

THE
PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

IN THE FIFTH SESSION OF THE EIGHTH PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD
AND TOBAGO WHICH OPENED ON OCTOBER 17, 2002

SESSION 2005—2006

VOLUME 18

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, August 18, 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 today's sitting of the House: The hon. Camille Robinson-Regis, for the period August 01 to September 04, 2006; the hon. Nizam Baksh, for the period August 02 to September 02, 2006; and the hon. Lawrence Achong from today's sitting of the House. The leave which the Members seek is granted.

**LIVE PARLIAMENTARY BROADCAST
(GUIDELINES)**

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, it is my pleasure to inform you that as of today, pursuant to a decision of this honourable House, proceedings in this honourable House are being broadcast live on television to the national community via Cable Television Channel 11. [*Desk thumping*] Parliamentary proceedings have, therefore, become truly public proceedings and not proceedings which are viewed or heard by a limited number of persons in the public gallery, or in an edited form via the electronic media. The public, whom, the Parliament serves, is now able, through the use of video cameras in this Chamber, to scrutinize the conduct of its elected representatives and to assess their abilities and performances in the Parliament.

It has become incumbent upon hon. Members, more than ever, to ensure through their conduct in this honourable House that the standards of decorum and dignity

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befitting the Parliament are met and maintained and that they strive to demonstrate to the public, at all times, that they are able to perform the responsibilities and duties entrusted to them in a dignified and, indeed, honourable manner.

The opening up of the public gallery to the national community is not to be abused by hon. Members using Parliament as a stage for undignified and unparliamentary behaviour. Hon. Members must remember that proceedings would be broadcast in their entirety continuously. The era of manufacturing sensationalist sound bytes out of context and for personal aggrandizement is now truly over. The public will see everything, not just clips on the nightly news, and would be too wise to accept such behaviour.

As hon. Members are aware, guidelines outlined for the broadcast of debates and business of both Houses of Parliament, and which were recommended by the joint select committee appointed by both Houses to consider and report on such broadcast, are now in force. These guidelines, among other things, regulate the use of recordings and film footage of proceedings, and the operations of the video cameras in this Chamber, so as to ensure that the dignity of the House and its Members are preserved and are not in any way undermined.

Parliamentary proceedings are serious matters for the benefit of the public and are not to be treated or portrayed as entertainment, and the restrictions contained in these guidelines, and which I have just mentioned are intended to ensure that.

Hon. Members, these guidelines go further than protecting Members themselves. They confer upon every person aggrieved by statements made about him or her, in the course of parliamentary proceedings, a right to apply to the Parliament to have a reply placed on the parliamentary record. Hon. Members would recognize that proper functioning of our nation's Parliament requires that each and every one of you be given a right above all other citizens, namely, an absolute freedom of speech in parliamentary proceedings. This privilege is given to hon. Members to ensure that debates and other business of the Parliament can be truly free and without inhibition.

This privilege is absolute. If in the course of parliamentary proceedings untrue statements and false allegations are made in respect of any person outside of Parliament, such a person cannot seek the protection of the civil or criminal law to correct the injustice and damage to his reputation which may have been meted out thereby, even if the untrue statements and false allegations are made maliciously.

The person outside Parliament is without redress. He can offer a rebuttal in the media, but he is not assured that it will be published so as to stem the damage to his good name. It is because of this vulnerability to false and prejudicial allegations that the joint select committee surely recognized that there is a very real need to allow aggrieved persons to publicly defend themselves.

To this end, the guidelines include the provision that if a Member of either House or a witness appearing in a parliamentary proceeding makes allegedly false statements, either intentionally or unintentionally about a person who is outside the Parliament, that person has the right to apply to the Parliament to have a reply placed on public parliamentary record.

The procedure to be employed and which is informed by the guidelines themselves is as follows: A person outside Parliament who alleges that false statements have been made against him in parliamentary proceedings must immediately upon, or within a reasonable time after hearing or learning of the statements, request by writing to the Clerk of the House that he or she be allowed to reply to or rebut the statements, and that the reply or rebuttal be published in the *Hansard*. The request must include the statements made, or the summary of the same; the day and approximate time that the statements were made; the name of the person making the statement; and must further include a claim that as a result of the reference to the aggrieved person in the statements, there has been:

- (1) an adverse effect in reputation or in respect of dealings or associations with others;
- (2) injury to occupation, trade, office or financial credit; and/or
- (3) the unreasonable invasion of privacy.

The request must be accompanied by a draft of the reply or rebuttal. The Clerk of the House would immediately upon receipt of the request and draft reply or rebuttal, refer the same to the Speaker who shall consider the same and if satisfied that the subject matter of the request is not obviously trivial or that the request is not frivolous, vexatious or offensive in character, rule on the matter fairly and expeditiously.

Where the Speaker rules that the person aggrieved be permitted to have a reply or rebuttal placed on the public parliamentary record, he may approve the draft reply or rebuttal, or modify the same and cause the approved or modified reply or rebuttal to be read into the public parliamentary record by the Clerk of

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the House, at a sitting of the House as soon as is reasonably practicable. The guidelines require that the media report the reply or rebuttal if they had reported the allegations giving rise to the same.

The publication of the reply or rebuttal in the *Hansard* will itself attract parliamentary privilege, and will be absolutely privileged. However, requests including draft replies and rebuttals will not be absolutely privileged and, accordingly, persons should seek legal advice before submission of the same to the Clerk of the House and the Speaker.

Hon. Members will no doubt recognize that this statutory right now conferred on persons outside of the Parliament would require Members to avoid any abuse of parliamentary privilege, and to exercise restraint in statements made in the course of parliamentary proceedings, notwithstanding that hon. Members' freedom of speech is undiminished, and that you still have full and absolute parliamentary privilege for what you say in the House.

I can do no more than to request the assistance and support of all Members of this honourable House to ensure that the continued dignity of our Parliament in these new times be preserved.

I thank you.

PHARMACY BOARD (AMDT.) BILL

Bill to amend the Pharmacy Board Act, Chap. 29:52, brought from the Senate [*The Minister of Health*]; read the first time.

FIRE SERVICE (AMDT.) BILL

Bill to amend the Fire Service Act, Chap. 35:50, brought from the Senate [*The Minister of National Security*]; read the first time.

FIREARMS (AMDT.) BILL

Bill to amend the Firearms Act, Chap. 16:01, brought from the Senate [*The Minister in the Ministry of Finance*]; read the first time.

PAPERS LAID

1. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the financial statements of the Siparia Regional Corporation for the year ended September 30, 1999. [*The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley)*]

Papers Laid

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2. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the financial statements of the Chairman's Fund of the Mayaro/Rio Claro Regional Corporation for the year ended September 30, 2003. [*Hon. K. Valley*]

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

3. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the financial statements of the National Agricultural Marketing and Development Corporation (NAMDEVCO) for the nine-month period ending September 30, 1998. [*Hon. K. Valley*]
4. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the financial statements of the National Agricultural Marketing and Development Corporation (NAMDEVCO) for the year ending September 30, 1999. [*Hon. K. Valley*]
5. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the financial statements of the National Agricultural Marketing and Development Corporation (NAMDEVCO) for the year ending September 30, 2000. [*Hon. K. Valley*]
6. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the financial statements of the National Agricultural Marketing and Development Corporation (NAMDEVCO) for the year ending September 30, 2001. [*Hon. K. Valley*]
7. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the financial statements of the National Agricultural Marketing and Development Corporation (NAMDEVCO) for the year ending September 30, 2002. [*Hon. K. Valley*]
8. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the financial statements of the National Agricultural Marketing and Development Corporation (NAMDEVCO) for the year ending September 30, 2003. [*Hon. K. Valley*]
9. Annual audited financial statements of the National Gas Company of Trinidad and Tobago Limited for the year ended December 31, 2005. [*Hon. K. Valley*]

Papers 3 to 9 to be referred to the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee.

Papers Laid

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10. Administrative report of the Diego Martin Regional Corporation for the period October 01, 2004 to September 30, 2005. [*Hon. K. Valley*]
11. Administrative report of the Princes Town Regional Corporation for the period October 2004 to September 2005. [*Hon. K. Valley*]
12. Administrative Report of the Chaguanas Borough Corporation for the period October 2004 to September 2005. [*Hon. K. Valley*]
13. The College of Science, Technology and Applied Arts of Trinidad and Tobago (Amdt.) Order, 2006. [*Hon. K. Valley*]
14. The Eighty-first report of the Salaries Review Commission of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Hon. K. Valley*]
15. Draft Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Hon. K. Valley*]

**JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE
(SECOND REPORT)
(Presentation)**

Mr. Hedwige Bereaux (La Brea): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the Second Report of the Joint Select Committee of Parliament appointed to inquire into and report to Parliament on Municipal Corporations and Service Commissions with the exception of the Judicial and Legal Service Commission. This is a special report on the Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Mr. Speaker, the Member for Barataria/San Juan is extremely fortunate in that his question was not subject to the vacation period that the Parliament has been on. Mr. Speaker, other than question No. 23, we are requesting the other questions on the Order Paper be deferred for a period of two weeks. [*Interruption*] We were on vacation.

The following questions stood on the order Paper:

**Point Fortin Market
(Leaking Roof)**

24. Could the hon. Minister of Local Government indicate:
 - (a) whether the Ministry of Local Government is aware of the leaking roof at the Point Fortin Market?

- (b) if the answer to (a) is in the affirmative, could the Minister inform this House when the roof would be repaired in order to bring relief to vendors and customers especially during the rainy season? [*Mr. G. Yetming*]

**Residents of Oropune and Piarco
(Compensation of)**

25. Could the hon. Minister of Planning and Development indicate when residents of Oropune, Piarco would be compensated for their property acquired for the development of the Piarco International Airport? [*Mr. G. Yetming*]

**Coastal Erosion
(Point Fortin to Icacos)**

26. Could the hon. Minister of Works and Transport indicate:
- (a) whether the Ministry of Works and Transport is aware of coastal erosion taking place in the south-western peninsula which is threatening homes from Point Fortin to Icacos?
- (b) if the answer to (a) is in the affirmative, could the Minister inform this House of the plans to protect the south-western coastline and the expected starting date for implementation? [*Mr. G. Yetming*]

**Trinidad and Tobago Football Federation
(Disbursement of Funds)**

30. Could the hon. Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs indicate the amount of money disbursed to the Trinidad and Tobago Football Federation (TTFF) in relation to World Cup 2006? [*Mr. M. Ramsaran*]

**Brian Lara Stadium
(Status of)**

31. (a) With regard to the Brian Lara Stadium, could the hon. Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs advise:
- (i) the status of work being conducted;
- (ii) the expected completion date; and
- (iii) the cost overruns to date?
- (b) Could the Minister state what the stadium would be used for in relation to Cricket World Cup 2007? [*Mr. M. Ramsaran*]

Incentives for Cricket Team

- 32.** Could the hon Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs advise what incentives have been given or would be given to our Cricket Team for winning the Regional Competition for the first time in 23 years? [*Mr. M. Ramsaran*]

Joel “Footy” Phillips (Escape of)

- 35.** Could the hon. Minister of National Security inform this House:
- (a) whether anyone has been held culpable for the escape of Joel “Footy” Phillips from protective custody;
 - (b) the date and time Joel “Footy” Phillips escaped from protective custody; and
 - (c) why the public was not immediately alerted about the escape? [*Mr. S. Panday*]

Joel “Footy” Phillips (Details of)

- 36.** Could the hon. Attorney General indicate to this House:
- (a) on what date did the Director of Public Prosecutions become aware of the disappearance of Joel “Footy” Phillips;
 - (b) why did it take the Director of Public Prosecutions four years to bring the accused Sheldon “Skelley” Lovell and others to trial;
 - (c) whether the Director of Public Prosecutions was aware that the state’s main witness, who was also an accomplice to the crime, was in protective custody; and
 - (d) whether the matter involving the accused Sheldon “Skelley” Lovell and others was discontinued prior to the jury being empanelled? [*Mr. S. Panday*]

Prisoners on Remand (Non-Attendance at Courts)

- 37.** Could the hon. Attorney General indicate:
- (a) whether he is aware that prisoners on remand are usually not brought before magistrates in various courts at the Magistracy, San Fernando before 11.00 am on a daily basis;

- (b) whether he is aware that there is a severe shortage of police personnel at the holding bay “cell block” at the Magistracy, San Fernando;
- (c) whether this shortage of police personnel has resulted in prisoners not being conveyed to the various Courts on time which has resulted in a chronic delay in the administration of justice; and
- (d) what steps, if any, are being taken to alleviate these problems? [*Mr. S. Panday*]

Questions, by leave, deferred.

British Law Enforcement Personnel

23. Dr. Fuad Khan (*Barataria/San Juan*) asked the hon. Minister of National Security:

Could the Minister of National Security indicate:

- (a) whether the British law enforcement personnel presently in this country assisting the police are from Scotland Yard?
- (b) if the answer to (a) is negative, could the Minister indicate from which international crime fighting organization they were recruited?
- (c) what are the terms and conditions of their engagement?

The Minister of National Security (Sen. The Hon. Martin Joseph): Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. Hon. Members are advised that on February 16, 2006, Cabinet granted approval for the recruitment of 39 United Kingdom detectives ranging in rank from Detective Constable to Detective Chief Superintendent, for assignment to the Special Anti-Crime Unit of Trinidad and Tobago.

Cabinet took this action in response to an unprecedented upsurge in violent crime, evidenced by the record high murder rate and an excessively high rate of kidnappings for ransom. These factors were compounded by a deficiency of trained and experienced police investigators.

On April 06, 2006, a total of 27 officers out of the 39 recruited, were assigned for duty at the Special Anti Crime Unit. Of these, three officers originated from the Metropolitan Police also known as Scotland Yard. In interviewing the officers for appointment, the interviewing panel did not specifically seek out Scotland Yard officers per se, but recruited the best mix of skills available from anywhere within the United Kingdom.

It should also be noted that the term “Scotland Yard Officer” has, over time, become a generic synonym for a United Kingdom Law Enforcement Officer, and it is common for the terms to be used interchangeably.

Mr. Speaker, 24 of the 27 United Kingdom Officers currently on assignment in Trinidad and Tobago originated from the undermentioned United Kingdom agencies in the numbers indicated. Serious organized crime agency, 14 officers; Cambridgeshire Constabulary, one officer; Devon and Cornwall Constabulary, two officers; Dorset Constabulary, two officers; Leicestershire Constabulary, one officer; and Wiltshire Constabulary, two officers.

The duration of the assignment of these officers is a period of two years, commencing from the date on which the officer assumes duties. Subsequently, contracts are renewable for a period of one year based on need, mutual consent and satisfactory completion of service.

Other terms and conditions of their engagement, as agreed to by Cabinet, include the payment of a basic salary along with the other under mentioned allowances: displacement allowance, job risk allowance, meal allowance and United Kingdom travel allowance.

The annual salaries paid to these officers range from per annum £42,000 per Detective Constable to £104,000 for the Detective Chief Superintendent. The equivalent salaries are TT \$493,000 to TT \$1,205,000 per year.

Mr. Speaker, thank you.

Dr. Khan: Recently, were two British officers promoted to the rank of Assistant Superintendent in the Police Service?

Sen. The Hon. M. Joseph: Mr. Speaker, the rank of the Chief Detective is equivalent to Assistant Commissioner of Police, and that is the equivalent rank that those two persons are functioning in our jurisdiction.

Dr. Khan: Would these officers be receiving approximately \$1 million per annum?

Sen. The Hon. M Joseph: The answer is possibly yes, if they are operating at the level of Detective Chief Superintendent. It is the similar salary that they would have been receiving in the United Kingdom plus the United Kingdom travel allowance.

Dr. Khan: Would you say that any of our officers at that level are receiving that level of remuneration?

Sen. The Hon. M. Joseph: The answer is no.

Dr. Khan: Could the Minister just indicate whether our police officers at that level are not qualified enough to receive that level of remuneration?

Mr. Speaker: It really does not arise out of the answer given, but if you have the answer and you wish to share it; it is up to you.

**DEFINITE URGENT MATTER
(LEAVE)**

**Protective Services
(Brutality of Citizens)**

Mr. Subhas Panday (*Princes Town*): Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. 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 of urgent public importance, namely, the brutality by members of the protective services against ordinary helpless citizens.

The matter is definite since it relates to specific cases of the alleged shooting and killing of Shazad Mohammed of Charlieville by officers of the Coast Guard in the Gulf of Paria, and the alleged humiliation by the beating of Rabindranath Choon by the police officers of the Oropouche Police Station.

The matter is urgent, because a young man, Shazad Mohammed, has lost his life and, further, no enquiry has been held so far to determine which officer or officers are culpable for the unwarranted and brutal attack on Rabindranath Choon.

The matter is of public importance, because of the alleged illegal acts perpetrated by members of the protective services against members of the public whom they are supposed to protect and serve. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the leave which the hon. Member for Princes Town seeks is denied. This matter would have qualified under Standing Order 11.

DRAFT CONSTITUTION

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

Draft Constitution
[HON. P. MANNING]

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Over the last decade, the very important issue of constitution reform has been in the national domain with increasing urgency. This is a most positive development and is the product of our evolving maturity as a nation.

How quickly time has passed. So soon after the first hoisting of our national colours, Trinidad and Tobago is now approaching its 50th year as a sovereign independent state.

Experience would have taught us many things, among them, the need to improve the governance of our country. This must of necessity involve another look at the supreme law of the land. The flaws in a system which has served us so well become more glaring as we develop. For example, political developments, especially the 18/18 tie of the 2001 general election, illustrate the need to determine the way forward. In light of the approaching half a century, we should seek constitution reform as an opportunity for national renewal.

Mr. Speaker, you would recall that recently I did indicate to this honourable House that our administration had embarked on the process of having a draft prepared of a new Constitution for the country. Indeed, last year, we asked Sir Ellis Clarke, former President of the Republic, and someone of considerable experience in this field, to undertake this assignment. Sir Ellis has now completed the task and we thank and congratulate him for it. [*Desk thumping*] May I say, Mr. Speaker, that Sir Ellis did this report on an entirely voluntary basis seeking no compensation from the State, and I applaud his public spiritedness. [*Desk thumping*] I would also like to thank the two legal officers, Ms. Nicole Fernandes and Mr. Samraj Harripaul, both of the Attorney General's Office who worked tirelessly with Sir Ellis on this most important exercise. [*Desk thumping*]

I am now pleased to lay on the Table of this honourable House this draft of a new Constitution for the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. However, in doing so, I wish to make it quite clear that this document is a working paper and, as such, should not be considered as Government policy. I repeat, Mr. Speaker, this document is a working paper and, as such, should not be considered as Government policy. It is intended to join other ideas and documents as part of the ongoing national debate on this critical issue. It is our intention to stimulate as much national discussion as possible on the way forward. I wish to emphasize, therefore, that this is a discussion document, and we welcome any comments on the proposals therein.

In this regard, let me also express our appreciation to the Principles of Fairness Committee, constituted as a group of civic-minded citizens, who have also produced a

draft constitution which has already been the subject of some examination by the national community. With these two significant documents, we have the basis for more informed dialogue, meaningful comparison and deep analysis of this matter of pivotal importance to the future of our nation. I urge all citizens to read and ponder on these documents with great care, and also consider any other issues and ideas that may be relevant to this very important exercise.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is appropriate in laying this draft, to now point out some of the main proposals for reform contained in the document.

Firstly, the draft makes recommendations for an Executive President and Vice-President of Trinidad and Tobago. It also suggests, inter alia, the following:

- the President and Vice-President should be elected by the House of Representatives in separate elections, by secret ballot;
- these office holders can be removed by that House through a no-confidence motion;
- a person is qualified to be nominated for election as president, if such a person has been elected at a general election as a Member of the House of Representatives; and
- there will be a maximum of two terms for any one individual as President of the Republic. In other words, a person is not qualified to be nominated for election as President if he has held the office for a cumulative period of 10 years. When I say “he” I mean he or she.

The draft retains the Office of Leader of the Opposition; but the suggestion is that this office holder should be elected by Members of the House of Representatives who do not support the Government, and is removed through a no-confidence motion by those same Members. That is what the draft contains.

