed system.

There is really no harm done with the proposed postponement of the elections, which is provided for by the Constitution. Indeed, the nation would gain by a rescheduling, because it would place an onus on all of us to reform the system within a given time frame. We have talked the talk; let us now walk it.

The Government, therefore, proposes to bring legislation to Parliament to extend the present term of local government bodies for a period of one year. We shall now publish our draft White Paper on Local Government Reform, which is being laid today on the Table of this honourable House. We are, therefore, now in a position to embark on the process of facilitating comprehensive public discussion on this pivotal matter of national concern.

As we continue to transform Trinidad and Tobago into a developed nation, it is important that we empower our system of local government to play its part in this giant step forward for the nation. We are proposing a modernized and revitalized system carefully conceptualized, which would enjoy sufficient autonomy and authority and have the resources and expertise to ensure improved delivery of goods and services to the people in our communities. Our proposals emanate from the concept of decentralization, which means the execution of policy decisions at the level of our local communities. In other words, more power to the people.

Thank you.

**ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY  
(ABSENCE OF RULES)**

**Dr. A. Nanan** (*Tabaquite*): Mr. Speaker, I was on the point of the dangerous gas, hydrogen fluoride. I would go on to give a little more facts with respect to this particular gas: it is a water soluble corrosive gas and when inhaled, it damages the larynx. [*Interruption*]

**Mr. Hinds:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member indicated that the fluoride content, for example, in toothpaste or water is not harmful but, in fact, good for human beings and would be one part to a million. The hon. Member also said that fluoride emissions from the smelter plant it would be in large quantities. Could the hon. Member indicate what that quantity would be?

**Mr. S. Panday:** More than one part per million.

**Dr. A. Nanan:** It would be more than five parts per million; anything over five parts per million is considered deadly. [*Crosstalk*] I would come to the Beetham landfill later on, Mr. Speaker. It is important for the Member to understand what is happening in his own constituency. [*Crosstalk*] Hydrogen fluoride gas is water soluble and corrosive and enters the system by inhalation. It destroys the larynx and the bronchioles; eventually you end up with fluid in the lungs. This is what the workers in the Cedros peninsula and La Brea would be subjected to.

There is another factor that I want the Member for Point Fortin to understand. Hydrogen fluoride gas, when it mixes with water or comes into contact with steam forms the explosive gas hydrogen. The explosion could trigger a chain reaction in that area. If there is an explosion, you would have a number of burn victims from this scenario. There is no burn unit in Point Fortin to take care of any disaster emanating from this particular gas that would be coming from the smelter in large quantities. It would also damage trees and crops in the vicinity.

I would leave hydrogen fluoride for the time being and move on to another fluoride element of the smelter, which is known as perfluorocarbons. These particular gases are fluoromethane and fluoroethane. [*Laughter*] [*Crosstalk*]

How can I confuse you? You are already confused. Can you be more confused?

These two gases emanating from the smelters do not have very detrimental effect on the environment or the health of workers, but they add to the greenhouse gas effect. Right now Trinidad and Tobago is about third in terms of the production of carbon dioxide.

**Mr. Bereaux:** Per population.

**Dr. A. Nanan:** We are heading towards the No. 1 position in terms of the production of carbon dioxide. [*Crosstalk*] You would get your chance to reply, Member for La Brea. I will point to the Alutrint smelter just now.

**Mr. Sharma:** He is on his way out.

**Dr. A. Nanan:** Hexafluoroethane—[*Crosstalk*] I said that it was fluoroethane, but it has six rings, so it is hexafluoroethane. In large quantities, these gases also cause nausea and vomiting when inhaled. It is not a laughing matter; it is important, because these gases that would emanate from the smelter would pose serious health risks. It does not have to be in great quantities; there are dangerous elements that come out as by-products of the smelter process.

What about sulphur dioxide, another by-product of the smelter? I pointed out to the House earlier that hydrogen fluoride emanates from a smelter. The perfluorocarbons arise, because as the aluminum concentration drops in the smelter, the fluorides attack the carbon anodes. That is how you get the carbon mixing with fluoride to give you these perfluorocarbons; so it is another by-product of the process of smelting. Everyone knows that sulfur dioxide is also called "acid rain"; it causes eye control irritation. It also causes serious respiratory illness. In my research, I also found out about another greenhouse gas: nitrous oxide.

**Mr. Manning:** Laughing gas.

**Dr. A. Nanan:** Exactly! I was not aware that nitrous oxide was produced naturally by oceans and rain forests. Many times you go to the ocean or walk into a rain forest and you find yourself at a different kind of level; you feel a little lightheaded and relaxed; probably that is why, because of the production of nitrous oxide. It is used as an anaesthetic in dentistry—the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre is not here.

Nitric oxides are part of the component of smog. So one day you may have an orange cloud over the Cedros peninsula, if the smelters are built, because of these nitric oxides in the atmosphere; that is the greenhouse gas effect. So you have smog in one area emanating from the Beetham landfill and Cedros with its orange cloud, because of the smog effect there, but the smog effect in the Beetham landfill is more methane than the nitric oxides. [*Crosstalk*]

So what are we setting up? We are creating an industry in Cedros to produce aluminium, using natural gas and we are killing the tourism industry. We are about to wipe out the tourism industry. Who would come to a country like Indonesia where you cannot breathe properly; clouds of smoke? Orange clouds in Cedros and methane gas in the Beetham area.

I would also deal with the metrological aspects from the west coast when the winds blow. When you inhale sulfur dioxide, it attacks the respiratory system. As

*EMA (Absence of Rules)*  
[DR. A. NANAN]

*Friday, May 26, 2006*

the Member for Diego Martin East said, it is acid rain. It also destroys the roofs of buildings. [*Crosstalk*] It has that kind of effect. In combination with the nitric oxide, that particular combination can be very corrosive in the atmosphere.

Crops are also affected because of the acid rain effect and it does not necessarily have to be within the Cedros peninsula; because of the prevailing winds coming off the South American mainland, it can travel all the way up to the north coast, so the entire country is at risk. I want to stay within the topic of acid rain because it is important to understand that it is not going to be confined to the Cedros peninsula.

**Mr. Bereaux:** Venezuela.

**Dr. A. Nanan:** So you have acid rain emanating from the smelter. You would also have nitric oxide and sulphur dioxide in the atmosphere; large quantities emanating from the smelters over the whole island.

If you take the example of where these smelters would be placed in terms of population density, Member for La Brea, you would see that the smelters being built in Cedros and La Brea are going to be built in the most populated area per square kilometre. [*Crosstalk*] If you look at where smelters are being built: Iceland, Brazil, Australia; large masses of land and not highly populated areas. But you have a concentration of two smelters here within the particular area in terms of the dense population. What signal are you sending? May I remind the Government, in case it is not aware—Member for Arima, you must be aware—that the New Zealand Government fell on the smelter issue, so I want you to tread very carefully.

