

*Leave of absence*

*Friday, August 25, 2006*

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

*Friday, August 25, 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 Member for Barataria/San Juan (Dr. Fuad Khan); the Member for Tobago West (Mr. Stanford Calendar); the Member for Port of Spain South (Mr. Eric Williams); the Member for St. Joseph (Mr. Gerald Yetming) and the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre (Miss Gillian Lucky). The leave which these hon. Members seek is granted.

Pursuant to section 49(4) of the Constitution, I have granted the Member for Couva North a further 30 days' extension to allow him to pursue his appeal against the decision of the Chief Magistrate. Those 30 days will expire on September 24, 2006.

**CONDOLENCES**

**Mr. Noor Hassanali**

**(Former President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago)**

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, it is with regret that I bring to your attention the passing this morning of former President Noor Hassanali. I now call on Members on both sides of the House to pay their condolences.

**The Prime Minister and Minister of Finance (Hon. Patrick Manning):** Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Government, and I am sure on behalf of all Members of this honourable House, I thank you for the opportunity to join in this most solemn occasion, when we observe the passing and pay tribute to a former President of Trinidad and Tobago, Mr. Noor Hassanali. It is a day of great sadness for our country and, on behalf of all citizens, I extend deepest condolences to the bereaved family, relatives and friends.

Mr. Hassanali served this country with great distinction and dedication. His social involvement started very early. In his youth, he was known as an outstanding cricketer and went on to serve the community through significant

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social and other religious activities. He was also an outstanding member of the legal fraternity of Trinidad and Tobago and distinguished himself on the Bench. However, it was as President of our Republic that the late Noor Hassanali became more widely known and universally loved both as an individual and as the holder of the nation's highest office.

Humility was certainly his hallmark, a characteristic that endeared him to the citizens of this country. In the conduct of his office, he earned the respect of the citizenry. One remembers the sound advice he offered the nation whenever the occasion arose. He was dignified, but never distant. Indeed, notwithstanding his elevated position, he was one with whom almost anyone in this country could identify.

Our late former President carried with him throughout his life and illustrious career all the virtues of his humble beginnings, which shaped his mind, character and conduct, making him one of the very worthy exemplars in the history of our beloved nation. So satisfied were we with his performance that, when the time came, we on this side were very pleased to propose and ensure his re-election by this honourable House to a second term as President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. Let me also say that, as Prime Minister, I enjoyed and benefited from the regular contact and consultation with him on matters of State.

The late Noor Hassanali became President at a time of significant change in Trinidad and Tobago. For the first time, after self-government of 30 years, the administration of Trinidad and Tobago had changed political hands. The country changed the presidency at the same time. For those who were perceptive and sensitive enough to discern, it marked a turning point in our country's political history and was accompanied by the expected uncertainties generated by an important new direction. It is, therefore, a tribute to President Noor Hassanali that he quickly emerged as a reassuring and harmonizing presence in the midst of seminal political change in Trinidad and Tobago. He clearly understood the requirements of the time, all of which, given his background and experience, would have come naturally to him. Noor Hassanali was both a witness and a participant in the social evolution of Trinidad and Tobago.

He would have seen, for example, the transition from colonialism to independence and thence to republicanism and modern statehood for Trinidad and Tobago. He virtually grew up with the country and is, in the final analysis, a symbol, an individual embodiment of the progress that this country has made.

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He lived a full, disciplined and productive life. We were fortunate, as a nation, to have had some of his best years when he served as President of the Republic. Let us thank Almighty God for this light that has been amongst us. The historical achievements of the late Noor Hassanali will continue to help to define the way forward for the people of Trinidad and Tobago. He served us all well and we thank him today for it. May Almighty God grant him eternal rest and peace!

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar** (*Siparia*): Mr. Speaker, it is with sadness that we mourn the loss of a person who has been one of the nation's most beloved Presidents, His Excellency, Mr. Justice of Appeal Noor Hassanali. In my view, he was the epitome of statesmanship. During his term as President, his reserved, affable manner generated an atmosphere of calm and a sense of well being that resonated throughout Trinidad and Tobago.

Testimony of what he was capable of and of his character is the fact that he is the only President in the history of Trinidad and Tobago to have been appointed by two different administrations to serve two succeeding terms. At a time when our nation faced crisis, at its darkest hour, following the assault on this Parliament in 1990, Mr. Hassanali was exemplary in his resolve to return this country to a state of democracy and the rule of law.