Secondly, in this proposed new constitution, the Parliament remains a bicameral legislature. The Lower House will continue to be elected by way of the present first past the post system. But there is a significant proposal for an enlarged and essentially elected Senate of Trinidad and Tobago. It is suggested that:

- the Senate would comprise forty-nine Members under the current configuration;
- twenty-eight Senators will be elected, two by each of the current fourteen local government bodies;

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- three Senators will be elected by the Tobago House of Assembly; and
- based on recommendations from their political parties following a general election, 18 Senators will be assigned seats by the Elections and Boundaries Commission as a result of a system of proportional representation, without a list of intended appointees.

The judicial system is the third area that I would like to highlight as being the subject of some proposed reform. This draft by Sir Ellis recommends that this nation's final Court of Appeal be the Caribbean Court of Justice, as agreed by this country on February 14, 2001 in Bridgetown, Barbados. A recommendation is also made for a change in the procedure for the appointment of a Chief Justice. The suggestion is that the President shall, after consultation with the Leader of the Opposition and the President of the Law Association, nominate a person to be appointed as the country's Chief Justice. This recommendation shall be subject to a negative resolution of Parliament.

Fourthly, Mr. Speaker, recommendations are made for changes in the composition and function of the Cabinet of Trinidad and Tobago. It is proposed that the Cabinet would now aid and advise the President on the general direction and control of the Government. It would comprise the President, Vice-President and up to 25 members, of whom not more than six would be appointed from the House of Representatives and three from the Senate. The rest of the Ministers would be appointed from outside the Parliament.

The fifth sector for suggested improvements is the service commissions. It is recommended that members would be appointed by the President subject to a negative resolution of Parliament. For the Police Service Commission, it would be by way of an affirmative resolution as recently negotiated between the Government and the Opposition.

Very significantly, regarding the Public Service Commission, the following is recommended:

- there will be the appointment of Personnel Boards, the number to be determined as deemed necessary by the Public Service Commission;
- these Personnel Boards shall exercise the powers of the Public Service Commission, including the power to impose a penalty other than the power of removal; and

- where a public officer is aggrieved by a decision of a Personnel Board, he or she is entitled to file an appeal against that decision to the Public Service Commission.

It is also suggested under this section that a Public Service Appeal Board would hear appeals emanating from any decision of a service commission. In this draft, the grounds for removal of members of the Police Service Commission are applied to all members of the other service commissions.

Of special interest and requiring careful study also is the question of local government reform. The current draft White Paper is a fundamental proposal to decentralize the system of local government in order to have power sharing between the central government and local government bodies, and a modern and more effective system of local government that takes the country's diversity into account.

Mr. Speaker, these are the five main areas of recommendations that I would like to highlight on this occasion. There are other suggestions in the draft dealing with, among other things, improved fundamental rights, emergency provisions, the Office of the Ombudsman and the Integrity Commission. A serious reading of this document is necessary to get a full knowledge of all the recommendations, and to grasp the thinking behind their creation. I urge all responsible citizens to become thoroughly acquainted with the contents of this draft. This is the way to contribute meaningfully to the national dialogue on this fundamental issue.

There must now be opportunity for greater national discussion. Towards this end, the Government has decided on a clear course of action. We shall establish a round table discussion at Whitehall, chaired by the Prime Minister, and involving the Attorney General, the Minister of Planning and Development, the Minister of Legal Affairs, the Minister of Public Administration and Information and Minister of Energy and Energy Industries, Sir Ellis Clarke, Mr. Tajmool Hosein Q.C, former Senator Prof. John Spence, Prof. Selwyn Ryan, Prof. John La Guerre and Assemblyman Anselm London of the Tobago House of Assembly.

Then begins one of the most important aspects of this entire exercise, that is; consultation with the people. A sub-committee of the round table, led by Prof. Ryan, shall fan out into the national community, holding meetings all over the country to have dialogue with the citizenry on this most important development in their lives. The sub-committee shall explain, but not defend, the document. I repeat it again, it shall explain but not defend the draft of the new Constitution prepared by Sir Ellis Clarke. Its main purpose would be to ascertain the voice of

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the people. It shall hold as many meetings as considered necessary, fielding questions from the citizenry and recording the comments and concerns of the people.

In addition, may I take this opportunity to advise that the public may also send written comments to the Office of the Attorney General. The comments should be enclosed in an envelope marked "Comments on Draft Constitution".

Armed with these views and also on the basis of the deliberations of the round table, the ministerial team will prepare a new draft which, after due deliberations by the Cabinet, would be published as a Green Paper of the Draft Government Policy. This is expected to take place by December 31, 2006. We would then have reached an important milestone in this historic process.

This draft policy would have been achieved through a meticulous process, the wisdom of national expertise and comprehensive national discussion with the people of the Republic. But even then, the national dialogue is not over.

As you can see, Mr. Speaker, we do not intend to proceed on this matter without the fullest possible consultation with the people of Trinidad and Tobago. This is an inescapable obligation of the democracy that we practise in this country. I, therefore, exhort all citizens to become involved. None should sit on the sidelines. All must think and talk about this matter. It must be an important topic in our homes, schools, workplaces and community gatherings. We must read and study the ideas being offered by all groups and individuals. We must attend all meetings. We must express ourselves on this matter of fundamental importance to the future of our beloved country.

This is a matter which transcends political allegiances. All political parties should make a special and deliberate effort to engage their supporters and the general population in meaningful discussion on this matter. The People's National Movement would certainly undertake this critical exercise, using the draft as a basis for widespread consultation with our members and the wider national community. May I also assure you, Mr. Speaker, and hon. Members opposite, that I shall soon be approaching the hon. Leader of the Opposition to determine how best we, on both sides of the House, could fruitfully be engaged in discussions on this very important aspect of national development.

We intend to make this a truly national effort. Constitution reform demands national consensus. We must together, as a people, eventually make the best decision on how we manage our country in the 21st Century. It is we who must

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determine how we run our lives. This is the responsibility of nationhood. Let us now demonstrate, Mr. Speaker, the maturity of a country approaching half a century of Independence.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

**COPYRIGHT (AMDT.) BILL
(Special Select Committee)**

The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Mr. Speaker, Members would recall that at a sitting of this House held on Friday, May 05, 2006 a Special Select Committee was appointed to consider and report on a Bill entitled the Copyright (Amdt.) Bill, 2006.

The committee was mandated to report to the House within eight weeks of its appointment. On June 30, 2006 an interim report was laid updating the House of the committee's progress. In that report, the committee also required an extension of six weeks in which to complete its deliberations, and that six-week period expired on August 11, 2006.

However, the committee is still in the process of considering the Bill and requires a further extension. We are proposing to give the committee a further five weeks to complete its work. It is in that connection that I move the following Motion:

Be it resolved that the Special Select Committee appointed to consider and report on the Copyright) (Amdt.) Bill, 2006, be granted a further five weeks to complete its deliberations.

Question put and agreed to.

TOURISM DEVELOPMENT (AMDT.) BILL

Order for second reading read.

The Minister of Tourism (Sen. The Hon. Howard Chin Lee): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move,

That a Bill to amend the Tourism Development Act, 2000, be now read a second time.

Mr. Speaker, today I bring to the Parliament a Bill to amend the Tourism Development Act, 2000 and, in doing so, I wish to also bring this Bill in the context of the tourism industry as a whole. To summarize the Tourism Development

Tourism Development (Amdt.) Bill
[SEN. THE HON. H. CHIN LEE]

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(Amdt.) Bill, it is really a simple amendment. This Bill seeks to allow dividends that are paid from an approved tourism project to non-resident shareholders to be exempt from taxes.

Mr. Speaker, what we are doing today is complying with the Caricom Single Market and Economy (CSME) and the recent agreement with COTED. This Bill was recently passed in the Upper House, and I am seeking the approval of the Lower House to pass this amendment to the Tourism Development Act.

In my presentation today, I also wish to review the tremendous successes that we have had in the tourism sector, and, certainly, within the last three years. I am extremely pleased today that we are also the first to broadcast live. I am very honoured and privileged to be the first Minister to be going live on television.
[Desk thumping]

Mr. Speaker, the Tourism Development (Amdt.) Bill, 2006 is really to remove the restrictions that are there for non-residents. We are seeking to remove section 3 of the Tourism Development Act, 2000.

Recently, the CSME was created—January 01, 2006. The intention was really to facilitate the free movement of people, services and capital throughout the region. To do so, certain amendments to legislation were required. In order for us to comply—according to the recent COTED agreement, we must comply by December 31, and certain amendments to our legislation were necessary. Therefore it was mandated by Cabinet that the following Bills be amended.

One of the Bills was the Customs Brokers and Customs Clerks Act; others were the Foreign Investment Act, the Immigration Act and, today, the Tourism Development Act of 2000. One of the ways of including persons outside Trinidad and Tobago is by creating a different definition for the word “national”. So the definition of a “national” would no longer be “a national of Trinidad and Tobago”.

I just want to take this opportunity to read the new definition of a “national”.

“‘national’ means a person who—

(b) has a connection with—

- (ii) another member state of a kind which entitles the person to be regarded as belonging to it for the purposes of the laws of that state relating to immigration or if it be so expressed in those laws, as being a native or resident of that member state:”

In other words, members of another country within Caricom would now become nationals, as long as they are residents or citizens of that country. We are asking for them to be entitled to have exemption from taxes on dividends paid, if they are shareholders of an approved tourism project in Trinidad and Tobago.

It is also the request to amend section 3, which would also allow, as I said, non-residents to be afforded that tax-free benefit. And the benefit is a seven-year tax exemption for any gains or profits derived from a tourism project, and it is dividend to residents of Trinidad and Tobago citizens which are exempt. This is what the present Bill says:

“Whereas dividends to non-residents are exempt from tax only if the recipient is not liable to tax in the country in which he is a resident.”

I just want to inform the House that this is merely a formality, because presently there is a Caricom Double Taxation Agreement which allows zero taxes on items such as this. So, anyone, who has already signed in to the Double Taxation Treaty does not pay taxes on dividends.

I remember being asked in the Upper House what sort of benefit and what sacrifices we are giving in terms of giving away our taxpayers' money. The honest truth is none whatsoever. All we are doing is complying and amending the laws, because we already belong to the Caricom Double Taxation Agreement.

According to the Agreement, if any member is a signatory to this Agreement, that member is subject to taxes and, therefore, was not previously subject to that tax on dividends that were paid.

Mr. Speaker, this is a very simple amendment that I bring forward today, and I bring this in the context of a booming tourism industry. I am going to quote some figures for the Member for Tabaquite. I just want to inform the House on some of the successes that we have had within the past year or two within the tourism sector.

Recently, you would have known that Cabinet gave approval for the formation of the Tourism Development Company (TDC) and this Tourism Development Company was formed with an understanding that the tourism industry can play a major role with respect to the contribution to our gross domestic product, with respect to our contribution to employment, and with respect to the contribution as a non-oil sector industry; therefore, in 2005, TDC was formed.

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At that time, we recognized that it was necessary to put someone who has a tourism background to head that industry. Since Trinidad and Tobago was very new to the industry, we appointed someone with expertise, and who has had experience and worked in 1973 with the British Tourism Authority; and who worked in the tourism industry in the Bahamas from 1983 to 1989. This gentleman worked as the Director of Tourism in Curacao from the year 2001 to 2005. In the year 2005, we appointed Dr. James Hepple to head that organization. We also afforded him one of the largest budgets to market Trinidad and Tobago—a total budget of \$72 million for both overseas and local development.

Mr. Speaker, since then, we have managed to have an increased awareness of our product. We have had better relations between the Government and the private sector in the industry; we have had an improved Caribbean and domestic marketing campaign; we have an aggressive plan to improve the infrastructure of all of our facilities which previously and presently are in need of dire reconstruction, rebuilding and refurbishing. I am going to talk about some of that today.

The TDC has been formed. Let me just outline some of the projects within the last year that I think have made Trinidad and Tobago now a worldwide name—on the world stage.

Mr. Ramnath: The high crime rate.

Sen. The Hon. H. Chin Lee: Apart from the great efforts of our Soca Warriors—this time, coming from the Ministry of Tourism, I would like to personally congratulate the Soca Warriors for making Trinidad and Tobago a household name. [*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: And Jack Warner.

Sen. The Hon. H. Chin Lee: Mr. Speaker, that did not come about only because the team played in Germany, although we commend them for that, but there was a concerted effort by the Ministry of Tourism, the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs, the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs and the Ministry of Trade and Industry to ensure that whilst one billion people are watching this live, we would take full advantage of the opportunity to highlight our culture. [*Desk thumping*]

In fact, many persons are not aware that the joint effort was planned four or five months before we participated in the World Cup. In fact, the TDC together with these Ministries led missions to Germany three or four times to meet with Mayors of Kaiserslautern, we met with the Mayors of Dortmund, we met with the

Mayor of Nuremberg and we met with the local organization committees to ensure that when the World Cup Competition was staged, our cultural team would have the greatest visibility on the world stage. That is what we did. As a result of that, what has happened is that based on the amount of publicity and positive publicity, I am pleased to announce that the value of the publicity that was received in England was £32 million. [*Desk thumping*] That was done because we were proactive. That is about TT \$320 million, a mere investment for such a great return. [*Desk thumping*] That is the PNM way.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of the print media in the United States of America, it is estimated that over US \$1.7 million in print media—I am not talking about the electronic media, it is calculated by the size and the centimetre per column. They worked out all of the articles that were written and they arrived at the amount. We used the Soca Warriors to ensure that the cultural contingent and all the teams that we sent were well managed and well publicized. It only redounded in creating an improved image of Trinidad and Tobago around the world.

Mr. Speaker, added to that, the TDC had an agreement to form a website. The website was called “socawarriorstt.com”. That website was one of the most visited sites in Trinidad and Tobago. In fact, that site received—I have the figures right here. The site highlighted the tourism attractions; all of the various sporting events; the Soca Warriors team; and it highlighted our music. That site received a total of 30,000,300 hits around 145 countries around the world. It was perhaps the most successful website we have ever had in the history of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] Mr. Speaker, we used technology to encourage and to publicize what Trinidad and Tobago has to offer. This is what this Government is about. Members opposite do not understand technology. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker, I want to also talk about some of the events we have planned within the last year. Many persons would be aware of the recent culinary event we had, and that was done to encourage our local enterprise and private sector to highlight the fusion of our foods; to highlight the fusion of our cultures; and to ensure that there is a forum by which they could communicate their brands around the world.

Mr. Speaker, that event took place recently at the Hasely Crawford Stadium. We had a total attendance of over 10,000 persons. It was received very well. It is the second year running, and we intend to make this a yearly event on our tourism calendar.

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Added to that, last night at the Centre of Excellence we launched our awareness campaign. This is a local domestic tourism awareness campaign. The intention of that particular project referred to as the “Tourism Park” is really to educate our young people about all of the attractions that we have to offer, because they are the ones who would serve as ambassadors of our country; they are the ones who would have a better understanding of Mayaro, Gasparee, and so forth; and they are the ones who would become our spokespersons. So, therefore, in the third year running, we have created a Tourism Park. We launched it last night. Mr. Speaker, I understand that this morning there were over 1,000 children and adults waiting in line to get in.

Last year, 71,000 of our citizens visited this park. This is creating awareness of the product. The year before was 25,000, and I could reassure you that this year we would receive over 100,000 visitors which is about 10 per cent of the population. They are going to come and see what we have to offer. [*Desk thumping*]

2.30 p.m.

At this park—we entitled it the "Seven Wonders of Trinidad and Tobago"—you would find there aspects of our ecotourism, adventure tourism, sports tourism, festivals and culture, sites and attractions. And, of course, a major thrust by this Government would be business and conference tourism. I would talk about that as I go on with my presentation, as to what we mean by business and conference tourism in Trinidad and Tobago; also all of the stakeholders involved: EMA, the Tour Operators Association, the Hotel Association. All of the major stakeholders in this private sector we call tourism are involved in it, because we always say that we are really working for the private sector as the Government builds and encourages that sector to go forward.

With respect to what proactive measures have been taken by this Government to encourage tourism in Trinidad and in Tobago; one would recall that about five years ago, Trinidad and Tobago was suffering one of the lowest occupancy levels in the history of our country; some 15 to 20 per cent occupancy. In the private sector there were some hotels on the verge of bankruptcy; there were hotels that wanted to close. I do not know if it was because of the lack of understanding of the sector, and the lack of understanding that in order for you to fill your rooms you have to guarantee airlift. There is no way you can fill rooms in Tobago unless you have planes flying to Tobago. There is no way you can fill rooms in Trinidad unless you have airlift coming into Trinidad. And at that time the airlines did not

want to fly to Tobago because they did not see the economies of scale. It was because of an airlift committee that was formed when we came into Government—it was called the Airlift Committee and was chaired by the hon. Prime Minister—that certain flights coming into Tobago were guaranteed. Flights coming in from Amsterdam and the United Kingdom were guaranteed. They were guaranteed with the understanding that if those flights were not full we would guarantee the passenger seats, and if you go in excess of the number that we guarantee they would have a refund.

I would just like to highlight the number of airlines that we have flying into Trinidad and Tobago as a result of this Airlift Committee, and as a result of restarting an industry that was once on the verge of death. Since then, we have had airlines coming in: Martinair from Amsterdam, that is a Boeing 767, 269 seats, flying directly to Tobago. Also, we are having discussions with them to add an extra flight. We have also managed to secure Virgin Airlines, which is a jumbo jet that flies 448 seats, and whilst before there was a code sharing between Grenada and Tobago, we are pleased to say that very shortly they would be flying directly from London to Tobago and we are now in negotiations with a view to adding two flights per week.

Also Condor, which is a flight that comes directly from Frankfurt to Tobago; that is one flight weekly; a Boeing 767; 167 seats, that is going very well. Added to that, British Airways, which flies twice weekly, starting in December will now fly three times weekly to Tobago from London.

I am also pleased to announce today that based on the confidence in the industry, a new airline will be flying to Trinidad very shortly. This airline would be flying directly from Atlanta to Port of Spain. Right now, as you know, there is BWIA, we have American Airlines and we have Continental Airlines. Because of the confidence in the industry, Delta Airlines would now be flying four times weekly to Trinidad from December. [*Desk thumping*] And negotiations are presently taking place to have a weekly flight from Atlanta to Tobago and we are hoping that by February 17 that flight will begin.

So you see, Mr. Speaker, the industry is vibrant. The industry is creating more investments. You can determine the success of this industry. Despite the advisories; despite the problems that we have had recently; we are experiencing one of the highest occupancy levels in the history of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

How do you score investments? How do you determine whether or not your industry is succeeding? Mr. Speaker, one way is by determining whether the private sector is interested in investing in hotels or in rooms. Last year the Marriott was launched; by early next year we can expect two new hotels to be launched in Trinidad and in Tobago. One, the Holiday Inn, which is a Holiday Inn Express; it is an 80-room hotel that is now being built in Trincity; you would see it as you are going to the airport. One cannot even get a room in Port of Spain and the business people are realizing that if they build a hotel we can fill the rooms.

Dr. Khan: It is not that; it is the traffic jams coming.

Sen. The Hon. H. Chin Lee: No, no Sir, you do your homework and you would realize that the occupancy level in all of our major Port of Spain hotels are close to 100 per cent. That is because of the awareness; the business activity; the confidence that people have in Trinidad and Tobago. They are coming here to invest; they are coming here to visit; they are coming here on vacation and they are coming here because of all the work that the Government has been doing over the last two years.

Added to that, a brand new Hyatt hotel that is being built on the waterfront with 425 rooms, a conference centre of over 50,000 square feet; this would be one of the largest conference centres in the region. [*Desk thumping*] When we talk about conferencing, we should talk about the kind of business these conference centres would create. Apart from having a 425-room hotel added to our inventory; apart from having another 80-room hotel, and if you do your maths you would realize that with these two hotels we would have an additional 55 per cent increase in our room stock by next year; that is over 50 per cent increase in our hotels. That is the confidence that the private sector has in our industry.