**Miss Beckles:** I will write that; I will take a note of it.

**Hon. Member:** He should be encouraging us, because then they would be in office.

**Dr. A. Nanan:** Another by-product of this industry are polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons which are also by-products and they enter through the skin and can also get into the soil, so they contaminate the water. There is also the possibility of contaminating the cows' milk in the area; this is very dangerous. They could lead to skin cancer; they attack the kidneys and the liver.

**Mr. Sharma:** You would not be able to breast-feed your children.

**Dr. A. Nanan:** In terms of babies, you would have growth retardation and low birth weight. You would have dwarfs in Cedros. Growth retardation; low birth weight; endocrine system defects and you would also have [*Crosstalk*] a lot of

miscarriages in that area, because of these polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons emanating from these smelters.

**Mr. Sharma:** "Imagine everyone start to look like Hedgie." [*Laughter*]

**Dr. A. Nanan:** It is important to understand that these products coming from the smelters are dangerous to the population.

**Mr. Sharma:** With the same level of intelligence. [*Laughter*]

**Dr. A. Nanan:** You would have a new breed of human beings emanating from the Cedros peninsula and the La Brea area. The Members for Point Fortin and La Brea come to Parliament and say, "Yes, we want the smelter."

**Mr. Bereaux:** You do not know what we would say.

**Mr. Sharma:** "It starting to affect Hedgie already." [*Laughter*]

**Dr. A. Nanan:** Those are the products emanating from the direct interface between alumina and the anodes. We have to deal with another part of the smelter which is the lining of the pots. If the information is correct, the lining of the pot has to be changed every six to seven years. You would not believe this, but you have cyanide coming from the residue at the bottom of the pot, called the pot liner.

**Mr. Hinds:** Pot lining.

**Dr. A. Nanan:** At least you are paying attention.

You have cyanide and all the by-products, all the inorganic fluorides: sodium fluoride, aluminium fluoride and the sodium aluminium fluoride.

**Mr. Sharma:** Adesh, why does the PNM want this smelter?

**Dr. A. Nanan:** I do not know if it is a deal they have struck. [*Crosstalk*] If it is a deal, I do not know how much money has been passed for this particular smelter. We are seeing it in other areas, now we are seeing it in this particular area. How could a government, with a Minister of Health who is on television every night talking to the nation and who would be going on that health walk in Palmiste, support this? Where are the health studies with respect to these smelters? Why the secrecy with these smelters?

I looked in the budget documents, all I saw was the smelter for La Brea; there was no mention of a smelter in Cedros. Why the sleight of hand? Why is Alcoa being forced on the population of Trinidad and Tobago, trying to fool the population with coloured advertisements? There must be a public debate on the

*EMA (Absence of Rules)*  
[DR. A. NANAN]

*Friday, May 26, 2006*

matter; that is why this Motion is brought to encourage debate and for the population to be aware of how dangerous these smelters are going to be.

Yes, the nation can be fooled by all the new improvements in these smelters, but look at our environmental situation today; look at the Environmental Management Authority (EMA), an independent authority. All the EMA can boast of is under the UNC; nothing underneath the PNM. [*Desk thumping*] I know that hurts the Member for San Fernando East, the Prime Minister, but the documents would point that out.

In 2001, the Noise Pollution Rules were passed here; the Certificate of Environmental Clearance Rules were passed here; all under the UNC. All the PNM had to do in terms of the EMA was to bring to this House the Water Pollution Rules, the Air Pollution Rules and the Hazardous Waste Rules and we would have been confident. There would have been some level of confidence by the population if this legislation was on the books. The Water Pollution Rules would have dealt with the leeching possibilities of the pot liner and the sodium fluorides entering the water system in large quantities. There would have been a National Pollution Register. What is the Member for Arima, the Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment, doing? People in Barrackpore cannot get water, so even if you fluoridate the water they are not going to get it. [*Crosstalk*] This is a serious situation.

Are you going to pump all that water? In fact, 55 per cent of the smelters in the world are using hydroelectric power, a renewable resource. We are supplying natural gas. [*Interruption*]

**Mr. Manning:** Are you suggesting that it is an improper use of our natural gas resources?

**Dr. A. Nanan:** Member for San Fernando East, I am going to point that out to you. I have a whole section in my head on gas pricing and gas reserves, which I would deal with later. Right now I want to stay on the environment; I will come to the gas situation later. [*Crosstalk*]

These things are not in place. You have a Solid Waste Management Company dealing with only the cutting of grass at the side of the road. There is no national solid waste management plan in place. Member for Arima, you came to this House and said that you were going to close down the Beetham and the Forres Park landfills, but you have not said what you are going to do with the waste products. Where are you going to put the waste products? Tonnes of garbage in Port of Spain and all over the place. What are you going to do with it? Are you going to build an incinerator?



For your information, Member for Arima, there was a plan that came to the Ministry of the Environment for an incinerator to be built in Cedros. We refused, because the plan was to build such a large incinerator that it would take garbage from the whole country. Because there could not be enough garbage to support that incinerator, they were going to bring garbage from outside. We refused that in Cedros. What are you going to do? Tell us what is your plan for solid waste management in this country? None.

**Hon. Member:** Cepep.

**Dr. A. Nanan:** If you have one, let us know in your contribution. The Basel Convention deals with transboundary movement of hazardous waste.

**Miss Beckles:** What convention is that? [*Crosstalk*]

**Dr. A. Nanan:** For your information, "Basel" is German; "Bail" is Italian and French, so we will deal with that aspect.

**Hon. Member:** Spell it.

**Dr. A. Nanan:** It is right; go and check it; let your advisors inform you, if you do not know. When the UNC was in government, Trinidad and Tobago was supposed to be one of the focal points. What has happened with that? Nothing.

**Mr. Sharma:** "It gone down." [*Crosstalk*]

**Dr. A. Nanan:** As everything else, nothing on the environment. So how could a Prime Minister have any confidence talking about a smelter? I know that the Member for Arima is going to say, "Yes, we are going to bring it; we are going to bring it," but the population has no confidence in you. Look around this country, one that is moving towards tourism, one that is moving towards First World status, as the Prime Minister said.

You cannot even manage garbage in your own country; you want to bring smelters to destroy the population? Unless you can prove to this House that the controls are there—where is the National Pollution Register? There is none in place, so how can you say that you are going to bring a smelter here? The National Pollution Register is not in place. In fact, in some countries Alcoa does the monitoring. Alcoa is going to do the monitoring and fool the population and say, "Yes, these are the emissions," this time "dey" killing everybody over a period of time; delayed activity throughout the area.