On a personal note, I had the privilege, pleasure and opportunity to be a student of Mr. Justice Noor Hassanali at the Hugh Wooding Law School. It was in my final year at that law school that I came into contact with him and his guidance as teacher and mentor there has served me tremendously. That may be moot, but I thank him for that contact I had with him. Thereafter, in coming into government, his words and advice—serving first as Attorney General and thereafter as a minister in the government—and the consultations with His Excellency were kind and most instructive.

I extend my condolences and that of those of us on this side to the family of Mr. Hassanali—Mrs. Zelayhar Hassanali, who herself has been a role model, to his children, grandchildren and relatives on their loss at this time. On behalf of our Members and of those we represent, we assure them that our prayers and thoughts are with them at this time.

Mr. Justice Noor Hassanali was a role model in every sense of the word and as individuals of this nation we would do well to emulate him in the way he contributed to this nation and in the manner in which he conducted himself.

I thank you.

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**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, I, too, would like to join with the hon. Prime Minister and the hon. Leader of the Opposition in expressing my deepest personal condolences to Mrs. Hassanali and her family on the passing of former President Noor Hassanali.

As the Prime Minister has said, his hallmark feature was his humility and I think that one can add also his love for Trinidad and Tobago. May his soul rest in peace!

I now ask Members of the House to stand for a minute of silence.

*The House stood.*

#### PETITION

#### Constituents of Princes Town

**Mr. Subhas Panday** (*Princes Town*): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present a petition on behalf of the constituents of Princes Town.

*Petition read.*

#### PAPERS LAID

1. Environmental Management Authority (EMA) Annual Report 2003. [*The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley)*]
2. Environmental Management Authority (EMA) Annual Report 2004. [*Hon. K. Valley*]
3. Annual audited financial statements of Trinidad Nitrogen Company Limited for the financial year ended December 31, 2005. [*Hon. K. Valley*]  
*To be referred to the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee.*
4. The Telecommunications (Access to Facilities) Regulations, 2006. [*Hon. K. Valley*]
5. The Telecommunications (Interconnection) Regulations, 2006. [*Hon. K. Valley*]

#### ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

#### Flooding at Spring Village and Surrounding Areas

**27. Mr. Winston Dookeran** (*St. Augustine*) asked the hon. Minister of Works and Transport:

Could the Minister indicate:

- (a) whether the Ministry of Works and Transport is aware of the perennial flooding affecting the residents of Spring Village, Dookiesingh Street, Freeman Road and other surrounding areas in the St. Augustine constituency due to the blockage and poor conditions of the Blackman Ravine?
- (b) If the answer to (a) is in the affirmative, could the Minister inform this House of the present and future plans being undertaken by the Ministry to improve the condition of the ravine?

**The Minister of Works and Transport (Hon. Colm Imbert):** Mr. Speaker, I ask this House to allow one week's deferral. The answer is complete, but it has to go through the approval stage.

*Question, by leave, deferred.*

**Somai, Cap-de-Ville  
(Dilapidated Bridge)**

**28. Mr. Winston Dookeran** asked the hon. Minister of Local Government:

Could the Minister indicate:

- (a) whether the Ministry of Local Government is aware of the dilapidated bridge at Somai, Cap-de-Ville; and
- (b) if the answer to (a) is in the affirmative, could the Minister inform this House when the bridge would be reconstructed?

**The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley):** Mr. Speaker, I think these questions got in the way of our summer recess or our summer recess got in the way of the questions. In that connection, I have to ask for a deferral of the questions on the Order Paper for a two-week period.

*The following questions stood on the Order Paper:*

**Caroni River  
(Temporary Bridge along Southern Main Road)**

**29.** Could the hon. Minister of Works and Transport state:

- (a) whether the Ministry of Works and Transport is aware that the bridge over the Caroni River along the Southern Main Road was due to be constructed since the 1980s and to date has not been constructed and

that the temporary bridge over the river is cause for grave concern for the safety of commuters?