Mr. Speaker, added to that, the conference business is an area that the Government and the Ministry are looking at. Any conference you go to abroad, whether it is in Orlando or Las Vegas, it requires increased seats on airlines; it requires more rooms; it requires ground transportation; it stimulates restaurants; it stimulates businesses. So that when we have one of the largest conference centres in the region, it would be the mandate of the TDC to ensure that we have conferences year round and that business continues to grow throughout Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Added to that, the Hilton Hotel. There is now a \$240 million refurbishment plan and when you do the maths, it is almost another billion dollars being injected into this tourism sector so that the future is very bright. And that billion dollars is

in this year, at this time, so next year and the year after I can only see us going from strength to strength.

I would now like to give you some arrival figures and expenditure figures as I close my presentation today, Mr. Speaker, and these are figures that have been provided, not by the Ministry of Tourism, or by our local organizations; these are figures that are presented to us by an international organization called the World Travel and Tourism Council. It operates out of France and it is a body that independently analyzes figures and tells you data in terms of employment, contribution to GDP, growth in expenditure or decreases in expenditure; it analyzes your entire industry.

I just want to quote some of these figures because it is not this Government that is saying it; it is an independent body that is talking about what this Government is doing and how much contribution is being made to the GDP.

In the year 2001, in terms of arrivals in Trinidad and Tobago there was a total of 383,101. The year 2002, there was a total of 384,214. The year 2003, there was 409,000. The year 2004, we had an increase to 442,555 and in the year 2005—which was last year—and those are the only figures we have to date—we had the highest recorded arrivals in the history of Trinidad and Tobago, 460,195. [*Desk thumping*] So, Mr. Speaker, the figures speak for themselves.

In terms of contribution to our GDP, according to the WTTC Report, it says that in terms of direct jobs, over 5.8 per cent of employment—when you look at the total employment—contributed to the tourism industry, 33,771 people. When you look at direct and indirect employment—because there are a lot of people who are employed indirectly as well in the industry—over 16.7 per cent of persons are employed directly and indirectly. Over 96,536 jobs contributed to direct and indirect employment. And with reference to the total amount of contributions to Tobago, it is said that over 53 per cent of the population in Tobago depend on the tourism industry.

So Mr. Speaker, I can go on and on and talk about some of our initiatives in the area of marketing; I can go on and on talking about our representatives in our source markets because our marketing is very strategic. People wonder why we do not have billboards in India or China. My answer to them is that we focus and we technically market—there are captions—to areas where there are flights to bring people to Trinidad; it is a very scientific approach. So most of our markets, if you were to look at London, Tobago's highest arrivals are from England,

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therefore, we market Tobago in England. Tobago's second highest arrivals are from Germany and that is why we took full advantage of the opportunities in Germany and we had a soca caravan in Germany which highlighted all of the features in Tobago, and that is why the awareness level has continued to increase. That is because there are direct flights from London to Tobago. There are direct flights from Amsterdam from Frankfurt, Germany, into Tobago, so we would market those destinations; we would co-brand with the airlines. We would talk with them about sharing codes, about marketing, co-opting with the airlines to ensure that the particular destination is highlighted.

In Trinidad we have a different market; our market in Trinidad is mainly the United States, second is Caricom. So therefore we have a Caricom programme and we have a programme with the United States to source destinations. That is why when we formed the TDC we re-appointed representatives in the United States. We have new representatives in Germany, London and Canada and all of this is done to ensure that whatever money the Government has spent, it redounds to returns on arrivals and improvement in our economic situation in Trinidad and Tobago.

So, Mr. Speaker, today's Bill merely seeks to have an amendment to section 3 of the Tourism Development Act, 2000, and I ask the House to consider it; to approve it without amendment and also to look at it in the context of the tourism industry which is doing extremely well at this time.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move.

Question proposed.

Dr. Adesh Nanan (*Tabaquite*): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I enter the debate on an Act to amend the Tourism Development Act, 2000, I do so in an atmosphere of uncertainty with regard to the safety and security of most of our citizens in Trinidad and Tobago. And to hear this hollow presentation from the hon. Minister of Tourism here this evening, I have to ask: Where is the Minister of Tourism living? Is the Minister of Tourism in an ivory tower and is not aware of the situation in Trinidad and Tobago? I am under the impression that the Minister of Tourism, as he came in here with this live feed, was nervous, and I would tell you why. The Minister of Tourism said that he is the first Minister to be aired live. The Prime Minister and Minister of Finance is the first Minister to be aired live here this evening.

Hon. Members: Big point, big point. [*Desk thumping*] [*Laughter*]

Dr. A. Nanan: Mr. Speaker, the Minister comes to the House and talks about double taxation treaty. I want to tell the Minister here this evening that he is a double failure. He is the former Minister of National Security and now the Minister of Tourism. [*Desk thumping*] The Minister tried to show this evening that there is growth in the tourism sector. What we have before us is now a Bill to amend the Tourism Development Act, 2000. The Tourism Development Act of 2000 repealed the Hotel Development Act and the Tourism Development Act came under the United National Congress.

The Act dealt with, not only hotels; it has been expanded to various sectors of the tourism industry. To hear this Minister come to the House this evening and speak about hits on websites and the use of technology, the Minister should have come this evening to the House and told us what are the projects based on the Tourism Development Act of 2000 that are being financed.

We want to know who the international investors are; what the contribution from the national sector is; tell us. Do not just call two hotels and say next year the Hyatt; then he talked about the hotel near the airport and I am sure that the Member for Barataria/San Juan made the adequate comment, because people are afraid to be within the city and they have to move nearer the airport. [*Interruption*] Exactly, what is the atmosphere we are in? We have a march from Cedros to Port of Spain with respect to an aluminium smelter that is not required.

Mr. Manning: How that relates to the Bill?

Dr. A. Nanan: I could speak about the community of Cedros and the atmosphere of expected tourism facilities in Cedros, if you want me to go there; agro-tourism, forestry, fisheries, but I would not go there, because I would speak to you on the Bill. So that is the atmosphere we are in—an atmosphere of uncertainty. We have a wage freeze that is causing conflict and for that Minister to come in here and speak about—I would applaud the Soca Warriors, Jack Warner and all the technical staff, but to come here to get plaudits with respect to the Soca Warriors—come here with facts. Tell us what is happening in Tobago.

I was in Tobago for one weekend and there was an attack on the wife of the owner of Kariwak Hotel. There was a robbery at Bago Beach Bar; Mount Pleasant Credit Union was robbed; tourists are being beaten at Argyle Waterfall; tell us about those things. What are you all doing? And now you are talking about infrastructure. Now you are talking about infrastructure; 2002 to now you are now talking about going to improve infrastructure and this Airlift Committee. What is

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new about that? That was already in place; you just changed the names and the personnel and you come with an Airlift Committee.

Tell us about the infrastructure. You are reading in the newspapers no public toilets in Mayaro; no toilets anywhere on our beaches, and you are trying to promote tourism in the country. You are speaking about a product. What is the Government's vision with respect to tourism? Tell us about that. You are doing nothing for the country with respect to the growth in tourism. It is just happening and it is happening because of our weather patterns. People are coming into the Caribbean now because the storms are moving more north; I do not know if you are aware of that.

Our destination is being shifted from Tobago to St. Lucia; are you aware of that, Minister of Tourism? A number of Europeans are in St. Lucia right now; it is because of the travel advisories that you said are not important. You have to deal with the crime situation as the number one priority in this country. [*Desk thumping*] Your arrivals are increasing—yes, we agree, those are the figures you are giving us, we have to take it for granted that you are right—but will they return? People are coming because they are adventurers. They are coming because of the marketing, I agree. But what are you marketing? Sun, sea and sand? That is all of the Caribbean, so you have to focus on multi-destination tourism. You cannot come here with a niche market and confine it. You come to read from a speech or your technocrats advised you, conference and business tourism; that was the plan of the United National Congress long before you came. [*Desk thumping*] The Minister of Planning and Development stopped that project. So do not come here with “any” big deal about conference and business tourism, and that is a market you are going to capture.

Sports tourism, Member for Toco/Manzanilla we had to beg for you to go to Germany; yes, beg for you to go; the Prime Minister did not want you to go. [*Laughter*] I am glad the Minister of Tourism expanded the debate, because we are going into all the sectors this evening with respect to tourism.

What is happening in Tobago? Is the Minister of Agriculture assisting in Tobago?

Hon. Member: No, nothing doing.

Dr. A. Nanan: Agro-tourism, are you doing anything there? [*Interruption*] No, I am not giving way; you would have your time to respond. Nothing! Where are the linkages? Is the Minister of Tourism aware that Charlotteville is not a port that has compulsory pilotage? Are you aware of that? No, you do not know that.

You do not know that those cruise ships over 50 tonnes that are coming into Charlotteville can pose a risk to the entire environment in Tobago. Are you aware of that? You must be aware of that. Those are the things that are important: That one little incident at Charlotteville with respect to fuel oil contamination in the waters in that particular area would destroy the entire plan for tourism in that sector. You must talk to the Minister of Works and Transport.

Hon. Member: They do not talk.

Dr. A. Nanan: They do not talk? Okay. Well, you should talk to the Minister of Works and Transport so you would have that compulsory pilotage at Charlotteville and you would be able to use the experience of our nationals on board those ships as they come in to dock in Charlotteville. And for your information, the declaration of Charlotteville as a port was under the United National Congress. [*Desk thumping*] You have done nothing for that particular area in Charlotteville. Probably because of spite you would not improve Charlotteville as a port.

Mr. Ramnath: Look at the reefs in the area.

Dr. A. Nanan: Exactly! One little disaster, Member for Couva South, would destroy the entire tourism industry in Tobago. The Minister is not aware of that. Are you also aware, with respect to infrastructure, that Maracas Bay is one of our polluted beaches? Are you aware of that? Have you been doing any linkages with the Institute of Marine Affairs to find out if they are doing any work to upgrade our beaches? If you are stamping sun, sea and sand as one of the proposals that go in the tourism sector; are you doing that, as you increase the number of rooms in hotels?

I want to ask the Member for Toco/Manzanilla—I remember in the debate on the Tourism Development Bill he spoke about eco-lodges—and I know you have a hotel in Toco, I do not know how well you are doing there. Are there any more eco-lodges in Trinidad? Are there going to be investors? In fact you should read the Act before you—this amendment amends a specific section in the Tourism Development Act, 2000, but if you read the schedule to the Tourism Development Act of 2000, you would see that there is a breakdown with respect to the international investor, as well as the local investor, and you would see certain criteria in terms of the allocation.

Is there any international investment taking place with respect to eco-lodges? There are a number of areas; tell us about that. Are there any helicopter services in Tobago? Are there any helicopter tours in Tobago? None! What are you all doing?

Dr. Moonilal: Nothing.

Dr. A. Nanan: Nothing! You could go to any other island and have a helicopter tour, but none in Tobago, and you come here to talk about you are going to have a hotel by Piarco and you are going to have an infrastructure upgrade, and what else you are speaking about; the number of hits on a website? *[Laughter]* And talking about technology! I remember in this same House—and the Prime Minister could say if I am telling the truth—I mentioned the number of hits and the Prime Minister had to ask me, are you sure it is so many hits; 40,000 hits a day? So I recognize the use of technology, but you see in your presentation—I must agree it is very difficult to have a debate because you are just laying down the policies. But if you had done your research you could have backed up your policies with a bit of initiative in terms of what is happening with it. *[Laughter]* You do not just come and speak like that; your knees should be on the ground, you need to walk around.

In terms of the niche marketing, I made that point already. With the terms of bed and breakfast opportunities, we are seeing springing up a minimum of 8-room guest houses, that is part of the investment aspect; we are seeing these houses of ill-repute. And I want to make the point again; I want to ask the Member for San Fernando West; are you aware of the masquerading of the bed and breakfast house in Palmiste?

Mr. Ramnath: They charge by the hour? *[Laughter]*

Dr. A. Nanan: Are you aware? And is the Mayor aware? Mr. Speaker, we have to ask these questions. The Investment Act was not for these houses of illrepute to come forward.

Mr. Boynes: Have you attended these houses? *[Laughter]*

Dr. A. Nanan: It has to be for investment in the tourism sector and the Minister of Tourism signs off on the document. I remember quite clearly, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Tourism signs off on that document with respect to requirements, and it is quite clear here, “the owner or operator of an approved tourism project”. Are they masquerading as an approved tourism project? We have to ask those questions, Mr. Speaker. Because I remember quire clearly the Member for Toco/Manzanilla said in his contribution that we do not want these guest houses to become a low standard of development in the tourism sector.

Eco-lodges, that is what we need. Tell us about eco-lodges. Tell us about what is happening in Tobago. That particular schedule speaks about charter boats, helicopter rides. We want to know how many taxis have been improved. Are there upgrades in the taxi service in Tobago? What is happening in Trinidad, are there any upgrades taking place? Those things are allowed under the Act. The Minister of Tourism signs off on all those things. Tell us what is happening. Is the Act functioning? Bring an amendment.

Mr. Ramnath: What about beach camp; you do not think that could be converted into eco-tourism?

Hon. Member: How many rooms you have there?

3.00 p.m.

Dr. A. Nanan: I remember, Mr. Speaker, not too long ago the Minister of Tourism brought an amendment to the same Act. I am sure the Minister would recall Destination Management Company—and it was redefined—Dive Operations and Ground Tour Operations. How many more people have become involved? That is what it was for. It was reserved for nationals. Tell us how many nationals are involved in ground tour operations since the Act came into force? Tell us about Dive Operations. We want to know.

Hon. Member: How they lose their TV time.

Dr. A. Nanan: Tell us what is happening in Tobago.

Hon. Member: “How much hits on the computer”.

Dr. A. Nanan: Exactly! And telling us now that you are going to have 55 per cent more rooms in terms of when you have these hotels included; *[Interruption]* What are you talking about? Have you seen the plan for Tobago with respect to the areas allocated for hotels? Have you seen that, Minister of Tourism? Can you give us an update on the acreage in Tobago and what is being utilized for hotels and guest houses and eco-lodges in Tobago? Are you aware of that? So how can you be a Minister of Tourism? You are supposed to be—

Hon. Member: Conversant.

Dr. A. Nanan: Not only conversant, he is supposed to be like an octopus with his arms outstretched in every direction, not confined to these niches that he is talking about, conference and business tourism.

Hon. Member: You were better at National Security. *[Inaudible]*

Dr. A. Nanan: So, Mr. Speaker, where are the gains or profits? Tell us. *[Interruption]* The Caricom nationals, now, would get the tax break on the dividend but who is investing in Trinidad and Tobago? We heard about investor confidence. Where? In the energy sector? Where else! Everybody speaks about diversification of the economy; now is the time. Tobago's big thrust is agro-tourism; diversification of the economy; utilize the tourism sector; do not just come and say words here. That is why I said your presentation was hollow this evening. *[Interruption]* There is a master plan. I am sure the Member for Diego Martin Central is aware; there is a 1995 master plan that is still relevant today. The entertainment industry; what is happening with that sector? We see a number of teenagers going into the entertainment industry; are they being promoted? The multimedia industry; I do not know if the Minister is aware. Have you ever gone into a studio? Do you know the arranging of music; are you aware of that?

Hon. Member: No.

Dr. A. Nanan: Are you aware of the use of music, now, Mr. Speaker, in terms of how could music play a role in the life of an individual? *[Interruption]* Are you aware of that?

Hon. Member: Do you play the guitar?

Dr. A. Nanan: So you need to reach out in the various areas; in the various sectors. The sectors are there; they just need to be improved.

I saw recently that there is another plan for the THA with respect to tourism in Tobago and they are going to ask the people in Tobago about tourism and they are going to have an input in tourism. How many plans for Tobago? How many strategic reviews for tourism in Tobago? *[Interruption]* As often as it needs to be. I think that is what is happening in every Ministry, Mr. Speaker, review and review; that is why we have review of the Constitution here before us today. More and more reviews, but no performance. In every ministry and I could go on to label every single Minister; every single area. *[Interruption]*

Now we heard about airlift, sea transport. The ferry breaks down going to Tobago—two-hour delay, the same ferry that they intended to buy; a 9-year-old ferry; 500 passengers stranded for two hours off the north coast. Rough seas, that is what the people have been put through in this country. And what! US \$71 and \$72 for a barrel of oil and the cost of living rising. I saw, also, that the people in Tobago cannot afford to buy food because of the high prices.

I spoke in this Parliament many times about the shipping industry, Mr. Speaker, and about the availability of nationals to get involved in the shipping industry, but the Minister of Works and Transport would not even take a look in the Maritime Services Division. If the Minister of Works and Transport looked in that direction there would be some assistance. Airlift is one; sea transport is the other; cargo transport to Tobago—all those sectors are being neglected. A Shipping Bill languishing in Parliament, Mr. Speaker, about to lapse once again; the second time around, so what are you talking about in terms of tourism.? Cruise ships, oil spillage possibilities; no protection for the waters anywhere, but you are talking about niche marketing.

“Well publicized website and awareness campaign”: What awareness campaign! A thousand people going; [*Interruption*] where are they going? Fort George; they are getting robbed; brutalized. They are going to Maracas Waterfall; they are getting robbed; they are going to Gasparee Caves, the boat might breakdown. Where else they are going! They are going down to the pitch lake, they are getting robbed. So what awareness campaign! Yes, the destinations are there, but there is no security; nobody feels safe in this country anymore; you cannot even step out. I was in Tobago, unaware. Unaware, I was walking around the Tobago Plantation Golf Course, only to realize, “oh shucks”, I might be in danger, because you see, the average tourist on an island comes there with a carefree attitude. You come down there; you are enjoying the splendour of the island and then suddenly something happens and you realize “oh shucks”, I should have been careful.

That is what you have to be aware of when you are marketing your destination; the advisories are against us. The Minister of Health—there is an advisory against the Minister of Health with respect to the health situation in this country, Mr. Speaker. In all areas! So, when you are here this evening to say in your opening that you would tell us about how there are improvements in the tourism sector—and of course, the Tobago Hospital fiasco.

Hon. Member: How many millions they spent there?

Dr. A. Nanan: Exactly; and tell us how much money is being put into the tourism sector. [*Interruption*] What are they doing?

Private sector involvement: Marriott, Crowne Plaza, talking about occupancy levels, Mr. Speaker, and the number of airlifts and the number of aircrafts coming into the country.

Mr. Imbert: Aircraft. It is not a plural word.

Dr. A. Nanan: I spoke about your non-performance earlier, Member for Diego Martin East.

Mr. Imbert: And I heard you.

Dr. A. Nanan: Mr. Speaker, we heard some figures from the Minister of Tourism about arrivals being up, but we did not hear from that Minister in terms of the arrivals, how many of those 460,000 visitors are coming to Trinidad first and how many are coming directly—*[Interruption]* We did not get a breakdown. How many of the visitors in 2005 are going to Tobago directly or coming to Trinidad and then going across to Tobago? *[Interruption]*

Yes, Mr. Speaker, another area of concern that the Minister did not speak about, really, with respect to the scheduling, is what was the situation in 2001. Now the Minister of Tourism was comparing what was happening in 2001, to say, yes, we have moved so far ahead in terms of performance under the People's National Movement as compared to the United National Congress government. But in 2001 the Minister would recall—the Member for Tobago East must be well aware—there were marine patrols in Tobago.

Hon. Member: Oh yes. *[Desk thumping]*

Dr. A. Nanan: There was a mounted branch in Tobago; there were K9 patrols in Tobago. In terms of the crime levels; the police were working together with hotel operators and cars were being utilized in the process of patrolling. There were detectives in Tobago; there was a whole direction in terms of the improvement. There were helicopter patrols by the police helicopter in Tobago. That is the kind of support mechanism that we have not heard or seen in Tobago. That is what was happening then but there was a crime situation developing in Tobago but it was controlled directly.