**Mr. Sharma:** What a shame!

**Dr. A. Nanan:** And the Prime Minister is going to stand here and ask if I think that we are using natural gas the wrong way. Of course it is. He should not even ask me a question like that.

We have a fluctuation in terms of the number of years of our natural gas. I would not even be around when our natural gas runs out, probably the next 11 years, and that is the proven resources.

**Mrs. Job-Davis:** "You are going to dead just now?"

**Dr. A. Nanan:** We have possible, probable and proven resources; we need years of natural gas. Why are we giving away our natural gas? The Prime Minister must be aware that when we move to power generation and we build power stations, there would be more sulfur dioxide in the atmosphere. Those power generation plants for that smelter are going to produce more carbon dioxide than we ever had in this country.

Do you know why the power generation plants must be built? Do you have any idea, Member for Arima? You are going to reply to me. The reason is because of the amount of electricity required for smelting. You need only four to six volts for smelting, but you need over 280,000 amps for the process; that is why you have to build the power station. I said that hydroelectric power is a renewable resource. Right now in Iceland they are using dams, using hydroelectric power for the smelters and the people are objecting, because you are destroying the ecotourism experience. An entire ecodestination being ruined, even if you are damming the place, in terms of the rivers, all the glacial rivers are being wiped out. Siltation would ruin Iceland. A court ruled against Alcoa, but the company is still going on, because they could buy out people; that is what we are seeing here. It has to stop.

In terms of the Icelandic experience and with other areas, do you know that some of the workers are as black as tar after they have finished from that particular smelter? Why is that so? Because part of the ingredients in that smelter are the anodes; they are using pitch and tar. Those things are harmful; they are covered in black dust for weeks and months. And you are saying that you are going to have more jobs provided? [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Partap:** They are not bringing any jobs here.

**Dr. A. Nanan:** Your own Central Bank Governor said that your skilled labour was down; you have to import labour. [*Crosstalk*] Are you saying that it not true? [*Crosstalk*] Your Central Bank Governor's report.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order!

**Dr. A. Nanan:** So skilled labour would be imported into the country, so "doh" say you have jobs for the people of Cedros and La Brea. [*Crosstalk*] I want to go back to natural gas. [*Interruption*] It may be my last speech in Parliament? [*Laughter*]

I am fully prepared for this debate, because I feel sorry for the people of Cedros and La Brea. [*Desk thumping*] I am also very disturbed by the approach of the Government in terms of our natural gas policy. Mr. Speaker, 11.7 years for the proven reserves. They would say 32 years for the probable, proven and possible; 11.7 years will come so fast and we would be out of natural gas. [*Crosstalk*] What will happen?

Look at the environment of the Cedros peninsula as it stands now before any smelter: beaches, forests and wild life. The Member for Arima must be aware of the Convention on Biological Diversity. What about the framework for the convention on climate change? What about the Kyoto Protocol? You just run roughshod over all those things? The Kyoto Protocol determines the amount of carbon dioxide a developed nation is emanating in terms of allotment. Bridging the Kyoto Protocol; bridging the Basel Convention.

In terms of the natural gas, we have to ask the question: Is the Government giving these companies preferential pricing? Is it deal making? Do you know, Mr. Prime Minister, that there are billions of dollars in losses right now? In fact, last year Alcoa lost billions of dollars because of health matters. In this country, there is no facility for redress. We cannot interfere with Alcoa right now and say, "Alcoa you are polluting and you have to pay so much and so much millions of dollars." They have paid out millions of dollars in claims. [*Crosstalk*]

I hear the Member for La Brea murmuring. We set up the Environment Commission?

**Mr. Sharma:** That is the effect of the smelter.

**Dr. A. Nanan:** What is the Environmental Commission doing? Waiting for a matter; being paid a large salary and the members are sitting there doing nothing; an environmental court.

**Mr. Bereaux:** You were the one in charge.

**Dr. A. Nanan:** I was the one in charge.

**Mr. Partap:** It was working when we were there.

**Dr. A. Nanan:** Anyway, I do not want to get distracted, because I would lose some time on this particular issue. The Member for La Brea tried to distract me, but he failed.

The Environmental Commission was set up for a particular reason, to work hand in hand with the Environmental Management Authority. In fact, because of the lack of action of the EMA, the citizens of Cedros can move to the next step on this particular matter, which is the Environmental Commission. First there must be no action by the EMA, of course. I know that a certificate of environmental clearance (CEC) has been applied for, although Alcoa's representatives have said no; so the Government needs to make that clear, whether there has been an application by Alcoa for a CEC, if it has been followed by an environmental impact assessment (EIA) of the area and whether there is one for Alutrint in La Brea. In La Brea, NEC has applied for a CEC only to clear the land, but there must be a certificate of environmental clearance for the building of a smelter, under the Act, as I pointed out earlier. There must be one before you even start construction, so we have to ask the Government.

[*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker, the difference between Alcoa and Alutrint, is that the Government has shares in Alutrint, as I pointed out earlier; so there must be some arrangement that we need to know about. Tell us about the agreement; give us the facts; do not have us guessing. If I am wrong, I would admit that I am wrong. I am sure they would enlighten us this afternoon in the House.

Getting back to the situation of the natural gas, is it more lucrative to package our natural gas and sell it on the open market, than to go into smelting where you have to subsidize the running of that smelter plant? Mr. Speaker, do you know that if that plant shuts down for four hours, they have to rebuild the entire pot arrangement in that facility? [*Crosstalk*] If the smelter does not get power for four hours, the aluminium at the bottom of the pots would get so hard on that cathode that you would have to rebuild the entire thing. Billions of dollars can be lost, because of a power failure for four hours in that area.

**Mr. Sharma:** Hard times ahead.

**Dr. A. Nanan:** That is standard chemistry; that is why you have to have a continuous source of electricity. We know the situation with us here with blackouts off and on. You cannot have that in Cedros, you must have a continuous power supply.

In terms of the footprints in Cedros, I want the Government to be careful when they approach Cedros. I want the Government to look at the environment it is destroying. We have records here: a Presbyterian church; an Anglican church; a whole police section of that community is being destroyed; churches are being destroyed; schools are being destroyed.

**Mr. Achong:** You are deliberately misleading the House. [*Interruption*]

**Hon. Member:** Well, get up and say so.

**Mr. Bereaux:** I thank you for giving way. Is the hon. Member saying that the plant to be put down by Alcoa will cause the displacement of churches, schools and other places of worship?

**Dr. A. Nanan:** Member for La Brea, I would hope that if Alcoa is going to put the plant there, the Government would think of relocating the people.