- (b) If the answer to (a) is in the affirmative could the Minister inform this House if there are plans to construct a new bridge? [*Mr. W. Dookeran*]

#### **Children's Authority**

- 33.** Could the hon. Minister of Social Development indicate when the Children's Authority would become functional? [*Mr. M. Ramsaran*]

#### **Remand Home for Young Male Offenders (Aripo)**

- 34.** Could the hon. Minister of Social Development indicate the status of the Remand Home for young male offenders at Aripo? [*Mr. M. Ramsaran*]

#### **Sanitary Facilities (Caroni and Felicity Cremation Sites)**

- 38.** Could the hon. Minister of Local Government inform this House whether the Ministry has plans to construct proper sanitary facilities at:

- (i) the Caroni Cremation Site, Caroni Savannah Road, Caroni; and
- (ii) the Felicity Cremation Site, Cunupia River, Felicity, Chaguanas?  
[*Mr. M. Ramsaran*]

#### **CEPEP Contracts Awarded (Information Governing)**

- 43.** Could the hon. Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment inform this House:

- (a) whether any employees of the State, state enterprises and/or state agencies have been awarded CEPEP contracts;
- (b) if the answer to (a) is in the affirmative, could the Minister provide this House with the names of such contractor/contractors; and
- (c) what is the policy used in the award of CEPEP contracts? [*Mr. S. Panday*]

#### **Ownership of former Caroni (1975) Ltd. Lands**

- 45.** With respect to lands formerly owned by Caroni (1975) Limited situated between the western side of the Solomon Hochoy Highway and the former

Montserrat Section Office, Couva Main Road, Preysal Flyover, could the hon. Minister of Finance indicate to this House:

- (a) who is the present occupier of the lands;
- (b) whether the occupier has purchased the said lands or has a lease for the lands;
- (c) whether permission was given to occupy the lands without it being purchased or leased;
- (d) if permission was not given to the occupier to occupy the said lands, whether the Estate Management Development Company has taken steps to remove the trespasser; and
- (e) if the lands were leased, what are the terms of the lease? [*Mr. S. Panday*]

**Mr. Speaker:** I hope that with the House agreeing to the two-week deferral, the answers to these questions will be available when the two weeks have expired.

*Questions, by leave, deferred.*

**DEFINITE URGENT MATTER**

**(LEAVE)**

**Persons Affected by Heavy Rainfall  
(Failure of Government to Provide Timely Relief)**

**Mr. Chandresh Sharma** (*Fyzabad*): Mr. Speaker, thank you for granting permission that seemed to have been withdrawn temporarily.

I thank you for granting leave to raise a matter of definite, urgent public importance, which largely has to do with the failure of Government to provide timely relief to the families and persons affected over the last 48 hours because of the heavy rainfall.

Matters of this kind require three qualifications. I am going to present them and hope that they would qualify. Firstly, it is definite because several homes in the constituencies of Fyzabad, La Brea, Naparima, Nariva, Oropouche, Ortoire/Mayaro, Princes Town, Point Fortin, Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West have been damaged or completely destroyed by the same heavy rainfall and winds.

Secondly, it is urgent because there has been very little assistance given by Government as I present this Motion.

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Thirdly, the matter is of public importance because this poor response by the Government to the cries for help by the affected families clearly demonstrates that, God forbid, if there is widespread damage involving several communities following similar rainfall and heavy winds, the Government certainly cannot be relied upon to render any meaningful measure of assistance.

I thank you.

**Mr. Speaker:** This matter is indeed worthy of discussion, but under Standing Order 11. It does not really qualify under Standing Order 12.

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

[Third Day]

*Order read for resuming adjourned debate on question [May 26, 2006]:*

*Be it Resolved* that this honourable House call upon the Government to:

- (i) strengthen its environmental regulations immediately with respect to the water pollution, air pollution and hazardous waste;
- (ii) clearly define what types and levels of emissions can be expected from the said smelters, the potential health risks to workers and residents and how the pollutants from the said smelters will be disposed of;
- (iii) state clearly the economic benefits to be derived from the construction and operation of the said smelters. [*Dr. A. Nanan*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, when we last met to consider this matter, the hon. Member for St. Augustine was on his feet and he has 28 minutes of original time.

**Mr. W. Dookeran:** May I indulge you, Mr. Speaker, by merely adding a comment to the tributes that were paid to Justice Noor Hassanali on his sad passing and to record my own personal appreciation of his support as President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago during the very difficult days of 1990, when he provided a sense of calm, dignity, purpose and duty, all of which assisted us in trying to find the appropriate solution for the country.