And he being a Minister of Tourism and a former Minister of National Security, I thought that the Minister would come here and tell us what is happening in Tobago in terms of security arrangements, but we heard nothing from the Minister in terms of the security plans for Tobago, Mr. Speaker. I am sure that the Minister is not even aware anymore—probably he does not speak to the Minister of National Security *[Interruption]*—in terms of what is happening in Tobago, but I urge the Minister to get involved and to work closely with the Minister of National Security because the crime situation in Tobago is escalating out of control. And if you listen to the “Rise and Shine” programme in Tobago

you would hear people calling in and expressing their concerns, and serious concerns, because that was—the Tobago concept is really to leave their doors open and enjoy the island. Now they have to keep their doors shut and stay inside like prisoners on an island. *[Interruption]* An island paradise, Mr. Speaker, that is being transformed into an island prison. *[Interruption]* They are coming to experience the beauty of the island and they are coming because of the marketing by the Soca Warriors. *[Desk thumping]* *[Laughter]* You laugh. You are not even aware—

Mr. Speaker, I do not know if the Minister of Tourism ever went on the website. I went on that website, as well as the CNN website and I left a comment on the CNN website. I do not know if he read that and it was broadcast as a CNN comment.

Mr. Boynes: What was the comment?

Dr. A. Nanan: I said that the tiny islands of Trinidad and Tobago are now swimming in a sea of pride because of the performance of our Soca Warriors.

Hon. Member: “Yeah man, yeah man”; on CNN. *[Desk thumping]*

Dr. A. Nanan: I said that on CNN forum.

Mrs. Job-Davis: You made news.

Dr. A. Nanan: I did not come here to get any plaudits for that, but the Minister introduced the technology aspect into this debate, and that is why I said he spoke about websites and hits, *[Interruption]* but I do not know if he got involved in the technology or they just told him there are so many hits on a website. Because the CNN fan club, I do not know if the Minister ever went on that CNN fan club for that was a marketing avenue that was there but never utilized. *[Interruption]* For free. You just send them a video clip and if they like it they use it and you get total coverage in terms of the country. He was not aware of that. They did not even use that. They did not have a fan club then in terms of sending information. So that is an avenue of technology that you could consider in the future.

So, Mr. Speaker, when we heard from the Minister of Tourism this afternoon in terms of his presentation, he has left out certain areas of great importance and highlighted very little in terms of the improvements in the tourism sector. So as I end my contribution—*[Interruption]* Mr. Speaker, I am urged on to continue, so I will. *[Laughter]* *[Desk thumping]*

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Mr. Speaker, you know the tourism sector is dear to my heart [*Interruption*] and when I speak about the tourism sector I speak from my heart.

Mr. Sharma: And with authority too.

Mr. Imbert: He never ran a guest house yet. [*Laughter*]

Dr. A. Nanan: Because, Mr. Speaker, I was intimately involved as a Minister of Tourism in that Tourism Development Act and I recall very clearly the long nights that we had with respect to that particular Act and the various areas that we were targeting, and when I heard from the Minister I thought that the Minister was going to say, this area here, they have seen great improvement, this area here, they have seen a lot of improvement, in terms of the villas capable—[*Interruption*]

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: Adesh, do not get distracted.

Dr. A. Nanan: No, I would not get distracted. Mr. Speaker, in terms of the areas, I mentioned in this House many times in terms of our potential as a destination, the beauty of Tobago. I spoke about Englishman's Bay being the number one beach in the world; ranked as number six in the world right now. What is happening there? [*Interruption*] You cannot go to Englishman's Bay anymore; you would be robbed, so even if you are number six in the world you cannot go to the beach, so what is the point. Brain coral, number one in the world, again, people are coming to the destination, but they are coming to the destination not because of the Minister of Tourism and the PNM Government. [*Interruption*] Despite them, they are coming to the destination—because it exists. And if they would recall, the reason that the yachts are coming into Chaguaramas is not because of the PNM and its marketing campaign; it is because it is the most southerly of the islands and they are away from the storms and the hurricanes. It is a sheltered area and that is why they are coming here.

Mr. Manning: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. Member for Tabaquite for giving way. Does the Member have an idea when yachts began to come into Trinidad and Tobago? Is it a historical thing or is it a relatively recent development? [*Laughter*]

Dr. A. Nanan: Mr. Speaker, I am glad the Prime Minister intervened, because one of the anchors is that Chaguaramas peninsula, where those yachts are.

Mr. Manning: Well answer the question “nuh”.

Dr. A. Nanan: I would answer the question, but I also want to give you some information and for the Minister of Tourism to know, [*Interruption*] because that

particular area; the peninsula, is an anchor for the tourism sector and the anchor in that particular area you have the ecotourism potential.

Mr. Manning: When did the yachts start to come into that area?

Hon. Member: He is coming; he is coming to that.

Hon. Member: You would get it.

Dr. A. Nanan: I am coming to that, but I want to paint the picture before I get there, Mr. Speaker. [*Laughter*]

Hon. Member: “Doh” give him no answer.

Dr. A. Nanan: Because the Minister would be aware; I am sure the Minister toured Chaguaramas, Mr. Speaker, and when the CDA operate—I want the Minister to be aware of this—they operate independent of TIDCO and I am sure that they are going to operate independent of the Tourism Development Company. It is my view that there should be an inextricable linkage between the two; the Tourism Development Company and the Chaguaramas Development Authority, (CDA) they should be working hand in hand. You should not have the CDA getting a small budget at the end of the year to fix a rope that is going down to the Gasparee Caves or a rail that is going to Gasparee Caves.

Mr. Manning: When did the yachts come to Trinidad?

Dr. A. Nanan: I am coming there; [*Interruption*] there is a little area that I am coming to.

Mr. S. Panday: Tell me, tell me.

Dr. A. Nanan: So, Mr. Speaker, you have the CDA getting that budget for upgrade of the Chaguaramas area, but you also have a growing private sector area there; you have building of yachts taking place there; building of catamarans—I do not know if the Member is aware—and the reason is the atmosphere in Chaguaramas; the atmosphere in terms of humidity is one of the best for boat building in Chaguaramas.

Mr. Manning: So when did they come?

Mr. S. Panday: He is coming to it.

Dr. A. Nanan: I am coming to that.

Hon. Member: He has to drop anchor first. [*Inaudible*]

Dr. A. Nanan: So, Mr. Speaker, that industry there; that yachting industry that is taking place there, you also have that great capability for tourism there. You have that Chaguaramas base, that turning basin in Chaguaramas for cruise ships; that turning basin is a basin already earmarked; you do not have to do too much work on the turning basin for our cruise ships. So you do not have to crowd the ports, in terms of Port of Spain as a cruise ship area; you have a cruise ship facility there, in Chaguaramas, Mr. Speaker. Besides that, you also have the ambience; if I remember correctly, you have the howler monkeys there in terms of ecotourism. [*Inaudible*]

Hon. Member: He has not dropped anchor as yet.

Dr. A. Nanan: I am coming to that area; the Scotland Bay area, I am coming to that last. [*Laughter*] [*Interruption*] You have the howler monkeys there and on a good day if you are playing golf—and the Member for Diego Martin West would be aware—and it becomes late in the evening you might hear or see a howler monkey in that particular area.

Listen also, there is a waterfall, Edith Falls, if I remember correctly, in Chaguaramas. Only in the rainy season you would have that waterfall available. In that area there are a lot of heritage sites.

Hon. Member: You are getting a tour.

Dr. A. Nanan: And of course, there is the old satellite tracking station on the hill. And if you look in terms of the Diego Martin valley from the top of one of these hills, that is picturesque in that area. You have a great facility that is not being utilized in Chaguaramas. [*Interruption*] Never! The Minister was only concerned there with the Chaguaramas Convention Centre and the conference facilities, and I spoke already in this debate and I said the Prime Minister should take a look out of the window when he went to the convention centre. Look at the ambience from that window and he would have seen the kind of beauty in Chaguaramas. I said it already, Mr. Speaker, and you have Harts Cut right there. You have the facilities and you have people suffering there. Upgrade Macqueripe; you said that you are going to do infrastructural upgrade. Upgrade Macqueripe, another great facility there in Chaguaramas, and while you are there consider what you are going to do with the ecotourism.

Mr. Speaker, I do not know if the Prime Minister or the Minister of Tourism is aware that outside of Chacachacare, that island, because of the protected areas there, if you stood on the docks at one point in time you could see turtles eating

the jellyfish in the area. Ecotourism potential, great potential on and around those islands. *[Interruption]* I am getting to the yachts in Chaguaramas because it is part of the entire picturesque area. You have that Chacachacare, Monos Huevos area, Mr. Speaker.

Nelson Island, what is happening? Tell us about Nelson Island. We had a great plan for Nelson Island. *[Interruption]* Great plan for Nelson Island. Prof. Kenny was working on that particular heritage site. Nothing happening in Nelson Island. You have actually marginalized the professor; all his work has gone down the drain on Nelson Island. It was a great plan for Nelson Island, if you recall in terms of the historical antecedent of Nelson Island; one of the gateways as the people were coming into this country. Open up the areas; talk about that. Talk about what you are doing there. All you are speaking about is conferencing and small areas; give us an idea. In fact, Minister of Tourism, you should attend the awareness programme that you are having in the Centre of Excellence, you might be more aware of your own country, Mr. Speaker. *[Interruption]* *[Laughter]* You would be aware of that. Are you aware of the potential of the Piparo volcano, the mud volcano in Piparo?

Mr. Manning: Yes, the cruise ship coming to Chaguaramas. *[Laughter]*

Dr. A. Nanan: Mr. Speaker, there is also a great potential in our rural communities, and I would tell you why. *[Interruption]* Exactly, if you remember, Mr. Speaker, the Brasso area in Tabaquite, beautiful ecotourism. If you travel along the Guaracara/Tabaquite Main Road, you would see, in terms of the beauty of the flora and fauna of the area. You can have drive-along tours in that area. Think about that, Minister of Tourism. Park and ride; look at those areas, the beauty of our country.

Mr. Imbert: I wish we could park you and ride out.

Dr. A. Nanan: In fact, as the highways are developed—I do not know in what century we would get the interchange, *[Interruption]* *[Laughter]* but we could transport the tourists who are coming in on the cruise ship—on a good day, we could transport them from Port of Spain, bring them down the highway and swing them into Gran Couva, and as they come into Gran Couva they could come into Brasso. What are they coming for? Along the route you could also have—there is a lot of pottery that takes place, they could see that taking place, the making of pots, using the old galvanize sheeting and a spinning wheel; you can have that. And not only there, as you continue along the route you would have the gorge of the Brasso river; another beautiful area.

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As you move away from that you would have a small bird sanctuary because there are lots of birds along that particular trail off the old railroad in Brasso; those are the potentials. I almost forgot, Prime Minister, but your Minister of Tourism has no national pride because he forgot to play the anthem when he was going to that function, Mr. Speaker. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Manning: Which function?

Dr. A. Nanan: The culinary event that you attended. There was no anthem. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Boynes: But what about the yachts?

Dr. A. Nanan: Mr. Speaker, I am hearing the Member for Toco/Manzanilla speaking and that takes me to the beauty of Toco and the Sangre Grande area. The Member for Toco/Manzanilla should take the Minister of Tourism into his constituency, because of the beautiful area or the ecotourism potential in the Sangre Grande and Toco areas. And in terms of rural community development, [*Interruption*] not only Brasso, we have other areas; Oropouche, Mr. Speaker.

Dr. Moonilal: They have abandoned those areas.

Dr. A. Nanan: Why are they abandoning those areas? Those are the potential areas for growth in tourism. Mention has been made many times of the potential of our celebrations; our local Divali celebrations. In almost every community around Divali, there are these celebrations taking place. That could be a tourist attraction.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, in very small islands throughout the world, they utilize all these little areas to attract the tourists; it does not cost much, but you see, money is flowing like water in this country. More and more money—pumping more and more money and money is just being wasted. There are small areas that just need a small injection of capital and you would have great rewards in community tourism. So coming here and talking about an awareness programme at the Centre of Excellence and 1,000 people attending, what is happening from that awareness programme? Nothing!

The Minister talking about you must have more conferences—to bring more people here to conferences. We are not against conference tourism, but there are other areas of tourism marketing. You said you hired one of best persons and you forgot, unlike The Bahamas, how much experience the person has. We have not seen the rewards of hiring that person. We are not seeing any changes in the tourism environment or landscape and we want to see those areas developed. We

want to see, not only the Piparo volcano being utilized, there are other areas. Devil's Woodyard in the Princes Town constituency is another volcano. We also have a volcano in Penal, so this could be another aspect of tourism development. And all this, Mr. Speaker, all of these projects could be approved as stated in the Bill, "an approved tourism project" by the Minister of Tourism and could receive, not tax holidays, but could receive benefits.

In the Chaguaramas area we have a number of yachts and by word of mouth the industry grew—I do not know if the Prime Minister is aware of that—by word of mouth, not marketing; it is by word of mouth; one person would tell another one, go down to Chaguaramas, they have good facilities there, in terms of the spare parts. And as I speak about spare parts, Mr. Prime Minister, may I also quickly mention to you that one of the reasons that our industry—that we cannot have a local shipping industry, is the price of spare parts. In other islands the prices of spare parts are very much reduced, and that is why a number of ships from Trinidad and Tobago fly Caricom flags—based in The Bahamas, based in Panama, based in Antigua and all those various areas they are flying foreign flags, and the Minister of Works and Transport should be aware, Mr. Speaker, *[Interruption]* that there is a possibility there in terms of a great potential for tourism, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Imbert: Boy, leave me alone.

Dr. A. Nanan: There is a great potential with respect to that area. So, by the yachties' word of mouth, that particular niche market of yachting has grown and also because of the shelter that particular area affords.

Mr. Manning: When did it start?

Mr. Imbert: When did this happen?

Dr. A. Nanan: When did what happen?

Mr. Imbert: The growth in the yachts.

Hon. Member: Adesh, just remember you are on TV. *[Laughter]*

Dr. A. Nanan. I gave the information as I am aware, and I am not being politically biased. I am speaking with respect to what has happened over the years. *[Interruption]* I am not speaking about under the UNC or under the PNM. I am speaking in terms of the geographical area of Chaguaramas; the geographical location of Trinidad and Tobago.

3.30 p.m.

Mr. Manning: I thank the hon. Member for Tabaquite for giving way for yet another time and I merely want to repeat the question I asked a few minutes ago, whether the Member would be kind enough to let us know when this influx of yachts in Chaguanas began. We would really like to know.

Mr. Speaker: The speaking time of the hon. Member for Tabaquite has expired.

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

Mr. Manning: I want to give him enough time to answer the question. [*Laughter and desk thumping*]

Question put and agreed to.

Dr. A. Nanan: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Members for extending my time, I want to give the assurance that I would not take all of it. This debate goes further than just what has been outlined in terms of the tourism sector; it goes further in terms of the youth of the country—

Mr. Imbert: You forget the question?

Dr. A. Nanan: No, I recall the question. Mr. Speaker, the question is that if the Prime Minister would read the tourism master plan of August 31, 1995, the answer is in there. [*Laughter and desk thumping*] And I am sure the Member for Diego Martin Central, who is aware of that tourism master plan, read that, and could inform the Prime Minister of the answer. [*Crosstalk*] Exactly, that is no problem.

Mr. Valley: Mr. Speaker, just for the avoidance of doubt, may I inform the hon. Member, that Chaguaramas, the yachties and so on existed long before any master plan that was written in 1995 or thereafter, that the influx of yachties at Chaguaramas preceded 1995. Okay?

Dr. A. Nanan: Mr. Speaker, I am not here to score any political points, I am here for the benefit of the country. I am here to ensure that our tourism sector has the potential to grow and grow in the right direction; to argue whether the yachts came in 1980, 1995, 2000, 2001 is irrelevant. The point here is, they are here and they have the potential to leave and they are already leaving. They are leaving because if you look at the track record of the PNM, you would see that under the PNM—and remember this—the yachties have been attacked severely and robbed.

Crime is rampant in the Chaguaramas area and nothing is happening. The Minister of Tourism is not saying anything; the Minister of National Security is taking no precautions and it is so close to the base and that is what I do not understand.

Dr. Khan: Who is the MP for that area?

Mr. Manning: Which base?

Dr. Khan: Who is the MP?

Dr. A. Nanan: The defence force. [*Interruption*] Mr. Speaker, you know I am shocked that the Prime Minister and head of the National Security Council made a statement like that because in Tobago when the United National Congress was in power, the soldiers and the police were working together, working in harmony and we were controlling the crime.

Mr. Manning: The base is there, what base? Who is based there?

Mr. Sharma: It is a baseless argument.

Dr. A. Nanan: I do not know why they are trying to trick me because I have all the facts in my head. [*Desk thumping*] I have not picked up one single piece of paper for the whole day and I could speak from Cedros where the match started all the way to Toco and Tobago. In every sector— [*interruption*]

Mrs. Job-Davis: You are coming to Tobago?

Mr. Sharma: Mrs. Job-Davis does not represent Tobago.

Dr. A. Nanan: I am shocked. Mr. Speaker, it really hurt me, when I went to Tobago and found out from the people that the water supply in Tobago is unreliable and it is not sanitary.

Dr. Moonilal: Nobody told them.

Dr. A. Nanan: Totally, unbelievable and in every hotel you read, the water is safe to drink. But why is the water in the hotel safe to drink and the water outside the hotel is insanitary?

Mrs. Job-Davis: Who told you that?

Dr. A. Nanan: You go down in some areas and drink the water; in fact, you would not even drink the water from there; you would be buying only bottled water from all over the country.

Dr. Moonilal: Take water from Trinidad.

Mrs. Job-Davis: You know that?

Dr. A. Nanan: It is a fact, get down on the ground and see that.

Hon. Member: “Dem” Tobagonian people.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Dr. A. Nanan: Go into some of the areas there and drink the water; you are trying to build tourism in Tobago and you cannot even have an adequate water supply in Tobago. Where is the Minister of Public Utilities? Not here!

Dr. Khan: Talk to Orville London, they are junior ministers.

Dr. A. Nanan: That is the infrastructure that is required. People cannot even drink water in certain parts of Tobago. Safe in hotels and the citizens cannot have a good water supply or a water supply they can trust in Tobago. How can you build a tourism industry in there? What are you telling the people in Tobago? All over the areas in Tobago!

Mr. Speaker, in Tobago there are certain beautiful areas, untouched. I went to that particular area of Mount Irvine

Mrs. Job-Davis: Untouched?

Dr. A. Nanan: In Bethel, beautiful area, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Sharma: Just like Mrs. Job-Davis.

Dr. A. Nanan: On the way from Mount Irvine—just like you, Mrs. Job-Davis, beautiful and untouched. [*Laughter and desk thumping*]

Dr. Moonilal: Dr. Nanan, your argument fall down.

Dr. A. Nanan: Sorry. But Mr. Speaker, let the Minister of Tourism really tour these areas. Those are the areas that are really our niche markets. Organize the tours; send the people up to those areas. Tobago is beautiful. I love Tobago but we have to get the Tobago plan right. I spoke many times of the erosion taking place with respect to the destruction of the coral reef in Tobago and the Member for Tobago East is aware of that.

Mrs. Job-Davis: Aware of what?

Dr. A. Nanan: The coral reef, the sediment that is killing the reef in Tobago. And how can you market a destination with dive tourism when your reefs are dying.

Hon. Member: It is “die” tourism.

Dr. A. Nanan: Where are the marine parks? Have you identified any area for marine parks in Tobago? Are you having any marine parks? We have heard about some technology park he is talking about. Are you aware that in Kuala Lumpur in terms of technology parks—

Mr. Valley: Boy, you are on TV, you know.

Dr. Moonilal: You all hear that?

Dr. Khan: So what.

Dr. Moonilal: Kuala Lumpur.

Dr. Khan: But he is giving you enough information.

Dr. Moonilal: Dr. Nanan would ignore him.

Dr. A. Nanan: I would ignore him, Mr. Speaker, because in that particular country in terms of the fibre optics transmission in Malaysia, five or ten years ago they were far ahead of us. Why can we not have a semi conductor industry in this country, why not? We have a politically stable climate, why can we not have that? They have it in Costa Rica, why can we not have a semi conductor industry in this country?

Mr. Manning: We would have tourism just now.

Dr. Moonilal: We have a semi-government.