**Mr. Bereaux:** You are not answering me.

**Dr. A. Nanan:** If you want to compromise and push Alcoa and keep your villages and keep your people in the churches when the hydrogen fluoride and the sulphur dioxide blow across, they would be inhaling that. It would be like the tsunami. They would be praying in the churches and the hydrogen fluoride would be coming out from the smelter. [*Crosstalk*] I am hearing a lot of questions coming. Go and open the book, *School Chemistry for Today* and you might find the answers. I am shocked that you asked me a question like that, an engineer of your calibre.

**Mr. Sharma:** Manufacturer's defect.

**Dr. A. Nanan:** That is important, Member for La Brea. Whether they move or keep them, whether you engineer their stay, you have to face the fact that you would have the orange clouds over the whole Cedros peninsula that are going to affect these people. Not only are you going to have the hydrogen fluoride gas over their heads, you are also going to have nitrous oxide and carbon dioxide gases; you are also going to have a big cloud over Cedros. Then you are going to have heat building up; a dramatic climate change only in that particular area. What are you going to do? Are you creating an area that you want to isolate and cut off the peninsula and say, "They are out at sea." If you do not put up the sea defences in that area, you would not have anywhere to build a smelter, because that particular area is subject to severe erosion.

The Ministry of Works and Transport must take action to preserve the ecotourism aspect of that peninsula. Why are you doing that? There is a possibility, under the Caricom Treaty, that you could consider Guyana. In fact,

*EMA (Absence of Rules)*  
[DR. A. NANAN]

*Friday, May 26, 2006*

bauxite is already available there. To do that, let us examine the Cedros peninsula. If you are building your aluminium smelter plant, you may get smart and decide, "I want to build my anode plant too." So now you have an anode building plant, as well as a smelter plant, because your anode would be used up from time to time; so you want to build your own anodes. Building your own anodes has serious problems too, because you are going to have all these workers in pitch and coke; serious health risks there, and that is the anode building plant.

Let us say that you want to refine bauxite somewhere in Trinidad and you put up your own bauxite plant here. *[Interruption]* *[Crosstalk]* You laugh, Member for Laventille West, but what if the Member for Diego Martin East informs you that there are certain areas in Trinidad where you could find bauxite, but not in the large quantities?

**Mr. Imbert:** How I could do that? *[Crosstalk]*

**Dr. A. Nanan:** Let us say it is a hypothetical situation, Mr. Speaker. You want to have your own bauxite mining facility. You want to be eclectic; you want to take everything, so you take your bauxite and you are going to refine it. You get the refined aluminium powder. You are going to bring in your sodium aluminium chloride from Scotland, because that is where it is found. So you have the raw materials now; you have your anode building plant, your bauxite, your aluminium and your sodium aluminium fluoride and you are now going to create your alumina.

Let us say that you are going to create your own refined aluminium; from bauxite to refined alumina, that step to go to the liquid process is dangerous. There is a health risk in that sector too. So in that area, you would have more risk added. The Government never told us whether it is building an anode processing plant along with the smelter. We know they must build a power generation plant to go with that smelter. Of course, the Minister would get up and tell us how much money they are putting and what they are going to build and how much systems.

I spoke about the Guyana situation; there is a possibility that you could put a submarine cable and supply the electricity to Guyana. Hydroelectric power can be used, because Guyana has a lot of land and rivers.

**Mr. Imbert:** "You have land there or what?"

**Dr. A. Nanan:** You could have some kind of agreement between Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago with respect to electricity generation, so there are endless

possibilities, and you leave the peninsula and save the people of Trinidad and Tobago. If you want to develop a new nation, I do not think that you want to develop a new people in 2020. [*Laughter*]

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Orange people. [*Laughter*]

**Dr. A. Nanan:** Dwarfs running around in the country.

Mr. Speaker, there are avenues. In terms of the environment, there is that possible linkage between Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago, where the Government can consider another location for the smelter, if it has to be built. The environmental safeguards, wherever the smelters are, must be in place. [*Crosstalk*] [*Interruption*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Please, the hon. Member for Tabaquite is taking us where no other parliamentarian has taken us before. It is what I would call a “Star Wars contribution,” a very futuristic contribution. Please, let him continue. [*Desk thumping*] [*Laughter*]

**Miss Beckles:** That is a real compliment; “where no other parliamentarian has taken us before” and we are all listening. [*Crosstalk*]

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** It is his last contribution.

**Dr. A. Nanan:** Mr. Speaker, the Motion is framed in such a way, to call upon the Government to—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Imbert:** Jedi.

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Clinging on to dear life.

**Dr. A. Nanan:**—to put in place the Water Pollution Rules, the Hazardous Waste Rules and the Air Pollution Rules, immediately. That is what the Motion is calling for. The Motion did not specifically point to the gas price, but the Government must say what gas price is being given. [*Desk thumping*] It must say what is the gas price used for negotiations. Do you know that there is no more building of smelters in China?

**Mr. Imbert:** No.

**Dr. A. Nanan:** There is no more building of smelters in America. Have you asked why? Cancer villages are symbolic of China; they are moving away from that now. China is not going to have any more smelters, and they have the greatest land mass. That is why the smelters are being built outside. Where is the aluminium going? Mainly to the United States. So they are outsourcing to the

*EMA (Absence of Rules)*  
[DR. A. NANAN]

*Friday, May 26, 2006*

Third World and pulling back in the product and utilizing it. They really do not care about what happens in the small islands; they are just operating. That is the same thing with the natural gas.

They are buying natural gas from outside and stockpiling theirs for a rainy day. We are utilizing our natural gas at such a rate.

**Mr. Manning:** What is that rate?

**Dr. A. Nanan:** We do not know; you have to tell us. [*Laughter*] [*Crosstalk*] We are only speculating on this side. I am sure when the Member for Arima gets up she would give us the whole dossier of the Memorandum of Agreement.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar:** They are getting rid of it in 10 years. [*Crosstalk*]

**Dr. A. Nanan:** In terms of environmental regulations in those countries, they are not going to build any smelters; they cannot operate in those countries. We are a neophyte in terms of environmental regulations; Alcoa is aware of that. We do not know what technology the Chinese would be bringing for the smelter in Alutrint. There are two types of processes. I do not know what technology they are bringing. We know that Alcoa is trying to modernize their techniques. [*Crosstalk*]

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar:** Do not get distracted.

**Dr. A. Nanan:** If the Chinese are coming in here with the old technique, there is a greater health risk to the population. There have been no new smelters built in the last 10 years. I do not know if you are aware of that.

**Mr. Imbert:** Time to build then.

**Dr. A. Nanan:** They are only being upgraded.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar:** You should go down and live next to the smelter.