I, today, take this opportunity to record that in the *Hansard* as a personal gratitude for the manner in which he had provided support to me at that time in our country's history. I also, of course, share the sentiments expressed by the hon. Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition.



Mr. Speaker, the Motion before us today has come at a very critical time in the development of our country. As indicated in the Motion before us, which you read, it is focusing on the very broad issue of environmental standards and management in our country and, at the same time, it focuses on a very current issue that affects many people in our country, particularly those who have been engaged for some time in a struggle to be listened to—the people of Cedros, Chatham and La Brea.

The critical issue is that the quality of life has now emerged as the number one priority in our development agenda. The quality of life in Trinidad and Tobago, notwithstanding the unprecedented economic opportunities of our time, continues to deteriorate at a rate unacceptable to a society like ours, or any other society that wants to provide a good quality of life to its people.

The issues before us deal with the quality of life. They also deal with the focus of development policy, that being whether or not we should direct our attention to a people-focused policy or we should rely on GDP statistics as the basis upon which to direct our public endeavours. This has become very clear in the issue before us. The very direction in which the Government has been proceeding on the issue before us has suggested that, notwithstanding all the claims that the Government is a caring one, it is now refusing to be people-focused and, in so doing, would have lost the legitimacy of such a claim in this case and perhaps many others.

The third issue within which this particular Motion must be located is that of community rights. That is a fundamental right of all communities in the new world in which we live. Public consultation is not a substitute for community rights. More often than not public consultations tend to be platforms for public relations. Community rights require the Government to establish an agreement with the community and an agreement with the force of law to satisfy the fundamental rights of the citizens of our country. I also venture to add that this is a critical issue that we must address as we address some of the issues on the constitution question.

The fourth issue is the issue of the challenge of sustainable development, which is now at the forefront of the agenda, which this particular Motion is addressing.

Mr. Speaker, when we look at that context, we will then be able to identify whether or not the Government, in its approach to dealing with this issue, has really reflected the most classical failure of a government in dealing with the

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fundamental issue of development in this country. The very way they have approached this issue and the controversies that have emerged as a result of the manner of the approach has resulted in a sick state of affairs where there is now great loss of confidence among our people in the governmental process itself and great insecurity of our citizens as to whether this Government can, in fact, protect their rights.

I venture to say that this is a lost opportunity on the part of the Government in dealing with a major developmental effort; a lost opportunity in restoring a sense of security to our people, particularly those who are directly affected and, indeed, the wider community; and also a lost opportunity in terms of how to handle governmental affairs. It is no wonder that the Government today has been caught in a trap where it is now itself engaged as a party in a dispute in which they should have been an umpire; that they themselves are now engaged in taking one side of the community's interest at the expense of the other side.

Very recently, I saw in the newspaper that the Prime Minister, who has been called upon on so many occasions to talk and talk seriously to the affected residents, chose, rather than to talk to those who were raising legitimate concerns for the country and for themselves, to join the debate by taking what has been described in the newspaper as a pro-smelter side and went on to meet one side of the equation—one side of those who were affected.

**2.00 p.m.**

It is the first mistake of the Prime Minister, in his capacity as Prime Minister, to side specifically with one side of the debate at the expense of the other side when there are so many legitimate concerns that have been raised with respect to the residents of Chatham, La Brea and Point Fortin. It is not only unfortunate, but it is in fact a situation in which we cannot today condone that kind of partisan behaviour by a Prime Minister, as we try to seek higher grounds for development in our land.

Against that context, Mr. Speaker, we can look at many of the fundamental areas that have been brought to the national agenda that have remained very much unresolved and at the same time, look at ways and means by which these matters should be properly resolved in a democratic system.

Let us start by looking very quickly at the issue of the principles of industrialization that should inform our thinking on this matter. I must add that what is at stake here is the compulsion to continue to increase demonetization of our natural gas resources and thereby deplete such resources for future generations,

when we appear incapable of spending what we are receiving today in a rational developmental manner. It is a reflection of the priorities of the Government who is not responding to the interest of tomorrow and to the future generation, as it ought to do at this time. That particular aspect has led people to agree that there should be very detailed dialogue on the criteria for industrialization in the country, for there are certain types of industries that ought to be promoted and there are other types of industries that will incur more costs than benefits and ought not to be promoted and if in fact they are not, then it is the right of the citizens of the country to note the facts. I once again reaffirm the right of the people to know and the right of the people for information as one of the basic principles upon which we must conduct public policy in our country.