Dr. A. Nanan: Is all about the economy; diversification of the economy. There are other areas—multimedia technology, utilize it for the tourism sector.

Dr. Khan: They have medical tourism.

Dr. A. Nanan: They have health tourism, are you aware of that, Member? There are other areas that we are not hearing of. The Government is very silent on this particular tourism plan because there is no plan. It is a vaille-que-vaille approach; a haphazard approach to the tourism sector; just pumping money into the areas and nothing is happening. Tourism has a specific growth rate and tourism—I have said it and I would say again, those markets could disappear in the morning. You would have all the airlift if you want; you could bring how many planes you want; how many passengers are coming on those aircraft, but if the product is not utilized and preserved properly, you could lose your market. It is a competition across the islands. I have said it many times and I do not know if

the Minister of Tourism is aware: What is the size of our picture in terms of the islands of Trinidad and Tobago in those magazines for the Caribbean? Small, small pictures whereas Antigua has a broad picture and the ones they show in those magazines for Tobago is like it is a prison: a gate and a beach.

Hon. Member: That is true.

Dr. A. Nanan: Antigua, St. Vincent and St. Lucia dominating these magazines.

Dr. Khan: Nice, nice—

Dr. A. Nanan: But no, Trinidad and Tobago, small. What are you doing about that? In terms of marketing are you improving: Are you talking to the CTO?

Mr. Sharma: *Chinkee, chinkee.*

Dr. A. Nanan: Yes. We have always been marginalized in our multi-destination tourism. It is not this Government, in case you are not aware Minister of Tourism, in terms of the waiving of the departure tax for visitors; it is not this Government that did that. [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. Moonilal: That is what we did.

Dr. A. Nanan: We did all of those things. We brought the Act; we gave you a platform. You had a platform by accident, but you never utilized it. Everything was there, all the areas, not only in health; sports tourism, business tourism and the entertainment industry. What is happening to the entertainment industry? Let us go into that area in terms of approved tourism projects. Have you given any approval for any tourism projects in the multimedia sector, Mr. Speaker? Have you had anybody approaching you for filming in Tobago? Are they producing any films in Tobago, our beautiful island paradise? In fact, in that particular film, *Pirates of the Caribbean*, they utilized a destination in the Caribbean, why did they not utilize Tobago?

Mr. Ramnath: You would have to ask the Tobago East Member.

Dr. Moonilal: They “fraid” the PNM pirates.

Hon. Member: Some of them do not know.

Dr. A. Nanan: All those things are opportunities.

Mr. Ramnath: What is the Member for Tobago East doing about that?

Dr. A. Nanan: You know how many people have seen *Pirates of the Caribbean*? Those are the areas. Mr. Speaker, those are the areas in terms of the

marketing; festivals. I am pointing out, Member for Diego Martin East, the areas that have been left untouched; those are the areas that can be utilized for more growth in the tourism sector, not only speaking about occupancy. You do not only have occupancy, airlift and sea transport; you must also have a captive area. When people come, they must say, “Boy, this is the best thing I have ever come to”.

Mr. Ramnath: Ah!

Dr. A. Nanan: This is the best thing they have ever seen because when they tour St. Lucia, Antigua and St. Vincent it is more or less the same experience that they are going to have. In fact, the warmth and hospitality of the people of Trinidad and Tobago is the magnetic attraction [*Desk thumping*] of this destination. In fact, if you recall in terms of the tsunami, so many people died in that tsunami in Asia and people are still going back to Thailand. Why? Because of the warmth and hospitality of the people. The tsunami wiped out so many people and people are still going back there.

Mr. Ramnath: They do not have any white people there, they have polite people.

Dr. A. Nanan: So it is the warmth and hospitality of our people that can be marketed; and that is what was reflected on the soccer fields in Germany; the warmth and hospitality of our people. That is the marketing approach, not the Minister of Tourism and the Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs; it was the warmth and hospitality that was reflected on the national television and the globe with respect to our country. That is marketing; market the warmth and hospitality of our people. Improve, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Ramnath: [*Inaudible*]

Dr. A. Nanan: Exactly! So, Mr. Speaker, we have to get it right. You could bring how many amendments you want to the Tourism Development Act—

Mr. Ramnath: It might be interpreted as a Dookeran Act.

Dr. A. Nanan: Sorry. So, Minister of Tourism, we want to see some concrete evidence, when you come to this Parliament the next time, of projects that are showing growth in the tourism sector. We want to know how many villas are being built; we want to know where these villas are being built in terms of the occupancy; we want to know how many international investors are in the tourism sector right now. We have this Bill here with respect to Caricom; we want to know how many Caricom nationals are benefiting from this particular relief in

terms of dividend reliefs. We want to know those things. [*Crosstalk*] No, I said when he comes to the House next time.

Mr. S. Panday: You are not listening; that is your problem; you are not listening.

Dr. A. Nanan: Yes, Mr. Speaker, we want to know those things. You come so many times to the House and we know that you are in difficulty when you come to this particular House. We know you had difficulty in terms of getting your point across because you came with two words that, if I recall, on an amendment which took almost an hour to pass; but we want to know and we want to have the belief that as a Minister of Tourism you are attracting the tourists to the destination as well as securing, not only tourists, but the safety of our citizens and residents, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, another area—

Hon. Members: O God!

Mr. S. Panday: Good, let them have it.

Dr. A. Nanan:—that needs to be addressed and has not been mentioned at all in terms of the tourism sector, is the youth population and the involvement of the youth in tourism. I think the Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs should get involved with the Minister of Tourism in terms of the youth population.

Mr. Sharma: They got involved in Germany.

Dr. A. Nanan: Because it is a great opportunity in terms of the training at the Hospitality and Training Institute—that is one area, but there are other areas. If I remember correctly, Mr. Speaker, there are universities in the United States that can have linkages with our University of the West Indies in terms of the culinary aspects. The Minister of Tourism spoke about the culinary competition and I do not know if the Minister of Tourism is aware, but under the United National Congress government there was a culinary competition within the—

Mr. Sharma: That is where they got the idea from.

Dr. A. Nanan: Exactly, they just expanded it and invited the Prime Minister and missed the anthem and said it was a great success, but it was already going on under the United National Congress.

So, the linkage between the foreign universities and our local university—apart from the Hospitality and Training Institute, there is that culinary experience that can be brought into the picture. Not only with respect to that particular

exchange; our immigration, our customs officials, training at the front desk because you would recall that the first contact with the tourist is immigration and customs. Our immigration and customs personnel must show the warmth and hospitality of our nation. I am not saying that there should not be that kind of security arrangements, but in terms of the first touch, when a person comes in to visit the island, they should have that warmth and hospitality at our airports.

Mr. Ramnath: The bathrooms are not functioning there.

Dr. A. Nanan: Exactly. Because the United National Congress built the airport, there has been very little maintenance at the Piarco Airport.

Mr. Ramnath: The escalator is not working.

Dr. A. Nanan: I do not know if it is a deliberate plan to downgrade the airport because it is a United National Congress project, just as we saw with the Biche High School.

Miss Seukeran: It downgraded itself.

Dr. A. Nanan: I hear some mumbling from the Member for San Fernando West. You prefer to walk from the plane and get wet all the way into the airport rather than have a gate to come in. Mr. Speaker, that is the mentality of the Member for San Fernando West and she is a Minister—

Mr. Valley: Mr. Speaker, if the hon. Member would give way, just to inform him that this Government was able to move the airport from category two to category one. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. S. Panday: What that has to do with that?

Mr. Valley: You are talking about the airport building—

Mr. S. Panday: Was it ever one?

Mr. Valley: —which is different, but the airport has been upgraded from category two to category one. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Order!

Dr. A. Nanan: What happens, Member for Couva South, is when the Ministers go through the VIP room in the airport, they see nothing; that is why he can stand up here and say that. The Ministers would pass through the VIP room and wait for their plane, get all their drinks and go about their business. The public that utilize those washrooms—you should go in there besides the VIP room; go into those areas and see the state of the airport that is under the PNM.

Mr. Ramnath: There are fittings that are getting old.

Dr. A. Nanan: Exactly. The tiles are coming apart; there is no maintenance. So they stand up here and say that—

Mr. Ramnath: Second hand [*Inaudible*] are working quite well.

Dr. A. Nanan: Just like the Member for Diego Martin East, buying a nine-year-old ferry.

Mr. Imbert: Yes.

Dr. A. Nanan: Ten to 15 years, buy a nine-year-old ferry for the people in Tobago. That is the mentality of the Member for Diego Martin West—an aluminium ferry. I do not know if it is an aluminium hull that it cannot even take the rough seas on the north coast. Two and a half hours the trip is supposed to be; right now it is three and half hours and by the time he is finished, it would be five hours to get to Tobago by boat. That is the mentality of the Member for Diego Martin West.

Hon. Members: East, East.

Mr. Speaker: Order!

Dr. A. Nanan: Sorry. Mr. Speaker, I would end my contribution now. You want to say something?

Miss Beckles: Thank you very much. In relation to a statement that the hon. Member for Tabaquite made when I was out of the room, last week I commissioned two wells in Tobago at the cost of approximately \$16 million—

Hon. Member: What?

Mr. Ramnath: You could drink the water now?

Miss Beckles:—and there are two additional wells that would also be commissioned later this year. So I want to make it abundantly clear that those two wells were to deal exclusively with the issue of the water as it relates to the tourism area in Tobago, the southwest area in particular. Okay? [*Desk thumping*] Therefore, if any impression is given at this point in time that there is any issue relating either to water quality or lack of water in Tobago, that is absolutely false. Now, I do not want to go into other commissionings that we have done because there are other commissionings that we have done during the year, but I want to say that the situation in Tobago as it relates to water quality and additional water has improved substantially over the last three years in particular. [*Desk thumping*]

And as a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, if I could just complete—just let me complete, I would take one minute—the head of the tourism sector in Tobago, Mr. Rene Supersad, attended that session; he was invited to speak so that he could give his own view as to what the situation was in Tobago and he actually indicated that since the month of May there were improvements in the water situation in the hotel industry. Now what happened, whilst we commissioned it in the month of August, the actual completion of the wells was since in the month of May.

Thank you very much. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Sharma: You are on TV.

Dr. A. Nanan: Mr. Speaker, only last weekend I was in Tobago and I did not come here—

Miss Beckles: What hotel?

Dr. A. Nanan: No hotel, that is what I am saying. You see, you missed the point. You missed the point. The point I made was that in every hotel you would see that the water is safe to drink, but the public in Tobago in certain areas the water is unsafe to drink.

Miss Beckles: Where did you stay?

Dr. A. Nanan: I stayed at the Hilton. [*Crosstalk*]

Miss Beckles: [*Inaudible*]

Dr. A. Nanan: I did not say that. Sorry, I said—

Mr. Speaker: Order!

Mr. Sharma: They confuse what you say.

Dr. A. Nanan: Exactly! What the Minister has said confirms what I have stated. I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to make a contribution to this debate and I hope that the Minister of Tourism would take what I said in terms of his planning because there are other areas in terms of the implementation programme that can be addressed for the benefit of the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker: Anybody. The hon. Member for Fyzabad, please. No? The hon. Member for Laventille East/Morvant. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of State in the Ministry of National Security and Minister of State in the Ministry of Trade and Industry (Hon. Fitzgerald Hinds): Thank you very much for recognizing me, Mr. Speaker, as I rise to join this debate on a Bill to enable all the—

Hon. Member: Wrong Bill.

Hon. F. Hinds:—a Bill the purpose of which is to “enable all the shareholders who are citizens of Caricom Member States to whom a dividend is paid by the owner or operator, out of the gains or profits of an approved tourism project, to benefit from the tax exemption granted under section 3 of the Tourism Development Act, 2000.”

Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by very, very sincerely congratulating the Minister with the responsibility for tourism, on the foresight and wisdom—

Mr. Sharma: Foresight or far sight?

Hon. F. Hinds:—of presenting the measures that he has offered for the approval of this House today. [*Desk thumping*] In fact, when I listened to the hon. Minister, I could not help but feel rather elated by all that is happening in and for the tourism sector, and it is obvious to me that there are great prospects in the making; prospects for employment, particularly as they relate to the youth of Trinidad and Tobago; and more particularly of course, the youth of my own constituency who will no doubt benefit from all the national efforts that are in place and in particular, in relation to the efforts in tourism. We have our problems in Trinidad and Tobago, there is no doubt about that, but based on what I heard and based on the other things that I know are happening, I know our future seems very bright.

Mr. Speaker, I want to deal with a very potent comment made by the Member for Tabaquite, poisonously potent. He told us that what was this beautiful island paradise is now converted to an island prison, and he said so rather glibly, and as far as he was concerned it was a good thing to say. But, Mr. Speaker, I hope the Member for Tabaquite and my friends on the other side will take note that these glib, sweet sounding, reckless and loose comments impact on persons across Trinidad and Tobago, the region and the world, particularly, since these debates are live from today. We have to be very careful as Members of this House who claim to be protecting and seeking the national interest when in the course of a debate or in our comments as politicians, we make these kinds of statements.

I went to Washington some time ago; had an opportunity to tour at the trade centre there and I learnt that all of the comments that emanate from this House

and from politicians outside of this House find their way to databases in that country and in other countries. So that the comments from the Member for Tabaquite remind me of the kinds of comments that would come from the Member for Couva North, reckless, without a care for its impact on Trinidad and Tobago. And we need to watch that because can hurt the country. He would be surprised to know; he purports to be talking in the interest of the country and wanting to see better for the tourism sector, but that kind of comment would turn visitors off rather than encourage them to come here. That is all I want to say.

4.00 p.m.

Of course, the Member for Tabaquite raised the question of crime and I agree that crime, as an issue, is relevant to a debate on tourism. [*Desk thumping*] It is very obvious that it is relevant and the Member pointed out that the Minister in his presentation did not deal with issues touching and concerning crime. That is why I entered the debate to attend to some of the comments loosely made by the Member for Tabaquite, and to assure this House, members of the national community, and potential tourists that we are doing what has to be done and we are not disregarding this very important matter. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Order!

Hon. F. Hinds: The diversification process, as is on the way by the efforts of this Government, recognizes tourism as an important platform, and it is critical. In fact, I consider that tourism, particularly for Tobago, is like oil and gas to Trinidad and I see any individual attacking tourists, or interfering with tourist sites or installations as engaging in acts of terrorism really, because if you burst a gas line running through Fyzabad or some part of this country, that can be considered a terrorist act in some ways depending on how it is done, based on the legislation, and we have to understand that tourists are important prospects for Trinidad and Tobago's diversified economy.

Crime affects investment; it has the potential to do that. Again, before foreign investors come to a country, a study on the country is done. They have a look at the sociological, legal circumstances and other issues concerning the country to determine the political stability of the country to determine whether or not they should invest—in this case—in Trinidad and Tobago. So we understand that crime can affect investment prospects. It can affect public confidence as well, and certainly inflows of tourists and we have had cases where tourists have stated so. I know of a particular case where a Japanese doctor was attacked in Port of Spain over the carnival season a few years ago, and he swore to me in my conversation

with officials of the Japanese Embassy that he would never return to Trinidad and Tobago and, that saddened me. It is not something that we want or welcome and we understand the impact of that.

Crime affects community development. It is a fact that there are communities in Trinidad and Tobago where, if the Telecommunication Services of Trinidad and Tobago (TSTT), the Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission (T&TEC), the Housing Development Corporation (HDC), or the Water and Sewerage Authority (WASA) have to do any repairs or install any facilities there are concerns for safety of their workers. These are issues that we address on a daily basis and, therefore, crime is a serious problem for Trinidad and Tobago and indeed, all countries and societies, everywhere in the world. Nowhere is immune to it because it appears as if human beings are simply not getting better.

Mr. Speaker, as it relates to crime in Tobago, recently when there was a spate of attacks on tourists, the Minister of National Security; Sen. The Hon. Martin Joseph immediately called a meeting of heads of security and the heads of the law enforcement agencies in Trinidad and Tobago and a detailed plan was developed as a response to that. So I want to assure the Member for Tabaquite that these issues do not go unnoticed; once they come to our attention we address them.

In February of this year, we engaged His Excellency, the High Commissioner of the United Kingdom to discuss the issues because there were some attacks on British tourists in Tobago. We went further and informed our Ambassador to the United Kingdom, former Sen. The Hon. Glenda Morean, Attorney General, and we engaged the British government in those ways.

I remember recently I was in England about a month and a half ago at a conference and I had lunch with a few British parliamentarians who were invited to come to Trinidad and Tobago as a delegation on the invitation of our branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA). We sat with our Ambassador there and they told me of their concerns about coming to Trinidad and Tobago based on some of the reports that they had been reading about the country, not only in the newspapers, but from their mission here that are sent to London routinely. That is why I told the Member for Tabaquite a while ago, that he has to be careful about what he says rather glibly, and insensibly, because in most cases they end up misinforming people in London who are not here to be apprised of the facts.

During lunch, I spent a few moments trying to persuade some of these parliamentarians that Trinidad and Tobago was as safe as London and possibly safer. I lived there for quite sometime and many of us have gone to London and it

is crime ridden like any other big city around the world. I remember as a student living through the intensive IRA years when they had to remove the bins from the London underground because they were planting little bombs in them and attempting to hurt citizens and visitors.

So I persuaded them, and told them all the things that we were doing and they felt a little more comfortable and the delegation in fact, came to Trinidad. I took the decision in London that I would take them to Laventille because they had been reading about Laventille and Morvant, so I invited them to Laventille and I have received correspondence from each member of the delegation, with the head of the delegation informing me about the great time they had in Trinidad and Tobago, how safe they were, and how they enjoyed Laventille in particular.

In fact, Lord Howell, who was the House of Lords representative on that delegation, took the title Lord Howell of Laventille. He enjoyed it so much; he danced and had a wonderful time and I informed our High Commissioner there of these developments, and I really pray that for Trinidad and Tobago's sake it make her job easier in selling Trinidad and Tobago to England and, of course, where applicable, to the world.

Arising out of the meeting of which I spoke a while ago, we oversaw a redeployment of police officers and soldiers in the island of Tobago. They continued and in fact, accelerated their joint patrols in specific areas because we are attempting to manage the crime problems in a scientific way. We looked at the statistics, the so-called hot spots and deployed resources accordingly because there would always be greater need than resources in all situations. That is the reality of our human existence, so we do it scientifically. There was a change of the leadership in terms of the police service in Tobago as well and we have found that there is greater enthusiasm for the work of paying attention to the tourists and their security and safety as a consequence of that.

Directives were given by the Commissioner of Police to all the supervisory staff in the various police stations and units in Tobago to attend very swiftly and professionally to reports generally, but specifically as well, of attacks against tourists. A long time before that, there were a number of officers of the police service participating in some strategic crime-control seminars, and some of the officers had to take particular aspects of crimes and do case studies with them. There were two officers in Tobago who chose the tourism sector and policing tourists and sites and we used those two officers coming out of the discussion to lead the way. These are young officers, who, in terms of what we were planning,

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are dealing with the attacks on tourists in Tobago and I want to tell you it is working very well.

We also sent an extra platoon of soldiers from Trinidad to deal with the problem, so when the Member for Tabaquite glibly, unthinkingly, and in ignorance, tells this Parliament and the country that nothing is being done, I want to let him know we respond to the situation as it comes to hand. A platoon of soldiers were sent, not with heavy arms, because we sent them to patrol areas that the tourists usually frequent. They were sent with side arms and have been doing that work in addition to the usual police activity and the police-army patrols.

Mr. Partap: They are not effective.

Hon. F. Hinds: We have allocated additional vehicles for their mobility and response to any attacks or interference with tourists. And the Government continues to provide funding for all the back-up resources the police would need to attend to; the general crime management problems and particularly, attacks against tourists because we understand the importance of the tourism sector particularly in Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, we have had some travel advisories put out by the British Government and I think other governments over the past year and a half, and when I read them, given my knowledge of what subsists in some of those big cities with crime, I wonder how or why the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and other governments in the region do not put travel advisories advising our citizens to be careful in those countries. The thing is, we are not in the habit of doing that. Historically, it seems to work one way but really, citizens of those countries are no safer than we would be in our country, and perhaps they are under greater attack for reasons the world understands well. We have taken the position that we will continue to respond and do what we have to do.