**Dr. A. Nanan:** Why is one being built here? We have to ask that question. What was their selection criteria? Did they base their criteria on gas pricing, as well as relaxed environmental considerations? [*Crosstalk*] The processes speak for themselves, in terms of the dangerous situation that we are getting into.

**Mr. Bereaux:** What are the main processes?

**Dr. A. Nanan:** I know the names, but I do not want to say them now. One begins with "S" and the other one begins with "H". [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Bereaux:** "H" as in house?



**Dr. A. Nanan:** Yes. You probably did not read the same material I did.

Mr. Speaker, I want to get on with the debate, because I have a few more points. The action groups in the Cedros peninsula have several plans for its development and they do not involve smelting. It involves ecotourism, fisheries development and other areas that could be considered, without the kind of damage and detrimental effects that the smelters are going to bring. There is also the possibility of a gateway to South America from Cedros. [*Crosstalk*]

There is another point I wanted to bring to this House. Besides breathing in the pitch in these smelters, workers could absorb it through the skin or ingest it through the mouth, as a result of eating or smoking. So you have the added situation where, not only are they exposed, it can also penetrate the skin. The National Occupational Health and Safety Commission in Australia gave a limit of .2 milligrams of coal tar pitch per cubic metre of air. Alcoa has said it has adopted a standard of 0.05 milligrams. I have several areas here in terms of people coming forward and confessing of cancers, leukemia and tumours, all related to the environment of smelters.

[MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Alcoa has admitted that there is the risk of cancer, but they have been trying to contain the panic. They came out publicly and admitted that there was the possibility of cancer only 14 years after it happened. It is always about public image, advertisements to fool people, but the facts are there; health hazards are there. No burn unit in La Brea or Point Fortin in case of explosions there. Imagine you are going to have an aluminium smelter with 280,000 amps passing through for the particular process, that kind of power generation and the health facilities there and throughout the island are so poor?

The Government should not even think about bringing an aluminium smelter in this country until it has upgraded the health facilities. The water supply should be regular, before it even thinks about bringing in a smelter. [*Desk thumping*] The people of Cedros and Sobo Village cannot even get water, but water would be going to the aluminium smelter. The whole country suffering right now for water, but you are going to pump water to the aluminium smelter. People must suffer, but the aluminium smelter must get water. You must upgrade your facilities. Put the environmental regulations in place and improve your water facilities; even then you must be able to have an analysis of the health risks. Do studies and after that you can say, "No smelter." Do not put your population at risk. Why are you putting your population at risk? [*Crosstalk*] This is a paradise.

*EMA (Absence of Rules)*  
[DR. A. NANAN]

*Friday, May 26, 2006*

If you control crime, not by 555, if you do something else—once you get the crime rate down, people would come back here. Take a drive through this beautiful country; it is a beautiful country, do not destroy it. I beg of you to rethink this particular development of smelters in Trinidad and Tobago. [*Crosstalk*]

**Dr. Hamza Rafeeq** (*Caroni Central*): Mr. Speaker, I beg to second the Motion and I reserve my right to speak at a later stage in the debate.

*Question proposed.*

**The Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment (Hon. Penelope Beckles)**: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise to make my response to the Motion as filed by the hon. Member for Tabaquite.

First of all, for the purposes of today, I want to deal with the Member's comment about this Government not having done anything as it relates to the environment. In so doing, I want to ask the hon. Member for Tabaquite: Who was the government that set up the Environmental Management Authority (EMA)?

You would recall that in 1995, the EMA was established. The hon. Member referred to the Environmental Commission that was set up in 2000. I imagine he was referring to the fact that it would have been set up under his jurisdiction. He said that the commission is not working. If that commission was set up under him and it is not working, then I think the Member would have to take responsibility for that.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar**: Six years later?

**Hon. P. Beckles**: Mr. Deputy Speaker, for the purposes of the record, the EMA, a key component of the environmental management and legislative infrastructure, was set up as an independent body tasked with coordinating and overseeing execution of national environmental strategies and programmes, promoting public awareness on environmental concerns and establishing an effective regulatory regime to protect, enhance and conserve the environment. The regulatory function bestowed upon the Environmental Management Authority resulted in a need for a specialized judicial body. That said Environmental Commission was set up in October 30, 2005.

Subsequently, the National Environmental Policy was improved in the Parliament some eight years ago in 1998. Having set up that management authority and having laid the environmental policy, this Government has now reviewed that policy and it was laid in Parliament in 2006 by me.

The new National Environmental Policy, as laid by this Government, seeks to find a balance between economic development and the environment. The policy is guided by respect for community life, keeping within the country's carrying capacity, empowering communities to care for their own environment, the polluter pays principle, and the precautionary principle.

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

First of all, this Government agreed to have our National Environmental Policy reviewed anticipating the fact that the original policy would not have taken into consideration a lot of the projects and programmes in which the Government is now getting involved.

The Member for Tabaquite indicated that the Government has not been doing anything in relation to the environment. I want to deal with a few of those things, for the purposes of today.

**3.30 p.m.**

The first thing I want to speak about is the fact that Cabinet agreed that a consultancy be undertaken this year which is aimed at improving the efficiency of the waste collection system in Trinidad and Tobago. That consultancy would determine the feasibility of waste segregation at source. The removal of recyclable materials at the source will reduce the amount of waste requiring disposal. The Member for Tabaquite indicated there is a problem in the country as it relates to the collection of waste and I am not disputing that. What I am saying is the Government has decided that this is a matter that requires us to do some investigation; have a consultancy determine the feasibility of the waste segregation at source and then based on the results of that consultancy take a decision as it relates to the way forward.

Additionally, the mover of the Motion also spoke about the fact that a decision was made for the closure of the Beetham landfill. Let me say, first of all, that whilst he indicated that the Government is doing nothing as it relates to the environment, that decision to close the landfills, where appropriate, is actually one of the most important decisions that this Government has ever taken, and you would have seen that decision has resulted in members of the public being extremely satisfied. We are quite aware that the landfill is not just at the Beetham; there is also Forres Park and the heights of Guanapo where those landfills and the activity therein, have been causing considerable health risk to the population of Trinidad and Tobago. Therefore, we have made that decision and it is a positive

*EMA (Absence of Rules)*  
[HON. P. BECKLES]

*Friday, May 26, 2006*

step. What we would be doing is inviting proposals for a new system of disposal of waste and we expect that to be done very shortly. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, in the Environmental Policy we also refer to the whole question of the Beverage Container Bill and the Environmental Management Authority has finalized that draft bill which is based on a polluter pays principle. That is before Cabinet for consideration. The hon. Member for Tabaquite spoke about the whole issue of biodiversity. This Government is the first government to have taken the decision as it relates to declaring certain areas environmentally protected areas. Those areas are: Buccoo Reef, Nariva, Aripo and Matura. Actually, to date Matura has been designated an environmentally sensitive area and the relevant surveys are being done in relation to the other three areas to have them declared environmentally sensitive areas.