Once again, we see the noncompliance of that fundamental principle as we try to conduct public policy. This was an opportunity that the honourable Prime Minister could have dealt with very directly, but rather he chose to take a side on this matter and has lost his credibility and his ability to influence the people who are affected.

Mr. Speaker, in developing industrialization policy, it is important to look very carefully at those who will lose by such developments. Today, what we are faced with is a critical situation in our country. Environmental concerns have now come to the forefront and these environmental concerns have reflected themselves in many different ways.

In the particular matter before us, on this agenda today, we have heard of the major concerns that have been expressed by the constituents who are affected on the very adequacy of the environmental impact studies that have been done. In fact, a study that was done by the Institute of Marine Affairs on this particular issue, and was submitted to the Environmental Management Authority, has raised a lot of the issues. It talks about the decline in the quality of our air. It talks about the increase in noise levels. It talks about the increase in littering that is likely to take place. It talks about the changes in the microclimate. It talks about the modification that is required in drainage. It talks about the decline and the risks associated with our water supply. It talks about the increased traffic and the ability to handle that. It talks about the decline in the quality of our water and finally a major issue, it talks about coastal erosion.

I visited Point Fortin some time ago and what was most apparent in a part of the country in which there was great beauty and wonderful beaches, we are seeing today very clearly, coastal erosion at its worst, as a result of many of the development that has taken place, which has been done without appropriate

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planning and appropriate management in making a decision. The very report that ought to have been dealt with in a very objective and rational way, has identified and has raised, in very clear terms, the fears of our society. The fears of the society have been expressed on many occasions in various places.

On the last occasion, we heard that when these matters were raised, instead of the Government dealing with the issue themselves, they ended up dealing with the messengers through the press; who did the job by bringing it to the attention of the national community. At that time, I did make my remark that that was not only unfortunate but it was uncalled for. It also reflects, once more, the Government's tendency to seek to find a scapegoat. It is the Government's tendency to find an excuse and to remove itself from a discussion of the critical issues and to say to the country that they have all the answers and they shall impose them regardless.

The people have been talking about many things. They have been talking about the unmanageable toxic waste that would place the workers at risk in getting cancer and other diseases. This has been based on evidence that has been brought to their attention. They are talking about research from many sources around the world that has shown that the workers at aluminium smelters are exposed to the high risk to cancer, particularly in the stomach and in the pancreas. The workers have been talking about the plant that they are more likely to acquire breathing disorders and shortened lives. The workers have been talking about smelting causing global warming and requiring huge amounts of energy. The workers have been talking about the facility and capability to manage the toxic waste expected from the smelters. The workers have been talking about the violation of environmental regulations, and they have been talking about the ability of the Environmental Management Agency to handle these issues. These are very legitimate concerns that have been raised on various occasions and by many interested parties, and to treat them as if it does not matter is not only an insult to the people themselves, but is in fact evidence of the failure of this Government to be able to manage our public affairs in an equitable way.

Mr. Speaker, we can go beyond these concerns and we can look very carefully at the approach of the EMA in this matter. Those who are very familiar with the approaches of the EMA, that is desirable, have pointed out two very major flaws in their method in which this matter has been dealt with, for which the Minister must be held responsible.

In the first place, the entire project has been dealt with in terms of environmental concerns in a piecemeal manner. For instance, they are looking at environmental concerns for the land use. They are looking for a separate study on environmental concerns for the installation of machinery and the plant itself. They are looking in an integrated way at the environmental concerns that would evolve as a result of the developments that must take place or the environmental concerns that must result on the fact that this is being placed on top of a water resource base in the country. These things are all being dealt with in a piecemeal manner. What is required today, in environmental methodology, is to bring it all together and to have an integrated approach to the environmental study. This has been the cause of a large part of the lack of confidence and the problems that have arisen from a public point of view.

We can go into detail and look at these matters and see how the Government, in its very approach, is the source of its own problem. One friend told me: You must never look to this Government to solve today's problems, you can look to this Government to create tomorrow's problems. That is where we are now. For in the very approach to this matter, they are sowing the seeds for the creation of further problems that one day the society will have to confront and may have to confront at the risk of their own health; to confront at the risk of their own livelihood and their own children.