Mr. Speaker, as you heard earlier, we have some British officers who are now working in this jurisdiction, and the Minister of National Security—

Mr. Ramnath: How much are they being paid?

Hon. F. Hinds: It does not matter. It is their work that is important. It is the experience, the contribution, and some of them are operating in the island of Tobago as well to assist in the efforts.

Mr. Speaker, the record will show, based on arrests and convictions, that sometimes there are citizens from Trinidad who would go to Tobago where they

are not as well known by the law enforcement or not known at all and commit crimes and return to Trinidad very quietly.

Mr. Ramnath: You have no proof of that.

Hon. F. Hinds: We have evidence of that. So very often when our intelligence forces identify this to be the case, we send Trinidad police officers to Tobago to man the various posts and look out for them, and that has been very successful. But of course, there are Tobagonians too who are perpetrating crimes against their visitors and that has not escaped us. I simply want to take the opportunity to say to those persons whether they are from Trinidad or Tobago—and they are usually young persons—that there is no need to do that to enjoy a good life in Trinidad and Tobago. The economy is buoyant, the potential is great, and there are tremendous opportunities available to young persons across Trinidad and Tobago, and as David Rudder would say in a song: “You don’t have to cheat or rob to be a winner.” Young people of this country have to understand, they do not have to do that to survive, but if moral suasion does not work, and parental control does not work, then law enforcement has its role and we are determined to carry it out in this respect.

Mr. Speaker, The InterAmerican Tourism and Recreational Facility Security programme (ITRFS) is a programme established under CICTE and as you know, CICTE is the InterAmerican Committee against Terrorism and this ITRFS was specifically designed to enhance and improve security and safety of visitors at tourism and recreational resorts. This is a regional body recognizing that attacks on tourists are a regional problem in Latin America and the Caribbean and we have a common problem to which we are trying to find common solutions with some common standards. That is where we are.

The objectives of this programme are to strengthen the institutional capacity of the tourism and recreational service sectors in the region; to disrupt the capacity for attacks; and to build visitor confidence in security and safety in the tourism and recreational services sector in the region.

Mr. Speaker, a long time ago when we passed the Anti-Terrorism Act, I was involved in that debate and I remember some of our friends on the other side telling us that it is not necessary because we do not have terrorist problems in Trinidad and Tobago, but today, the Member for Tabaquite, perhaps the only correct thing he said was that he understood that tourism is important to Trinidad and Tobago’s economy particularly as we seek to diversify away from oil and gas.

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In that debate, I pointed out the record of Bali which was a very successful and prosperous little country largely on the basis of tourism, and one major terrorist attack has set Bali's entire tourist sector and economy awry. A murder in Aruba is affecting the entire tourism sector in a very significant way. So with these two examples and there are many more, and fortunately, we have not had something so major or so drastic in Trinidad and Tobago.—

Hon. Member: Oooh! With 245 murders?

Hon. F. Hinds: I am talking about that high profile. Mr. Speaker, the murder I am talking about in Bali had to do with a visitor from the United States of America to that country. That is the point I am making. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Order!

Hon. F. Hinds: They are shouting 245 murders as though they are celebrating it.

Mr. Ramnath: So that woman is more important than anybody else?

Hon. F. Hinds: You know, I really have problems in understanding my friends on the other side who claim to be patriotic, who claim to be speaking on behalf of their constituents and who claim to be seeking the national interest, they seem to celebrate murders in Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Ramnath: You all are absolute failures.

Hon. F. Hinds: You see. So that is the difference and even in the 245 murders—

Mr. Sharma: Do not try to justify them, you cannot justify murders.

Hon. F. Hinds: No, I am not trying to justify them. Mr. Speaker, let me continue with the ITRFS programme and indicate what it is intended to do.

It is intended to encourage hotel owners to do some homework as it were, and improve the security standards in their own hotels as far as possible. Minor matters like security checks of deliveries to their hotels; knowing who is registering at the hotels; proof of identification;—all of these things we spent time talking with the hoteliers so that they would understand these issues to improve security within their own facilities.

Installing CCTV cameras; scanning vehicles entering their facilities; screening packages; training managers how to support, collaborate and work with law enforcement because that is very important. We have been stressing the need for partnership between law enforcement and the wider public if we are to succeed in

dealing with the criminal elements in the society who are bent on terrorizing us and adversely affecting our reputation, foreign investments and our own peace in this country. So there has to be partnership and we spend time teaching them how to build and keep this partnership in all our interests.

We propose to continue to work with the Tobago House of Assembly (THA) to ensure that this programme continues. All these measures in addition to our usual security arrangements—these are additional measures we have put in place in addition to those which already exist to deal with and respond to the particular issue of attacks on tourists. That is why I say, in addition to the usual arrangements.

Mr. Speaker, I do not want to politicize this debate, I merely want to bring to the attention of my friends on the other side that we are aware that there are some crime problems; we are aware that tourists in particular have been attacked and I want my friends to feel comforted, it is not that we are not doing anything about it, but we are responding to it in particular ways.

We hear them on the other side talking about how much money the Government is spending and they complain that the Government spent over \$80 billion. They spent six years in office and have learnt nothing about governing Trinidad and Tobago because they were busy doing other things. They do not take into account that much of the expenditure, particularly in national security is spent on salaries for all the officers and workers in law enforcement; much of the money is spent on training and improving the facilities.

Mr. Sharma: Bringing in foreigners.

Hon. F. Hinds: Mr. Speaker, security does not come cheap especially in this modern and advancing technological environment. Those from whom we adopt best practices in the developed world and Jamaica—because we relate closely with them—do not sell their wares very cheaply. So if we have to improve, we have to spend money at it and the nation has to decide whether it wants top-level, modern security systems given the globalized environment in which we are, or whether it wants to listen to our friends on the other side, pinch pennies, and still complain about crime and say the Government is doing nothing about it. We spend a lot of money on training our officers and training in the element of law enforcement so that they can respond in a modern problem-oriented fashion to deal with crime management in Trinidad and Tobago. That is what we do.

Mr. Speaker, there is much more to be said in respect of our efforts in law enforcement, but the Member for Tabaquite spoke for the full time allotted to him and really did not say anything of great significance in my honest view, so I will

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resume my seat now, having made this brief intervention to assure my colleagues on the other side that we have responded and will continue to respond to issues of crime as they relate to tourists in Trinidad and Tobago for the benefit of all of us and, of course, the economy.

Thank you.

Mr. Chandresh Sharma (Fyzabad): Mr. Speaker, I had not really intended to contribute, but it being the first day on the television, I thought I would not miss the opportunity. [*Laughter*] And when I heard the Member for Laventille East/Morvant attacking the Member for Tabaquite, I thought that was not required. It is totally unprofessional, and when you spoke to us this morning it was a lecture; I thought we were in church, it was well received and I thought I would be on my best behaviour and do everything to maintain that.

When I heard the hon. Prime Minister present the draft of the new Constitution, I thought we were going in the right direction because I said I will be saying goodbye to my friend, the Member for Laventille East/Morvant, and the next time I see him he will be here as a Senator recommended by the San Juan/Laventille Regional Corporation and I see why it has to happen. [*Laughter*]

We had two presentations from the Government's side; one from the hon. Prime Minister who came to talk for the television and the other from the Member for Laventille East/Morvant who came to talk about some international database. Both of them competing with each other; one wants to be on TV, and one wants to be on international database and they said absolutely nothing.

After a good three to four weeks of vacation, we should come back refreshed. How are we adding value to the lives of people? There is a crisis in the country in every sector and we are all collectively responsible for it, as the Prime Minister would say; both sides of this House are in the governance of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Imbert: The crisis is in the UNC.

Mr. C. Sharma: I want to visit a few points which the Minister of Tourism raised. He started by telling us of the tax holiday. Who is benefiting from this tax holiday? It is very clear from this Government's view that citizens of Trinidad and Tobago are not enjoying the wealth of this country. He talked about double taxation and then about zero rate. It reminded me of a PNM Sen. Jagmohan. [*Laughter*] I thought really one of the things he would have treated with today

was an apology to this House, and the country as an extension, about the mess Carifesta finds itself in and call on the Opposition and the national community to come to the rescue because we are obligated to do it.

Mr. Imbert: Rescue your party.

Mr. C. Sharma: Our hon. Minister talked about spending \$72 million, he has not told us how he is doing this, but it is most unfortunate that part of this \$72 million is a high level of discrimination, and I know whenever I use the word “discrimination” all ears expand and that is okay. He spends some of it on local promotions, but in the rural communities absolutely nothing. [*Desk thumping*] In fact, when the Minister talks about the Tourism Development Company, he is claiming that they are responsible only for four beaches. This is most unfortunate, as it means that Mr. Bereaux, my colleague from La Brea, my colleague from Point Fortin, and myself and constituents from Fyzabad, none of these beaches in these areas come under his watch and there is absolutely no assistance with the exception of Vessigny. “The Member for La Brea asked me to raise that eh.” [*Laughter*]

There are no lifeguards, no changing facilities and the Minister is talking of a big promotion at the Centre of Excellence. I am sure he visited there because we both have kids. He took his children there. “Oh, he doesn’t have any, he is a bachelor.” Anyway, as one enters the compound, there is a balisier flower. There is absolutely no need for that because it must not come over as taxpayers’ money being used to promote the PNM. We know what it is.

My good friend the Member for Laventille East/Morvant does not understand governance. He asked why we do not give travel advisories like governments of other countries. Governments are responsible for their citizens regardless of where they are. A citizen of a country is a citizen of a country and when he/she goes to another country they are guests, but at the same time the Government’s duty does not stop there. So the World Travel Advisory to which you referred—can you pass it to me please? I have two minutes, so I think I will have to return after tea.

Hon. Member: Prime time.

Mr. C. Sharma: I was making the point that you are spending \$72 million and there are absolutely no community tourism projects. Every Member on both sides of the House has raised this, and at the last budget the hon. Prime Minister gave an undertaking that there will be consultation but they are not treating with consultations. We write letters, and one of the things the PNM claims is that we do not write letters.

Dr. Moonilal: “What dey want, a pen pal?”

Mr. C. Sharma: Every project must take place in a PNM area. Where is the \$72 million spent, and how are we benefiting from it?

When you make the point that a number of aircraft are coming to the country with additional passengers, that is marketing by the airlines, British West Indian Airways (BWee) is running at a loss. How is BWee losing money? Many times one is in an aircraft and it is half empty. Why is that so?

Hon. Member: It is half full.

Mr. C. Sharma: Half full, very well. I am concerned with the half empty because that is revenue being lost. The others are coming in full so what are they doing?

In summary, Australia is advising its travellers to exercise caution and monitor developments that may affect safety in Trinidad and Tobago because there is a risk of serious criminal activities throughout the country. It is unfortunate that the Member for Laventille East/Morvant thinks that we celebrate this. We are concerned because we all bring tourists to this country, we all invite friends and family here and they bring their loved ones and friends and we all benefit. That money pays my salary too, so I want the tourists to come, and we must be concerned.

Mr. Ramnath: As small as it is.

Mr. C. Sharma: Australia also advises its travellers to pay close attention to their personal security and monitor the media for information about possible new safety or security risks. The Ministry of Tourism does not print a single measure in the newspapers advising travellers.

The travellers are advised to be smart and before travelling to organize comprehensive travel insurance and check what circumstances and activities are not covered by their policies.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the sitting is suspended. We shall resume at 5.00 p.m.

4.30 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

5.00 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Mr. C. Sharma: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. During the tea break I had discussions with the hon. Minister of Tourism and gave him my notes and he agreed to treat with most of the issues, so I intend to be very short. He did say to

me that I should raise some of the issues because when he goes to the Cabinet he would have to get support, and if it is said over here, the record would show.

So in keeping with that line of argument, I want the Minister to be reminded that in the debate today one of the issues that received a lot of attention was the question of crime, and I want to suggest on behalf of us all, that one way to reduce crime, perhaps remove it to some extent, would be to encourage community tourism. What do I mean by that? Tourists are coming into this country, both local and foreign—the definition of the word, local, meaning “national” now; from the Caribbean and so—and as a result, they must be able to visit areas, let us say in Fyzabad: the Butler statue; the first oil well that was drilled in that area. We could encourage

Mr. Bereaux: The first oil well was in Aripero. that kind of tourism. In Oropouche—

Mr. C. Sharma: You are right. I meant the first after the first. [*Laughter*]

In the constituency of Oropouche, for instance, you have the Tourista Trace Picnic Site, and the Tourism Development Company knows nothing about it and spends absolutely no money on its upkeep. At the Woodland Bridge where the “Baar sanskar” is carried out—that is the shaving when people die—it is totally unfit now—[*Interruption*]

The point I was making was that there are a number of similar places: the Mora Dam across the North Coast and so on. We are not seeing it. It was unfortunate that the Member for Laventille East/Morvant, to set the record right, spoke about the alleged murder in Aruba. Up to now it has not been declared a murder. In fact, it is still a missing person. But he cannot justify that and say that has arrested international attention, because then you are forced to focus on Trinidad and Tobago. You had an American soldier who was murdered here and the FBI came in; you had a tourist in Tobago; Sean Luke. So you do not want to justify murders. We all are affected. We govern the country and when it happens we have to take action.

Now, we must also respond to the international advisory. I know the hon. Prime Minister on a previous occasion sent our Foreign Affairs Minister to London and another Minister to Washington and elsewhere. Because what is still coming out, when the Minister spoke about 30 million hits, it also means that there might be 100 million hits on the travel advisory. Let us look at what is coming, one: “Robbery of tourists.” Now, we must post these statistics because

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there is robbery all over the world. Everyday in the subways of New York and Canada there are robberies, so it is not that it is isolated to Trinidad and Tobago. Governments of the world are issuing travel advisories warning citizens about travelling to Trinidad and Tobago. We must also become messengers of good news. We must indicate to them that there is still a lot of safety here; we have 8,000 police officers.

It might be a good time for the Tourism Development Company to explore the possibility of having its own internal police that could help police some of these areas and could also become conversant in tourism activities, on relaying information, helping out the industry.

Drugs and murder rate are global. The latest thing that is attracting global attention—because we have visitors from New York, Canada and Europe—is Carifesta. The latest hit says: “Carifesta in danger.”—being held in Trinidad and Tobago and the Minister is being accused of micromanagement. There is a whole article which I do not really want to read, but we are concerned because Carifesta has been with us for a number of years and it gives an opportunity for the entire Caribbean to come, not just in the arts and the culture, but in fellowship.

In looking at some of the other hits that we are seeing is the whole question of sex tourism in Tobago and the development of AIDS and incest problems in Tobago. We must tell the international community what is happening, because if it is sea, sand and—what is the other one? I hope it is not sex—sun, we must promote safe sex. If sex is marketable, so be it. You and I cannot stop it now. Promote it—“safe”. Because that is what the international website is saying: “Sex tourism in Tobago” and “the development of AIDS and incest in Tobago”. We cannot allow them to have this information and we are not treating with it and pretending it is foreign to us. We must advise them that it obtains the world over, but all the precautions are in place; all the safety measures are there. Health tourism is a big thing and we could promote that.

“Trinidad and Tobago: Crime Now in Broad Daylight.”

“Trinidad and Tobago: Lax Law Enforcement

The British Foreign and Commonwealth Office warned that the law enforcement on the islands was weak after police failed to hold suspects in an assault on three British tourists...”

who were at a pool in Tobago.

“The visitors were participants in an international...golf tournament...”

And you know golf is big business; big money; big contracts; big positions.

So I want to suggest that there must be an approach where we all could get involved in this tourism aspect, because it is important. It creates a lot of employment. The Minister's own figures were somewhere close to 100,000 and growing; direct and indirect employment. I want to make the point before I take my seat, about local tourism, to make sure that there is some opportunity for us to be involved. The hon. Minister boasted about the Tourism Park, that it has attracted 71,000 this year or last year. Let us take that park throughout the different parts of the country. Do not leave it only in the East/West Corridor. Let us move it to south at some time, to central, even Tobago.

The question of business and conference tours which is a growing field, let us all get involved in it and let the contributors to it reflect all of Trinidad and Tobago. One of the challenges I always face—I know when we were in government we had treated with it—when there are conferences and Government is participating, we are Members of Parliament, what is the difficulty in inviting us? What does it cost you at the end of the day? A breakfast? The reason being, we must identify with all the development, whether we like it or not. There is a tendency that only those in Government are invited to everything and we have to beg for an invitation. Whether it is a show in Port of Spain or a play, let us become part of it; let the national community see that the Opposition was invited and they could choose to come or not come. Today you still have to beg to get tickets to go to Carnival shows. That should never be so.

Mrs. Job-Davis: That is not true.

Mr. C. Sharma: Do you know differently?

Mrs. Job-Davis: Yes.

Mr. C. Sharma: You will speak after me. [*Interruption*] I apologize.

The Minister spoke about £32 billion. That sounds good but it is not really reaching out to us—£320 million. It is really not reaching out to us, and we do not want to give the impression, because you see one of the risks we run is that people may feel it is a whole lot of money here and they may try to get at that money, which really does not exist in many quarters.

The last thing I want to raise is the question of “bed and breakfast”—and it was under previous governments and it continues—where you encourage homeowners and give incentives. I think that is a good area because oftentimes we have students coming in. I raised this with the hon. Prime Minister on the last

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occasion—and I think I raised it in the budget—and he promised to look into it, where, in each of our 41 constituencies when we set up under the new Constitution, that our offices could be a home at times, meaning that we oftentimes would have visitors, and we would want to expose them to the local community and there must be some facility for that. If we want to invite a Member of Parliament from Australia for a weekend or something, you cannot put them in Port of Spain and represent Fyzabad at the same time. It is difficult. So you must encourage that kind of thing.

If you go to Florida, from Miami, 12—14 miles away is Fort Lauderdale. It is a different city; different approaches; different accommodation; different culture, so we need to expose that kind of thing. It has to be treated with, and the best messengers in this country are Members of Parliament. Let us all get involved in this tourism thing, because at some point the oil money would get less. Let us invest some of the money, and tell us also; put it on a website and direct us and see the hits coming from the Member of Parliament for Fyzabad, Tabaquite, wherever, that, “look, moneys are available for these things, I want to see your application.” And once every six months, call the Members of Parliament and say: “Listen, what is happening with your project?” Because we keep making the representation, budget after budget, debate after debate and absolutely nothing happens.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Minister in the Ministry of Trade and Industry (Hon. Diane Seukeran): Mr. Speaker, I was listening with great interest to the contribution of the Member for Tabaquite. He took us on a whirlwind tour of the country and built an excellent case, in the first instance, for support of the tourism sector as the Government is determined to develop it. He took us from the Brasso Gorge, through Chaguanas, into Toco, down to Princes Town, even into the houses of ill-repute in San Fernando, some of which may attempt to pass under this very Tourism Development Act. We went from howler monkey down to turtle, into the charms and warmth of the Trinidadian citizen. It was as fascinating a discourse as the Member for Tabaquite always presents to this House. It reinforced what we are about here this evening, and in particular it reinforced the necessity for support of the amendment as proposed in the Tourism Development (Amdt.) Bill, 2006. As the Member for Tabaquite spoke, he threw in for good measure the issue of the perceived wage freeze. I think he was referring to the article in the *Express* newspaper of Thursday, August 17, 2006: “NUGFW gives Government deadline”; the issue of the measures contributing to inflation. Then he went on to throw in youth development and all of the other things.

As you read what this Bill means, what it is intended to achieve, there are very few people who would not respond to the words that are quoted in the objective of the Bill when it says:

“The objective of this Bill is to enable all the shareholders who are citizens of CARICOM Member States to whom a dividend is paid by the owner or operator, out of the gains or profits of an approved tourism project, to benefit from the tax exemption granted under section 3 of the Tourism Development Act, 2000.”