This is the first time such a decision has been taken to deal with the issue of protecting our biodiversity and also it ensures that where Trinidad and Tobago, like some other countries, is extremely fortunate to have areas in our country that, in a sense, reflect the biodiversity, that those areas are protected.

We are quite aware of the situation as it relates to the Nariva Swamp. We are aware that this was a particular area with quite a lot of illegal activities, including illegal rice farming that resulted in the destruction of the topography, hydrology and ecology, and to a large extent, whilst we know that that would have affected the livelihood of a lot of people living in that area, it was of critical importance, therefore, to the ecology and livelihoods of the surrounding communities that the ecology of the Nariva Swamp be restored. The extent of success of the rehabilitation of the Nariva Swamp would be a function of a well-designed and executed restoration plan which includes a scientific assessment of how its ecology and hydrology have changed over time.

Having regard to that, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago has accepted an offer to facilitate a project to assess the potential for carbon sequestration and mitigation of greenhouse gases through the restoration of the Nariva Swamp that involves the following four components:

- Hydrology studies
- Monitoring of greenhouse gas emissions
- Design of an afforestation restoration programme
- Stakeholder consultations.

It is instructive to note that the proposal to restore the integrity of the Nariva Swamp is consistent with the 2006 National Environmental Policy.

I want to go a little further to say that Trinidad and Tobago has succeeded in 2005 in having an additional two of our wetlands declared Ramsar sites. Just last year the Buccoo Reef/Bon Accord Lagoon and Caroni Swamp had been added to wetlands. For a small country with just 512,800 hectares, we can now boast of three Ramsar sites: Nariva, Caroni and Bon Accord Lagoon. This clearly indicates the efforts the Government has undertaken to ensure that important areas of biodiversity are managed sustainably.

As it relates to one of the major concerns raised by a number of persons, that is to say, illegal practices in agriculture, logging, quarrying and forest fires, this denudation has contributed to land erosion, watershed degradation, significant reduction in wildlife population and overall degradation of our forest ecosystems. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago and the Cabinet took a decision for us to start, what is called a National Action Programme to combat land degradation. As a matter of fact, Trinidad and Tobago is the only country in the Caribbean that has completed its first draft and we are now in the stage of finalizing that National Action Programme to combat that land degradation. In order to get there we have had consultations all over the country: San Fernando, Port of Spain, Tobago, and we are now doing the second rounds of our consultation. As it relates to this programme, what we are looking at, really, is an integrated and systematic approach for correcting, mitigating and preventing the problems of land degradation over the short, medium and long-term and it is a critical part of our efforts to preserve the natural environment of Trinidad and Tobago. So that is another example of demonstrating the Government's involvement as it relates to the environment.

Trinidad and Tobago originally formulated its forest policy in 1942, with a view to enabling the then forest department to manage its forest. What has happened was that more than 50 years later we have now taken the decision to revise that policy and together with the FAO, we have almost completed the agreement for the purposes of revising that policy that is more than 50 years old. For the first time that is going to give us a better idea as to what is our stock to do an inventory and we would be in a much better position to be able to say exactly what is our forest cover and 50-plus years later, to give to the country and to the various persons involved in the environmental sector, a better understanding as to exactly what is the biodiversity of our forests and to make some decisions, again as it relates to certain protected areas.

*EMA (Absence of Rules)*  
[HON. P. BECKLES]

*Friday, May 26, 2006*

As it relates to wildlife, because this is another area—and it is unfortunate that my colleague is not even here to listen to my response to him—

**Mr. S. Panday:** I will report to him.

**Hon. P. Beckles:** Well, you know, having been so passionate about the Motion and having made all those comments; most of them he referred directly to me, if he knew he could not have been here, I would not have responded.

**Mr. S. Panday:** He is coming back.

**Hon. P. Beckles:** I am going to continue.

I want to also point out that another intervention that this Government has taken in relation to the environment is the monitoring of our wildlife and for the first time we have appointed honorary game wardens under the Wildlife Act, and the forestry division is working with an additional five groups in northeast Trinidad to enforce our nation's wildlife. That is the first time that so many honorary game wardens have been appointed. This has resulted in a reduction of poaching and so, on beaches, particularly around the north coast and in the northeastern areas.

Another intervention of this Government is starting a Community-based National Reforestation and Watershed Rehabilitation Programme where we are looking at replanting some 33,000 acres of land. Again, that is the first time any government has taken such a decision to replant such large numbers of acres of forest and this particular decision that we have taken is a matter that is of great interest to many other countries, particularly countries like Haiti and other countries in Africa, even the United States and Latin American countries, where their forests have been removed, resulting in consequences that they may not have initially intended. But the fact is that all countries have recognized the importance of forests and this Government has taken a decision that it is extremely important to do that replanting and that is one of the projects that is not only going extremely well, but is going to redound to the benefit of Trinidad and Tobago, both in terms of health and certainly in terms of the revitalization of the forestry industry—the sawmilling industry.

This reforestation effort will sequester carbon emissions and it is envisioned that adaptive capacity would also be built in minimizing or reversing the adverse impacts of climate change, such as flash floods and soil erosion. The sequestration of carbon has the benefit of offsetting greenhouse gas emissions emanating from

the increased industrial thrust of the Government. That was one of the concerns raised by the hon. Member of Parliament for Tabaquite.

Trinidad and Tobago has emerged 35th out of 133 countries in a pilot 2006 environmental performance. I am sure that the hon. Member would have wanted to hear this particular part of my contribution. This particular study was conducted by Yale and Columbia Universities and presented to a World Economic Forum at Davos, Switzerland last week. The 367-page report of the Environmental Performance Index (EPI), measured environmental health, air quality, water resources, productive natural resources, biodiversity and habitat and sustainable energy; all areas of concern raised by the hon. Member. Among regional countries measured, only Costa Rica scored higher than Trinidad and Tobago. Costa Rica was ranked 15 out of the said 133. Just by way of interest, while Cuba, Jamaica and Venezuela were just behind us, scoring 41<sup>st</sup>, 43<sup>rd</sup> and 44<sup>th</sup> respectively, Trinidad and Tobago emerged near the top of the group for policy categories of water resources—99.9 per cent; environmental health—94.1 per cent; an above average for air equality—74.4 per cent and productive natural resources—89.9 per cent. Trinidad and Tobago was below average, however, for sustainable energy use—3.3 per cent, as well as biodiversity and habitat—32 per cent. Although the overall results are promising, clearly we have much work to do in some areas.