As soon as we hear the words, “benefit,” “gain”, “profit”, words that sound of money, the entire brain mechanism of every thinking human being focuses upon what we are talking about here, so it was sometimes difficult to understand exactly where the Member for Tabaquite, in his wonderful contribution, was leading. When you hear money and the dollar sign starts to rumble, you ask yourself: “What am I being asked to do? Why am I doing it? What can I lose by it and what can I gain by it? That is an instinctive question that arises in everybody's head when you hear the word, “benefit”.

The Member for Fyzabad, in his very short diatribe, mentioned a single point that emphasizes the point, when he asked the question: “Who is benefiting from the tax holiday that is being proposed here?” And he insisted that it was not the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. Let us then ask ourselves what we are being asked to do here. It is very simple. This is a proposal that was first made in Act No. 2 of 2005 which widened the definition of the word, “national” to mean a citizen of Caricom. Under the terms of CSME and the Treaty of Chaguaramas, we are supposed to be doing that, so that the parity of treatment is meted out to the citizens of Caricom equal to that of the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. That is all this Bill is intended to achieve.

Unfortunately, as the Minister of Tourism pointed out, the Caricom Secretariat begins to believe that there may be a loophole in which this benefit may slip by members who have not renewed their commitment to CSME, et cetera. There is a possibility that the person whom it is intended to benefit under Act. No. 2 of 2005 will not benefit by it. What we are doing here is simply closing a potential loophole that might arise in the laws of Trinidad and Tobago. That is what we are doing.

Then the question: Why should we do it? It is very simple, again. We are fulfilling a legal commitment, as we are bound to do under the terms of the Revised Treaty, and, fulfilling a basic conditionality to bring into effect the

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entirety of the CSME, the Caricom Single Market and Economy which, of course, was signed by Heads of Government in July of 2001. It is a very simple process. In fact, the CSME Unit presented a very good document that tells you exactly what we are doing here. It says that we had signed it; that 13 member states out of 15 have agreed to this so far, and that Article 37(1) and (2) of the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas provides for the abolition of all discriminatory restrictions on the provision of services within the community in respect of Caricom or community nationals, as well as for the establishment of a programme for the removal of restrictions with respect to the said provisions.

This Bill before us here is one step in the chain of measures that are seen as being restrictive or discriminatory—in this case, restrictive in the matters that have to come to be amended in this Parliament. In total there were 15 measures that were pointed out to the Government of Trinidad and Tobago that needed to be corrected. Caricom went further and asked the Government of Trinidad and Tobago to submit to it the copy of the legislation which indicated what we had done to ensure that the benefit would accrue.

The Revised Treaty, in Articles 7 and 8, speaks to the clear prohibition of discrimination on the grounds of nationality only, and here we are talking about giving parity to Caricom nationals so that there shall be no discrimination on the grounds of nationality. It also talks of “most favoured nation status” being granted to those member states that are signatories to the CSME. This benefit would accrue to those members that are signatory, and as other members sign on, they, too, would benefit by this. It is removing a restrictive provision. This is substantially what the CSME points out as being necessary, and it is exactly what we are doing here.

To get back to the question of what are we doing, we have already discussed that. Why should we do it? It is a legal regulation that we must comply with. Thirdly, you ask yourself the question: Would we lose anything by it? Since the Minister of Tourism has already pointed out that there is an existing agreement that zero-rates it and since in any case, this is only closing a small loophole, we can be sure that we will lose nothing by it. But more importantly, you ask yourself the question: “Shall we gain anything by it?” There is a great deal of gain that is to accrue to this country as we sign on this measure and many other measures. We signed off, for instance, in Act No. 2 of 2005 on the Tourism Development Act, defining a national to mean a Caricom citizen or any person who is described as a resident, officially, of that

country. We signed off on the Customs Brokers and Customs Clerks Act, Chap. 78:03—that amendment.

There were several amendments made in Act No. 2 of 2005; including the Immigration (Caribbean Community Skilled Nationals) Act of 1996, allowing the free movement of persons, one of the basic premises of the CSME. But the question is one of what did we gain. We gained a great deal. Members opposite are fully aware of the gains that would accrue to this country, of the essentiality of regional integration and the implementation of the CSME to economic survival. That is what it is all about—survival of island-states adrift in a fully liberalized economic global order, an order in which we trade.

The Member for Fyzabad, like the average citizen who is not privy to the information that is within this House, or within the Government—and certainly in the Opposition benches—may find himself asking: “Why are we doing this? How come we want to treat a “Bajan” like a Trinidadian? Or find a “Bajan” too stiff to be as flexible, as nimble, as warm, for instance, as the Member for Tabaquite describes the “Trini”. He might have cause. He might want to know why you are giving your oil and gas revenue to these people. There are all of these questions that the average citizen might just ask himself in the absence of information that we in this House have.

The average citizen, for instance, does not understand fully the issue of the loss of preferential prices for sugar; why Caroni (1975) Limited was closed; the price of sugar on the global market; the impact of that on Trinidad and Tobago, on Jamaica, on Barbados; the whole question of the sale of rum on the European market, or the global economy. He does not understand the question of rice preferentials in Guyana. There are so many parts to the issues of preferential treatment and preferential prices and therefore earnings to a government lost in the course of these trade negotiations that affect a small island economy, whether it has oil and gas or whether it is a single crop economy like Dominica with its bananas, understanding it in the same manner.

We are talking about tourism and about what we are doing here to ensure that a benefit accrues to a Caricom citizen equal to that of a fellow Caricom national of Trinidad and Tobago—that we are one. That is what we are doing here, hence the reason for raising all these points. The average citizen, unlike the Member for Chaguanas or the Member for Fyzabad, who is busy attempting to distract me, may not have full cognizance of the social impact that is caused by the loss of these—

Mrs. Job-Davis: All right. Words! Take that!

Hon. D. Seukeran: Its impact upon crime, for instance. We use the very poor reason that poverty is a cause of crime. There is no reason for crime. There is a pride in the man who is poor equal to that of any—he is as honourable as any man is, so long as he is honest. Poverty cannot breed crime in its true sense. However, Sir, the ordinary man may not understand that the deepening of poverty can result in other social consequences; the sickness of poverty other than crime; the impact on a country of the mass exodus of skills, as the Member for Tabaquite was pointing out; of investment that goes out of a country - an effect of poverty, and the mass migration, to a country like Trinidad and Tobago seen to be wealthy as it is in terms of its oil and gas revenues.

And so he questions, quite understandably, the emphasis that we might want to place upon regional integration and upon the grant of parity of treatment to other Caricom nationals. He may even see it in terms of a threat to his job, as we move to open the market to the free movement of persons. This country has a shortage of skilled labour and we need our Caricom brethren to come. We prefer to have them than anyone else. And he can very well say that we do not really need them; we have oil and gas. But oil and gas are finite resources.

Therefore, we must plan, as a serious Government, to do what is right for our country, not just for today but for tomorrow, and that is exactly what we are doing. And Caricom is no different. The threats facing the average citizen in Caricom, or Trinidad and Tobago, are no different from those facing the citizen in the United States, or in France, as we have seen with their riots; or in Germany with their loss of jobs. In the United States, farmers are under threat by the WTO of loss of their subsidy for their agricultural products; the CAP in Europe, the agricultural policies in Europe; the issues of unfair competition, of dumping; the fact that every government must now legislate fair trade legislation; fair trading bills; no subsidies. All of these issues are not different here to anywhere else, just as crime is no different here from anywhere else in the world. The difference is that we are small; we are more vulnerable than other countries, but we face the same problems as they do. In fact, their problems might be even bigger. Their media houses, however, handle their issues better than we do. That is all.

Sir, all that we do here today, as we have done in so many other Bills—and as you say, the Minister of Tourism is often in this House and will come again—is the attempt to bring a harmony, to bring our Caricom brothers into a tight family unit. That includes the Bill today and many other bills as we fight the challenges

facing us in the country of Trinidad and Tobago. The issue is not just one of the finite nature of oil and gas; it is also about the issue of security of energy supplies. Sir, the country of Trinidad and Tobago is also facing that challenge in the global trading arena. It is in the basic fundamental backbone of the economy, in the energy sector.

What happens if tomorrow morning, it happens as it happened in the '70s? Today the price of oil is \$73 a barrel. Tomorrow morning all of a sudden the issue of Iran is settled, or what is happening in Lebanon and therefore the whole face of the Middle East changes; if in Nigeria they stop raiding the oil depots; or in the Ivory Coast there are fewer problems; or the question of Russia's supply in Europe is eased as it comes to terms with the business environment; whether all of a sudden Venezuela starts to behave in a different manner? If all of that comes together in one harmonious whole and the price of oil suddenly plummets from \$73 a barrel to \$7 a barrel, as it did in the 1970s.?

Trinidad and Tobago must be cognizant of all these things and, therefore, meaningfully seek to diversify its economy, including that most critical service sector which is the tourism sector. That is what we face as a country. There is no doubt that in Trinidad and Tobago—you could say, okay, we do not have to worry too much; we have a very good strong manufacturing sector; and we do. This sector is known to be the tiger. We call them the Tigers of the Caribbean, and they have a virtual control of the markets of Caricom. But that control is being tested; is being challenged by the same liberalized economy in which they must operate. They face the problems that arise from competition with economies of scale.

Sir, the manufacturing sector of Trinidad and Tobago, which this Government promotes and works with very closely, is also under threat. They need to look at the issue of not only—they have accessed market share in Caricom; they need extra-regional markets to access. They face the problem of lack of competitiveness that comes clear as they start to compete. Remember the market is liberalized. Sir, Caricom countries now are also importing goods from the United States, from Europe, from Japan, the developed nations, from the developing giants that are Brazil, China and India. Our small manufacturing sector has to compete against those players.

5.30 p.m.

It is not an issue of our people not having access to research and development facilities. As you know, the Ministry of Trade and Industry has opened a research and development grant for the manufacturing sector. It is very much about the

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economies of scale and the production savings that that generates. As you focus on this particular issue in the Bill, as you ensure that when you describe a Caricom national you are giving parity to him and that you leave no loophole through which you are breaching your laws, you are trying to bring together the regional harmony necessary for us to go into serious partnerships with our Caricom investors in this region, so that we can develop a single economic space, move capital for businesses to expand and develop the economy of scale.

Any new industry would face the same problems that our manufacturing sector is facing. Those issues are the question of size that brings down production cost. It is a major competitive edge. The size and scale to guarantee constancy of supply. It is twofold. Constancy of supply as well as the competitive edge of size both of which allow for profit margin and the long-term capability of businesses to thrive, to ensure the long-term survival of jobs. Job security becomes key to what is going on here.

I use this opportunity to emphasize Government's seriousness about the diversification of this economy. Despite the Member for Tabaquite's clear doubt as to the seriousness of Government in terms of the development of the tourism sector, I say categorically that we are extremely serious about the tourism sector. The Minister of Tourism referred to the development of the Tourism Board. There was the question on the newspapers a while ago as to what happened to Tidco? Remember that TIDCO was a tourism development company designed to ensure the survival and development of the tourism sector. What happened was that it lost its way. It had too much to do; it was too busy doing everything else. We had to restructure and refocus the company as we meaningfully try to diversify and develop new industries. We found that we needed new special companies and boards to help us achieve the objective. Tidco was disassembled and we now have a new Board that is more targeted towards the attraction of investment to develop the product tourism, the same product that is under doubt here and to market that product very thoroughly.

It was pointed out that tourism is a particularly competitive industry. It faces perhaps more challenges than any other. The Member for Tabaquite or was it Fyzabad talked about the volatility of the industry. That is a fact as life. The Member for Laventille East/Morvant talked about what happened in Bali. One single act of crime and an industry is wiped out. One tsunami and the industry is wiped out. One hurricane, the plant goes down for a long time. The capital cost is extremely high.

Mr. Sharma: One bad government and a whole country goes down.

Mrs. Job-Davis: You are sure right.

Hon. D. Seukeran: We need capital in the tourism sector. This amendment is designed to attract our Caricom brethren into bringing their capital under the Caricom Single Market and Economy (CSME). The free movement of skills, people, goods, services and capital. CSME brings about the whole issue of capital movement within Caricom. As we implement that, we develop the economies of scale.

We excel in direct foreign investment attraction. Here, we want to focus it on the tourism sector. To make it easier, we fulfill our legal commitments. Note that we do not lose in the course of what we do. When it comes to the issue of the Caricom community and the CSME we gain. We gain, not just because we are serious about tourism but because we are serious about diversification of the economy. We seek to develop it.

There is a Standing Committee under the auspices of the Prime Minister that is intent on development and for which the Ministry of Trade and Industry has the secretariat function. It is intent on developing new clusters of industry such as the food and beverage sector; printing and packaging and the yachting industry. We spoke a lot about the yachting industry. Unfortunately, the Member for Tabaquite could not answer the question of when and where – and he talked about *Pirates of the Caribbean*. The merchant marine industry; the fish processing industry and the film industry: We are very seriously addressing the film industry and the entertainment sector, matters raised by the Member for Tabaquite. We are also addressing technology if you look at the University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT) and what is happening in the Tamana Park.

Agriculture continues to be a major plank of our economy. It is an industry as all others and deals not only with food security. We are very serious about it. I was talking about the tie-in between agriculture and tourism during the break with the Member for Arouca North and Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources who pointed out to me that we do not have data—the questions from the Member for Tabaquite to the Minister of Tourism were: Where are the statistics? Where are the facts? How has the industry grown? How has it contributed to GDP? The Minister pointed out that only in a conversation with the Hilton did he learn that they purchase \$1 million per annum of local foodstuff. If you multiply that in the hotel chain you could see what is happening in the agricultural sector, despite the song and dance that we hear about what is

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happening to local agricultural production. He raised the point about the middleman as we spoke about the high price of food, and crime. The Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources said that it had come to his notice that whereas on one hand, the National Agricultural Marketing and Development Corporation (NAMDEVCO) was telling you the average cost of yam from the producer's end was \$2 per pound, it was being sold by the middleman at \$5 and \$6 per pound. This brings up the cost of food to the consumer. It is true, not just about local agricultural products, but all goods that are sold in our supermarkets, in our shops, bringing the cost of living, particularly the cost of food, up. It all ties-in. Agricultural production in the country is thriving, even as we determine the whole issue of its development within the Standing Committee.

There is an excellent article in the newspaper where I saw the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources talking about these seven industries I just named. We are working in partnership with the private sector. A genuine partnership is going on in respect of business development. The Prime Minister was saying that we must come together to act as partners as we comment on Sir Ellis' first draft Constitution. The Member for Laventille East/Morvant said that there needs to be a partnership between citizen and policeman in terms of the erosion of the crime factors in the country. We also need to partner in terms of the strategic industries that we seek to develop as we diversify: the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources, the Standing Committee and the private sector. Indeed the private sector is leading this thrust facilitated by the Government and working alongside all the ministries to develop strategic plans. The private sector heads the advisory teams. It is private sector led. The Government facilitates with information and assistance and then spends the money to implement the plan from which the private sector and the country will benefit in the long term. We seek to diversify the economy in a very meaningful manner.

In the Ministry of Trade and Industry we focus on the services sector. Tourism is a services product. More than 60 per cent of global trade is derived from services. Tourism is a major part of this. With tourism comes the film, entertainment and food processing industries; the agricultural and hospitality sectors; youth development for this sector. All of these feed into tourism. As we deal with this Bill today, we deal with all these services – remember that services represent 60% of our local trade also. In the services sector Trinidad and Tobago has designed a coalition of national service providers. As per CSME and Caricom requirements, and in line with the objectives of today's Bill, the national coalition will

feed into a regional services coalition. The issue is dealing with the Bill as it should be dealt with. We grow our industrial base and diversify our economy meaningfully and thoughtfully so that it has every opportunity to survive in the global liberalized economy even as we grow our entrepreneurial base from the ground up, in the SME sector, through BDC's assistance. We look into the micro enterprise development as we grow a culture of entrepreneurship, much of which can feed into the tourism sector – to answer the Member for Fyzabad who asked how it feeds into the tourism sector.

Even in the Community-based Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme (CEPEP) there is the principle of business development in the very smallest man, as we move our people away from dependency into true independence via entrepreneurial development. The hope is that we have a nation of entrepreneurs in a diversified economy to add value all the way up. As they grow they will have to compete on equal terms in the global economy, just as the manufacturers do and the big industries we are helping to develop. Market share lies outside this country. It lies in the region, in the hemisphere, in the world.

We have to look at what is happening in the trade arenas. In the World Trade Organization in Brussels, there is a lull which allows us the time to plan and strategize how we move forward, how to minimize the challenges facing us while we maximize the opportunities to develop market share, to move our people, services, skills and goods across regions. These things are happening around us all the time, changing constantly. The pace of change locally and globally is mind blowing. You cannot keep pace with it. The technology industry that we are looking for in Tamana Park changes with breath-taking speed. What you buy today is outdated before the night comes. That is the reality of technological innovation.

The WTO is intended to level the playing field. We complained for years that the playing field was not level, and that is a fact of life. Today, as must all nations, we now have to compete as equals. Sir, little Trinidad and Tobago, St. Kitts, Nevis or Fiji has to compete on the same playing field on equal terms, in the free liberalized economy, with the United States, Russia, China and India. Everybody is competing equally for global market share, trying to develop the competitive edge, much of which lies in the economies of scale. Outside the oil and gas sector we compete as an equal. To come back to what we are doing today, we are fine-tuning the ability to make the CSME work, removing any discrepancy or misunderstanding so that there will be parity of treatment afforded our Caricom partners similar to that which applies to any Trinidadian investor.

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What we are doing is not new. It applies in the federation of the United States of America; in what has become the European market; in the African Union; in the ASEAN countries; in the countries of Mercosur and the Andean Pact. Everywhere countries, peoples and markets are coming together, removing barriers so that they can facilitate business; create vast markets, removing national barriers so that capital, skills, goods and services can move freely; creating the right climate for industries to create an economy of scale able to compete in the global market. That is why the trade blocs come together. It is the rationale for regional integration. That is the reason we must implement the full terms of the CSME including the tourism sector and every other sector. We must emulate the developed world by coming together to derive the benefit of size. We have nothing to lose. The final questions are what, why, when, and how? What do you gain? We have nothing to lose but a great deal to gain by the very simple amendment to this Bill - which ensures that the benefit derived by a national of Trinidad and Tobago and a Caricom citizen resident in Trinidad and Tobago also applies to all of Caricom.

Thank you.

Mr. Manohar Ramsaran (*Chaguanas*): Mr. Speaker, I will bring back the Bill to this House and read it into the record:

“The Tourism Development Act is amended in section 3 by deleting subsection (5) and inserting the following subsections:

- (5) The owner or operator of an approved tourism project who receives a tax exemption under subsection (3) shall keep a separate account of all gains or profits that are tax exempt.
- (6) Where the owner or operator referred to in subsection (5) is a company and pays a dividend out of the gains or profits, the dividend so paid shall be exempt from tax where the recipient is—
 - (a) a non-resident shareholder who is a national; or
 - (b) a non-resident shareholder who is not a national and who is not liable to tax in respect of that dividend in the country in which he is a resident.”

The Explanatory Note says:

“The objective of this Bill is to enable all the shareholders who are citizens of CARICOM Member States to whom a dividend is paid by the owner or operator, out of the gains or profits of an approved tourism project, to

benefit from the tax exemption granted under section 3 of the Tourism Development Act.”

When you examine the body of the Bill it does not refer to Caricom. The law is saying a non-resident who is not a national. In the Explanatory Note it says Caricom. You have to look carefully at that to see if it is binding.

I listened to the Member for San Fernando West and that is when I got interested in this debate. I would like to put some sauce on the table. The Minister went through the world and opened the question of how we in Trinidad and Tobago could compete internationally. I believe that is the real problem I want to bring to this table. Trinidad and Tobago competing internationally is but a dream. Could Trinidad and Tobago compete with China, India or the emerging market? Can we do that? How can we do that? I would like people to say. *[Interruption]* I just started. I have not finished my point.

Mr. Manning: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. Member for Chaguanas for giving way. May I say that it is because Trinidad and Tobago’s Government is of the view that we can compete successfully with many countries in the world and was of that view for a long time that today we find ourselves as the largest exporter of ammonia and methanol in the world, responsible for three quarters of the US market in LNG and countries are now coming to Trinidad and Tobago to examine the successful Trinidad and Tobago model to emulate it. Just recently, we had a delegation from Ecuadorian Guinea and there are so many others. Before the hon. Member for Chaguanas gets too far along that road I want to caution him.