So, yes, we must admit that we need to improve in terms of our collection of waste and in terms of the environment. It is very good that this research actually gives us the kind of information that would allow us to know exactly what are some of the areas, comparatively speaking, with other countries that we need to improve on. Again, as I said, in terms of that Environmental Performance Index conducted by Yale and Columbia, we are 35<sup>th</sup> out of 133.

When the reforestation project is assessed and when we implement the decision as it relates to the consultancy for waste collection, and the new system of waste disposal is put in place and further studies are done, that is going to put Trinidad and Tobago in an even better position, because those are some of the areas which, clearly, we need to improve on.

Trinidad and Tobago now holds the leadership position, being the current chair of Caricom, the Caribbean Development and Cooperative Committee and the Subsidiary Body of Scientific and Technical Advice to the United Nations Framework on Climate Change. Trinidad and Tobago was also a member of the expanded core group that was established to develop and elaborate proposals for the regional coordinating mechanism for sustainable development, which is one

*EMA (Absence of Rules)*  
[HON. P. BECKLES]

*Friday, May 26, 2006*

of the issues to be discussed at the upcoming 18<sup>th</sup> Special Meeting of the Council for Trade and Economic Development. Trinidad and Tobago is also a member of the following ad hoc working groups established by the forum of ministers and the Caribbean—

*[Dr. Nanan enters Chamber]*

**Mr. S. Panday:** You see, he did not go to cricket.

**Hon. P. Beckles:** He could have turned back.

The ad hoc working groups are:

- Water resources, integrated watershed and coastal management
- Climate change
- Monitoring the implementation of decisions of the forum relevant to the Mauritius strategy for the further implementation of the BPOA (Barbados Programme of Action) and sustainable development of SIDS (Small Island Developing States)
- Health and environment
- Disaster-preparedness and management.

The logical conclusion, then, is that there is more than ample evidence of this Government's commitment to the protection of the environment.

I spent most of my time so far, in the absence of the Member for Tabaquite—and your colleague from Nariva and Princes Town said they took enough notes, but I would just like to say to the Member—

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** I did not see them write one thing.

**Hon. P. Beckles:** It does not necessarily mean, written; it means oral. I know that you are quite capable of doing that, so I am not being sarcastic. I was saying to my colleague, the Member for Tabaquite, that in his absence I focused on the areas in which the Government has been involved as they relate to particular interventions relating to the environment, which I am sure he would read later. But I would go now to some other specific things that he raised in relation to air quality, air pollution and those matters.

First of all, let me talk a little about water quality and water pollution which is one of the areas he raised. In his Motion he referred to the fact that there are a number of regulations that have not yet been in place and he had concerns with that.



With respect to water quality, Trinidad and Tobago is fortunate to have an adequate supply of ground and surface water to meet the needs of the population. The nation's challenge has been to ensure water quality and to build an effective distribution infrastructure to meet the growing demands of the population. Here in Trinidad and Tobago, although we are well endowed with water resources, we are faced with a range of water-related issues which include: poor land-use practices, pollution, as well as overuse and misuse of the resource. It is clear that water is indispensable for sustainable development and, as such, we need to manage this resource wisely in order to address the many water problems which have emerged over the years.

In this regard, a National Water Resources Management Policy has been developed and approved by this Government for the first time. This policy expresses a new vision for water and will serve to chart a new course for effective management of this precious resource and contribute significantly to achieving our goal of becoming a developed nation. I am sure that the hon. Member for Tabaquite is aware that one of the requirements of a lot of the environmental agreements relating to the environment is the need to have that integrated approach. We have not had that before and Cabinet has now approved that, and the Ministry is now in the process of ensuring that there are the requisite human resources to have that implemented to ensure that we take a much better approach as it relates to the distribution management of our water and improved quality.

This policy is currently receiving the consideration of the Attorney General's office, in particular the Chief Parliamentary Counsel with respect to drafting the appropriate legislation to give the force of law to this new Water Resources Management Policy. Additionally, the policy and other environmental efforts are also supported by the National Action Programme to combat land degradation which I spoke about a while ago, an integrated framework for mitigating the physical, biological and socio-economic impacts of land degradation. This programme is currently being finalized by the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment.

I quite agree with the comment made by the hon. Member as it relates to water pollution. The discharge of effluents into the country's rivers and watercourses is especially troubling, given that the majority of the country's potable water emanates from surface sources and considering that proper water quality is essential to the preservation of life and, indeed, the survival of every citizen of Trinidad and Tobago, as well as, in particular, our marine ecosystem. In response to these long-recognized water pollution challenges facing the nation, the Environmental Management

*EMA (Absence of Rules)*  
[HON. P. BECKLES]

*Friday, May 26, 2006*

Authority has finalized the redrafted water pollution rules in keeping with the 2006 National Environmental Policy. I know that the hon. Member for Tabaquite is going to say that there were rules drafted, and I am going to indicate to him why it was necessary to redraft those rules.

These rules are intended to ensure that the fresh water and marine resources of Trinidad and Tobago are protected from pollution. They have been modified from the version of the rules of 2001. Since coming into office the Government reinitiated the process of consultation, and water pollution rules have now been updated to more adequately reflect the nation's changing industrial profile and rapidly growing residential/ commercial sectors. We were very careful in doing these redrafted rules, to have extensive consultations, as well as to publish the entire new drafted rules on the various media, as well as to have them put up on the website of the Environmental Management Authority.

**Dr. Nanan:** I thank the Member for giving way. Is the Minister saying that it took five years for the consultations and now we are going to have the water pollution rules?

**Hon. P. Beckles:** Mr. Speaker, I became the Minister in November 2003 and when I looked at those rules in 2004 I realized that they were defective. They did not take into consideration a number of issues that had arisen in the environment and we would have put ourselves in a position where we would not have catered for a number of things that were likely to come up. In 2004, we sat about redrafting those rules and they were taken to Cabinet. In 2005, there were extensive consultations and I know very well that it is on the legislative agenda and my friend who has previously been the Minister of the Environment knows very well how the process works. So while he wants to suggest that it took five years, the fact is that it did not take five years. That process, in terms of having those consultations and having the process restarted, really started in 2004. The point is that the draft rules have been completed; they are before the legislative review committee and they should be laid in Parliament very shortly. But they are not the rules that were originally drafted by the hon. Member of Parliament for Tabaquite.

The revised draft rules address the problems of water pollution, and I am going to say what some of the differences are. Some of what is here were included in the original water pollution rules. It would prohibit the discharge of water pollutants from industrial, commercial and agricultural premises or sewerage works without a permit from the Environmental Management Authority; authorizing the EMA to impose water pollution standards and reporting requirements

on each applicant; authorizing the EMA to enter premises with a warrant to ensure compliance with the conditions of a permit and by establishing a national register of permits which will be open to the public.

Pollution of rivers will eventually have negative effects on the coastal environment. Cognizant of this fact, the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment has been working closely with the Institute of Marine Affairs and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration as well as other key stakeholders in the development of a national programme of action for the protection of the marine environment from land-based sources and activities. The National Action Programme would provide a flexible mechanism for identifying and addressing priority problems that contribute to water pollution through partnership and consensus among stakeholders within the framework of integrated coastal area management. Further, the National Action Programme would provide an effective framework for ensuring the implementation of the country's international commitments under the protocol concerning pollutions from land-based sources and activities to the Convention for the Protection of the Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region.

As it relates to air pollution, air pollution occurs in most areas of Trinidad and Tobago, especially in densely populated communities, industrial areas and along major transportation routes. In 2004, in order to address air pollution issues, the Environmental Management Authority installed the nation's first permanent ambient air quality monitoring stations at Point Lisas and Toco.

#### **4.00 p.m.**

Whilst we have been talking about some of these matters, whether or not legislation or regulation is in place it never stops you from putting some kind of monitoring system. For the first time ambient air quality stations are located at Point Lisas and Toco. That would allow us to collect data to tell us what is happening in those two areas. Over the next few years we propose to install other ambient air quality stations at strategic locations throughout Trinidad and Tobago, to facilitate more widespread collection of base line air quality data through this network.

The stations would give the kind of information to see whether or not the regulations are working. Data collected from these stations would enable the Environmental Management Authority (EMA) to establish links between air quality and the incidences of respiratory and other ailments. For the first time, we would have scientific data that would tell the country about some of our diseases,

*EMA (Absence of Rules)*  
[HON. P. BECKLES]

*Friday, May 26, 2006*

particularly respiratory diseases. We would be in a position to establish whether links occur between air quality and the incidence of respiratory and other ailments.

The EMA completed the revision of the draft air pollution rules based on the 2006 national and environmental policy. We have completed the relevant and very extensive consultations relating to air pollution rules throughout Trinidad and Tobago. These rules have been significantly modified from those that were previously presented to the public and were subject to a new round of public comment which took place in the first quarter of 2006. This was necessary due to the unprecedented increase in industrial development and the introduction of new industries since the rules were drafted. The feeling by the Environmental Management Authority—I agreed with that—is that the original rules did not take into consideration the increase in the activity in the industrial and energy sector. We felt that it was necessary to have those rules redrafted and have another round of consultation to ensure that we would have the kind of responses from the public. As is customary, when we are debating legislation in Parliament, the accusation is that the Government does not consult properly with the communities. In terms of the water and air pollution rules we have ensured a procedure where that should not be one of the arguments coming forward.

The draft air pollution rules are intended to regulate the release of airborne pollutants into the atmosphere and protect the air quality and health of the citizens and the environment of Trinidad and Tobago. The draft rules will control air pollution through a system of permits for listed activities that emit specified air pollutants above the maximum permissible limits, based on a similar principle to that of the beverage container Bill. That is basically a polluter pays principle. The rules will protect public health and the environment from the adverse effects of air pollution using the national air quality standards and will eliminate or reduce to a minimum those hazardous air pollutants.

One of the major sources of air pollution that was of particular concern to the public was that of lead emissions from vehicles fuelled with leaded gasoline. The threat to human health posed by exposure ranged from neuro-developmental problems in children and increased blood pressure to related cardiovascular conditions in adults. Lead has been identified as a possible carcinogen. The neuro-developmental effects of lead exposure to unborn and small children are viewed by health experts, as one of the most significant public health hazards. The scientific evidence and concern for health risk posed by lead resulted in the

Government discontinuing the use of leaded gasoline in Trinidad and Tobago. This was a very significant decision that this Government took. According to the EMA, this effort has reduced the amount of lead in the atmosphere by 44 per cent. [*Desk thumping*]

It is instructive to note that this milestone to address a major source of air pollution and threat to public health was achieved despite the absence of finalized air pollution rules. Notwithstanding the fact that air pollution rules have not been approved by Parliament, Government took a decision to discontinue the use of leaded gasoline in Trinidad and Tobago. The impression being created is that there can be certain intervention and control if there are regulations. I do not intend to say that the creation of air pollution rules is not necessary and important as part of the nation's regulatory compliance framework. I want to show that the Government employs a proactive multifaceted approach to recognizing and redressing pressing environmental concerns.

The Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment has continued its efforts in fulfilling its obligations related to major air pollution treaties to which the country is a signatory. The Member for Tabaquite mentioned the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change; the Vienna Convention and the Montreal Protocol on substances that deplete the ozone layer. Trinidad and Tobago has been the beneficiary of technical and financial assistance from international donor agencies in fulfilling its mandate related to these conventions.

At the end of the day, Trinidad and Tobago's leadership role among small-island developing states and the advances made in implementing these treaties have been recognized by the international community. In this regard Trinidad and Tobago recently chaired the expert group on technology transfer under the climate change. Trinidad and Tobago is also the current chair of the subsidiary body on scientific and technical advice under the convention on climate change.

With regard to the Vienna Convention and the Montreal Protocol, we are quite advanced in terms of the phase-out of substances that deplete the ozone layer. The EMA has done extensive work with the air condition and refrigeration industries to address pertinent issues as the standardization of chloro fluoro carbon phase-out and uniformity of voluntary standards for refrigerants imported in this country. Based on the work done by the EMA in this area, Trinidad and Tobago is one of the countries that is being compared with some of the other countries that are now embarking on their processes as they relate to this issue of depletion of the ozone layer.

*EMA (Absence of Rules)*  
[HON. P. BECKLES]

*Friday, May 26, 2006*

The Member for Tabaquite raised the issue of waste management. We are aware that as a result of the increase in population; rapid industrial expansion; globalization and change in lifestyle, Trinidad and Tobago has experienced significant increases.

Before I end, I would like to take the opportunity on behalf of the Government to extend to the public a happy Arrival Day on Tuesday.

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

*Motion made,* That the hon. Member's speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. [*Hon. C. Imbert*]

*Question put and agreed to.*

#### ADJOURNMENT

**The Minister of Works and Transport (Hon. Colm Imbert):** I beg to move that the House do now adjourn to Friday June 02, 2006 at 1.30 p.m.

On that day we will do the Supplementary Appropriation Bill. The Finance Committee will meet on Wednesday May 31, 2006 at 1.30 p.m.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*House adjourned accordingly.*

*Adjourned at 4.12 p.m.*