Mr. M. Ramsaran: If the Member were listening to the Member for San Fernando West he would have heard that she did not talk about that. She talked about economies of scale; service products; the entertainment industry and the hospitality sector. These sectors are not what you are talking about. You are talking about the energy sector which I have no problem with. The energy sector is not the end of an economy. When we talk about competing internationally in these areas—the Member mentioned the global liberalized economy.

Mr. Manning: Mr. Speaker, again, I am sorry to intervene. I thank the hon. Member for Chaguanas for giving way. The point I am trying to make is that it begins with a vision. As long as the vision is properly conceived a country and a people can achieve almost anything. That is the base on which this Government has been moving forward with consequences that you would see. When we first talked about developed country status by 2020, many people scoffed at it. Forgive me.

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In 1995, when I talked about full employment coming to Trinidad and Tobago, I was the subject of tremendous vilification. Today we are at that point. It begins with a proper vision and once you believe it is achievable, then, the people of Trinidad and Tobago possess the ability to do it. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. M. Ramsaran: Mr. Speaker, I have no quarrel with the Prime Minister. His vision is one that is a vision and as a Trinidadian, I should like to see your vision come through. You have to examine the reality. I would like to see our economy compete successfully with the emerging market and the established world. How could we do that when we have a country where trade disputes are the order of the day? Every industry is facing a dispute. Let us look at them: Petrotrin, T&TEC—I have lost count. Somebody is marching from Point Fortin to Port of Spain. We have unease across the country. How could we come to Parliament and argue that we could compete successfully with the emerging market?

We talk about productivity. Are we productive? Could we compete with the emerging market? We cannot. The vision is there. I have no quarrel with that. I am confused about how we could encourage tourism. The Minister mentioned the social problems in this country. Look at vagrancy in Port of Spain. In this country, would a tourist be happy to walk over vagrants in the city? We have to fix our country first.

Mr. Valley: Mr. Speaker, I do not want to participate in the debate. I take the opportunity to make two points. Yes, we can compete otherwise we can just lie down and die. In Trinidad and Tobago at present, we have companies in the non-energy sector that are competing globally. I do not know whether you are seeing it. National Flour Mills has just brought in a new plant; Ansa Mc AL has just gone with a joint venture, the roofing company with 90 per cent of production for the export market; and KC Confectionery which is all over the world. The strategy is clear. We are encouraging companies in the manufacturing sector to look for joint ventures and other strategic relationships with firms in the Far East. When we do that and they locate here we have the market access agreement whether Europe, North America or Latin America. There is a clear strategy to benefit from the cost competitiveness of the Far East and our market access agreement that we have. If we cannot compete we may as well lie down and die, and we do not plan to do that.

Mr. M. Ramsaran: Mr. Speaker, this is interesting. I am supposed to have spoken for 10 minutes but I have only spoken for three.

I repeat that I am not against the strategies being adopted. It is for the Minister to say that everything is hunky-dory. I would ask several questions and bring several issues to the table which will come back to the Bill to deal with tourism. I was touching on opening the market and competing globally. Yes, we have to do it. We are forced to do it. The world is a global village. We say that from time to time. It has happened. Maybe, we did not prepare for it. The Member mentioned the WTO. Correct me if I am wrong. The role of WTO is to deal with dispute resolution, not to equalize the market. When we are using these terms we have to be careful. CSME and Caricom have been established, but do we have a competitive edge as against other trading blocs? The answer is no. We are still in the formulative stage. We still have to negotiate.

When you read the reports from CSME and the regional negotiation machinery, you would see that we have to struggle and fight with this small team to try to keep things afloat.

My good friend talked about the FTAA. The only people who do not know that FTAA is dead is this Government. I have been all over the Caribbean. People in Jamaica say, "What FTAA you talking about?" The Minister might want to get up and bark at me. The advertisement is all over the place that Trinidad and Tobago is the capital of the FTAA. What has happened to it? What is the cost of Trinidad and Tobago's participation in it? We do not know.

Yes Minister, you sound well. I know about KC Confectionery. Why have they left here and partnered in the Middle East? They understand the problem that we have to go for the cheaper market. We have to correct our country first. If we want to compete successfully we have to go abroad to gain competitive advantage. I am sure that you and the Minister did not agree with each other. You have to do both for Trinidad and Tobago to become competitive. You have to encourage people in our country.

I was talking about the social problems in the country. We cannot compete with anybody. My good friend for Laventille East/Morvant spoke about one murder in Aruba that has spoilt the tourism industry. Here in Trinidad and Tobago it is a murder a day.

6.00 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, today we have heard about an eight-month-old baby who was battered and whose mouth was filled with cocaine. This was on the front page of one of our newspapers. Would this be encouraging to a tourist? We have

paedophilia in this country as never before. Children are being murdered and yet this Government gets up and talks about having a perfect system. I wonder if I am living in the same Trinidad and Tobago where tourists are attacked and murdered, and we are talking about one incident in Aruba. We have to correct our house first.

I thought the Minister would have commented on vagrancy in Trinidad and Tobago. Mr. Speaker, billions of dollars are passing through our system and we cannot deal with a couple hundred vagrants. We cannot seem to understand the psyche in dealing with vagrants. If we cannot do that, Mr. Speaker, we are wasting our time. We have social problems, murders, kidnappings, vagrancy, and poverty. The Member talked about poverty and crime and I agree that they are not linked, but in Trinidad and Tobago the way people see how our leaders operate and how they see us operate, it is no excuse, but they will follow and they will commit crimes. As my leader said, we have to end the criminality in politics. And there is criminality in politics. When you look at the people who fought the last election and who supported the PNM, that was criminality in politics. If you want to create the society that the hon. Minister of Tourism and the hon. Member for San Fernando West talked about, you have got to appreciate that we have problems here. We cannot sit and hope that they will vanish.

In my own constituency, Mr. Speaker, and for a few days the news was taken up with the murder of Shazad Mohammed. He was a poor person trying to make ends meet and was allegedly shot by the coast guard of this country. He was plying his trade; trying to make an honest living, and he was murdered! What is sad about it is that nobody from the Defence Force or from the Ministry of National Security came there to—

Mr. Bereaux: Hon. Member, I feel the word “murder” is an incorrect word and it is improper, because murder is the taking of life with malice aforethought. The jury is still out on it and I believe that as a responsible Member of this House you should not say that.

Mr. M. Ramsaran: Mr. Speaker, I am sure I used the word “alleged”. I said that he was allegedly murdered by the coast guard. I was going to the point that there was no remorse or regret shown. As a matter of fact, when I first heard about the shooting and I went to find out what had happened, I heard that the boy had a gun. On the second day I heard he had drugs. They tried to destroy that person’s character, and at the end of the day no such thing happened. The boy has died and there has been no intervention from this Government at all. Mr. Speaker, the point I want to get at is: Do we really care?

Mr. Speaker, people's houses are flooded; people's houses are burnt and we see no intervention by this Government. It is as if everything is okay, and yet we want to encourage tourism in Trinidad and Tobago. We have to be careful. Look at tourism, and my colleague from Fyzabad said it, only four beaches are maintained but Trinidad and Tobago has many beaches and many tourist sites. Ecotourism is important; if you go to the Caura River daily you will see hundreds of people bathing there—my friend from Tunapuna would know that—but what do we give them? A little pittance here and a little pittance there and we say we are encouraging tourism. Tourism is not only foreign tourism; local tourism is important. Trinidadians like to go to the beaches but when you go to the beaches in Trinidad and Tobago now, it is a horror story. there is debris, you name it, and you are not safe. Mr. Speaker, nobody would allow 4 or 5 o'clock to meet them on a beach, they would race home. We have to create the whole question of safety for our people first and then for tourists after.

Mr. Speaker, I did not want to get into the debate until I heard about the economy and floating around the world and the services industry. We have a long way to go in dealing with our services industry and the Member for Tobago East would agree with me that in Tobago there are few persons who are interested in going into the hospitality industry. Because of the wages and the incentives provided to the young people, they do not want to go there. They prefer to go and lime on the beach rather than to go and be trained because they do not have confidence in the whole industry. If one does not create that atmosphere in an industry and give the companies and participating firms that leverage to become involved, they would not become involved. The Government has a major role to play.

Mr. Speaker, we are a small country and we allow everything to happen to us. There was this question in England, Lebanon and the Middle East crisis, but we in Trinidad and Tobago reacted as if we are the criminals. At the airport people were sleeping in the hall, they were being treated as if Trinidadians and Tobagonians created the problem worldwide. We were treated like common criminals. Did we hear our Government make a statement? We talk about global economy, globalization and international trade and so on, yet we remain quiet and we say we are the big leaders and the big *jéfé*,—Mr. Speaker, it is confusing to me. We said nothing. It is as if there is no foreign policy; it is as if we must accept everything. I put that squarely on the table now for the Government to deal with it. Are we going to react to everything that happens elsewhere? This is what is happening. The poor officers at the airport, whether they are Immigration Officers, Customs Officers or whether they are the persons dealing with baggage; are

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confused; they are not aware of what they are looking for. It is as if no foreign policy exists, but yet we want to encourage tourism in this country. Let us put our country right.

When I heard the hon. Minister talk about Trinidad and Tobago I got confused, I thought I was hearing about somewhere else. He talked as if everything was okay. Mr. Speaker, this is the problem we have. We have got to forget the politics. We have got to make the country right. We have got to get the politics right. We have got to treat people equally in this country. If we cannot treat our own right, how can we treat tourists? We have the vexing question of poverty and dependency and all these things must be put right and it is not difficult to do. A government must come and must have that political will to do it. They must get rid of problems, not create problems.

Mr. Speaker, Trinidad and Tobago, in the 21st century, has introduced a Smart Card. Where in the world have you heard of a smart card? What is it to achieve? Think about it carefully, Members of the Government, we cannot only throw money at our problems, because we have money, and say our problems will be solved.

According to the Member for San Fernando West, to get our social policy right, we have got to deal with the senior citizens in our country. Our senior citizens are now close to being beggars. Yes, I applaud the \$1,000 per month pension, it was in our 2001 manifesto that we would increase pension to \$1,000, it has reached \$1,000, but times have changed, cost of living has gone out of control, so \$1,000 for a pensioner is not nearly enough. This is the group of people we have to deal with; the vulnerable group in our society, whether they are senior citizens, vagrants or disabled. These are the people we have to deal with, not Smart Card. The Smart Card is for whom? They will tell you that the pensioners are not getting that because they are already getting \$1,000 pension. Smart Card is for smart men. *[Interruption]* I do not know; you have to tell me. *[Interruption]* Of course, the Member for San Fernando West talked about the social fabric of this country and I am responding.

We have to deal with the question of old age pension. Let us look at it carefully; let us analyze this. The vulnerable group 65 years and over would need special attention. If the Government is listening to me, pensions must be substantially increased and further incentives should be given to senior citizens so that they could end their evening in glory. Disabled people must be treated with respect. I heard recently that a delegation left Trinidad to discuss disability and no disabled person was on the team. Where are we going? Do we really care or are

we just talking? Government, listen to me; let us deal with the senior citizens and with the disabled; bring disability allowance on par with old age pension. When it was introduced in this country that is what it was about. It was about equality because they have to face the groceries, pharmacies and so on.

We must make sure that they have equal treatment; end that discrimination now! Old age pensioners and the disabled must get, in my opinion, nothing less than \$2,000 to take home. We have the money now. Maybe we could have it revolving in a way so that if cost of living increases or decreases, what have you, and if the money dries up we could readjust. But in today's government-created inflation, we have got to treat with the poor in our society. Mr. Speaker, we talk about it year after year that the Government is encouraging price increases and not controlling it. Cost of living is out of control and we have got to correct that.

The agricultural policy was laid recently by the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources, but in my humble opinion that will take about four to five years to even kick off the ground. What must we do in the meantime; must we wait on this? When I come to this Parliament and listen to these questions, I want to put them on notice that we will not sit by and allow these things to happen.

How are we to encourage tourism in Trinidad and Tobago? Coming here and amending the Bill is not enough. When we look at poverty, social issues, vagrancy, the question of the coast guard—I would like to hear an answer—crimes against our children—these are issues that must be dealt with when we want to sell Trinidad and Tobago;—murders, our beaches, the traffic jams, how long can we survive with that?

They talk about the agricultural policy, Mr. Speaker. I would like to advise the Government, please, when we come to this Parliament let us make it clear as to where our country is going. Do not come here and talk and claim political points, that is not what it is about; we have to put the country on a proper footing to deal with it.

Mr. Speaker, I thought I would just say these things to put on record that the whole question of our economy must be examined carefully. May I recommend, too, that if we want to talk about the economy, please come to the Parliament, lay a paper on the table, let us discuss our economy; let us discuss our foreign policy; we have to put things right if we want to go forward. Idle talk cannot work.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Minister of Tourism (Sen. The Hon. Howard Chin Lee): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take the opportunity to thank all the persons who have contributed to the debate, the Members of Parliament for Fyzabad, Tabaquite and the Members on our side.

I want to respond to some of the issues that were raised by the Member of Parliament for Tabaquite. The Member spoke about the port in Charlotteville and whether or not I was aware that a port existed there. Of course, I am aware that a port existed, and the reason that they used the port in Charlotteville as a port of call for cruise ships, Mr. Speaker, is that at that time there were not proper facilities for vessels to berth alongside a jetty.

This Government, in its wisdom, in recognizing that the cruise ship industry is developing and that ships today are becoming larger and larger—they call them voyager class vessels—we are now in the process, together with the Tobago House of Assembly, of expanding and increasing the length of the jetty at Scarborough, which will very shortly be able to port vessels that are voyager size and, therefore, will not need to use substitute ports like Charlotteville for a port of call. It will be a proper facility with a jetty lengthy enough to berth these vessels. I just wanted to clarify the whole issue of ports of call and the use of Charlotteville.

The Member for Tabaquite also asked what we are doing about the entertainment industry, the multimedia. As many of you are aware, it was under this Government that that sector has grown and it has grown for several reasons. One of the reasons is that today because of the opening up of the television market, the fact that we have CNC3 or Gayelle Television, there are more and more young persons who are getting involved in editing, who are getting involved in film-making and producing short documentaries. Today I have seen and I have found, personally, that there are more and more young people who are coming into this industry because of expanded opportunities that the Government has presented to them.

Added to that, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance recently brought a Note to Cabinet to deal with the new authority called Trinidad and Tobago Entertainment Company. That company will really focus on young people who are interested in becoming part of the entertainment—the multimedia sector—becoming part of editing and producing and becoming involved in the sector. By increasing the size and the amount of demand for persons who want to enter the industry, by forming more channels, by

increasing the amount of bandwidth that is available in Trinidad and Tobago, by increasing the whole IT sector, we therefore create a greater demand for jobs and job opportunities.

The Member also asked about a breakdown of tourism, how many people visit Trinidad and how many people visit Tobago. The figure for Tobago last year was roughly 89,000 arrivals and Trinidad was about 278,000, so there was an increase in arrivals both in Tobago and in Trinidad.

He also talked about how we are spending the money, the \$72 or \$73 million in marketing. I have given the Tourism Development Company—I have put that in the hands of the experts—to come up with a marketing plan. They have consulted with the Tobago House of Assembly, private sector and all of the stakeholders to ensure that the money is well spent in the right direction.

As I mentioned earlier, the scientific approach to marketing would be to look at the source destination, so a lot of the marketing is done towards our source destinations, by using multimedia, audiovisual, print media, the Internet and also by code sharing with the airlines. We code share with British Airways and Virgin Atlantic and we give them marketing support funds. How that works, Mr. Speaker, is that if Virgin Atlantic is advertising Tobago and we were to share a marketing fund of half a million pounds, what they would do is to advertise in England to come to Tobago; they would tie in the hotels with the trip together with the destination so that everyone benefits. It is a much more strategic approach in terms of our marketing.

The Member for Tabaquite also asked about the Tourism Development Act. I have to compliment Members on that side for understanding that tourism development is not only about hotel development and in their wisdom they wrote the Tourism Development Act of 2000, where under Schedules 7 and 8 they broadened the definition of tourism not just from hotels but from other ancillary services: cruises, tours, diving and convention centres. All of these are now given the same incentives that were given under the Hotel Development Act, under “hotel”.

Recently, I had to amend it. Mr. Speaker. They did it in such a way that we had to amend section 38, which was to allow retroactivity on interest and taxes earned on interest. It was done quickly and it had some flaws in it, which we are now attempting to correct by amendment.

Another comment was made about the innovation and education of the youth. Mr. Speaker, that is why we have the Tourism Park. Part of that plan is that the

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Hilton Hotel and all the other services, the tour operators are all involved so that when young people come they could interact, they could ask questions and they would learn more about the tourism sector. I just got a text, when I was outside, that they have almost 5,000 young people down there and all these young people are learning and are being educated about the tourism industry and how they too could benefit in terms of employment.

The Member for Fyzabad asked how communities benefit. Part of the Tourism Park as well is that we have tour guides and tours outside of the centre and I understand that is very popular. From there you can go on tours to Tabaquite, Gasparee Caves, Mayaro, Toco; we have a variety of tours and that too is extremely popular. We have not ignored the community; we have included the community in our tourism drive.

Mr. Speaker, the Member spoke for one hour and a half but he could have summarized it in 10 minutes and those were the points I think he raised and I have attempted to address them.

The Member for Fyzabad raised the issue on AIDS awareness, which is a very serious issue. The Ministry has allocated a fund for \$3 million for AIDS education and that fund is done in conjunction with the National AIDS Coordinating Committee. It is not done in isolation, it is done to educate the people and for them to understand the danger and the fact that this disease could result in death. It is a very serious issue and we have created and put aside a budget to deal with an awareness of AIDS.

The Member also asked that we should take the Park to other parts of the country. Well, we cannot move that whole facility to another part of the country because it is a very large operation; it is a big investment and it is difficult to move the Centre of Excellence. What we have done, as I have said, is to move the tours from the Centre of Excellence outwards.

The Member for Chaguanas spoke about competition and how we could be competitive. The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance responded. I would like to acknowledge the fact that our music industry can be also world class and already the genre of soca and calypso is making it on the international stage. I know that with the formation of T&T Entertainment Company, together with the support of the Government, very shortly it would become a world class genre.

The Member of Parliament raised the issue that only a few people are interested in tourism in Tobago, in the tourism industry. Mr. Speaker, that could not be further from the truth. Fifty-five per cent of the people in Tobago are employed in the tourism industry. When you go to Tobago and talk to taxi drivers, the lifeguards, and you talk to the people who own restaurants, they are all very keen and in tune with what is happening. When the planes arrive all of the persons who move the tourists from the airport to the hotels are employed. They are very keen and would always ask me when the next flight is and how many more flights do we have. They all want to become a part of this industry because they recognize that this industry feeds their children and their children's children. I do not agree that they are not interested. They are becoming more interested and they understand the industry more and more.

I have also heard it said, and this is my last point, that the Tourism Development Company (TDC) is looking after only three or four beaches. The facts are that TDC looks after the facilities which were constructed, while the local government will see about their respective sites. The facilities which the TDC are responsible for are the Maracas Beach Facility the Manzanilla Beach Facility, the Las Cuevas Beach Facility, and the La Brea Beach Facility. It is the list of facilities that I can provide for the Parliament.

With those few words, Mr. Speaker, I hope I have responded to all the issues raised by Members on the other side. I commend the Bill to the House.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a second time.

Bill committed to a committee of the whole House.

House in committee.

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

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

House resumed.

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

Adjournment

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ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this House do now adjourn to Friday, August 25, 2006 at 1.30 p.m. That day is Private Members' Day, and I therefore ask the Chief Whip to inform us of the business of the day.

Dr. Hamza Rafeeq (Caroni Central): Mr. Speaker, we will continue with the Motion by the Member for Tabaquite dealing with the smelter plant.

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 6.27 p.m.