When I was in Point Fortin some time ago, I met the residents in the area and I remember having a long discussion with a young lady who had three or four children. She came out, in no uncertain terms, to express her concern and her request to have direct dialogue with the authorities. Her only quest to do so, she claimed, was the quest to protect the future of our young children. That is the legitimate expectations and requirement of the citizens and no government can stand in this country and ignore that request and take a side on this matter, as the Prime Minister has done, and say that it is a fait accompli, it is another done deal, who do not like it—that is their matter and let us go on with what they call industrialization, but what, in the end, would end up, quite probably, to be the high cost kind of industrialization as people's lives are at risk. No life is worth being put at risk, if it cannot be dealt with in the process of industrialization and in the name of industrialization. The people must be brought into confidence. That is the fundamental issue that has led many groups to find other ways to express their search for that consultation and that search for a solution to the problem.

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Not only has the Environmental Management Authority looked at this in a piecemeal manner, it has not adopted an integrated approach that allows the people now to be running to different places to get answers. They also have not addressed the very fundamental issue of the aquifer upon which this particular facility is being built. Where is the water going to come from? Technical studies have made it very clear that this is going to be one of the great problems of industrialization in the future. The figures were laid out to me in a report on this whole question of water resources, that will be placed at risk in our country. The figures have suggested that the Alutrinc plant requires 40 cubic metres of water, which is the equivalent to 2,500 people domestic demand for water. The Alcoa plant, which is two to three times bigger than the Alutrinc plant, is equivalent to 7,000 people domestic demand for water. How is this going to be dealt with? WASA has indicated that this demand would be met from the northern area. If WASA is to meet this demand for this smelter, they will have to find new water sources. There is a fundamental issue on resource management that has not been answered and it is no wonder that we have had problems in the past of not dealing with this in a proper manner, as we are doing once more in our country.

There is also, Mr. Speaker, major concern reflected on the question of the EMA's capability to enforce the laws and whether or not they do have the legal authority to act in this matter. In this particular case, there are a number of instances in which the EMA has seen companies violate environmental laws. What is called the Certificate of Environmental Completion has been violated by the Atlantic LNG Company and, to date, it has gone unnoticed. No wonder when I visited Point Fortin I went into a home in which a poor family was being inflicted, not only by dust pollution but noise and light pollution, in the sense that they had to face extreme light in their homes for almost 24 hours per day. These are issues that affect the ordinary people in the country, because the EMA is not enforcing the standards which they have themselves proclaimed. Those standards too are not standards that are up to best practice policies in the international arena. There is a major problem of the failure of government of not only the manner in which the Government handles its problem, but the ability to handle it and to diagnose where the solution is. What we can say clearly about this Government is that the diagnoses of most of the solutions have been clearly so wrong that it is no wonder the solutions have been so ineffective in almost all aspects of public life in our country and more so in this particular area than in others.

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We also saw the violation of environmental standards by the National Energy Corporation in Union Estate. That remains an unresolved matter, which is only a matter now of the record. There is no enforcement of measures to rectify these situations.

State agencies have always found themselves being treated in a soft way and there is still evidence of fines being imposed on one or two state agencies; UDeCOTT in particular, on the Tarouba Stadium, but there has been no action. Fines are imposed. No one is held accountable and the whole matter goes under cover. These are all but little evidence of an ineffective EMA and no political will on the part of those in power to correct that situation.

It is a serious matter and this is what has led to the people feeling this sense of alienation and has led to the people feeling that sense that their own security is not at stake; and it is very easy to have dealt with this matter if you were going to start with a humble approach; not an approach where there is arrogance of power, or an approach where you believe that there is money at your disposal and political power in your hands, that you can exercise the arrogance of power on the people of this country. That must stop in this country from now on.

That is why I am sympathetic to those who have been calling for this kind of direct dialogue and those who have been calling for a real solution to the fundamental issues. I applaud all those who have done their homework and have gone through the necessary investigation to identify, in very clear terms, what are the issues. I believe today that those people in Chatham, La Brea and the community at large who have been making this a big issue now have a greater knowledge base in their hands than this Government has in its own hands on this particular issue. They have done the research and they have forwarded these issues but, to date, we have not seen any serious effort to handle the issues before us.

It is in this context that one must look, not only at the Environmental Management Authority, but we must indeed look at the laws within which they operate. Today, there is not the law that allows them to have the capacity to deal seriously with air pollution, water pollution and toxic waste and substances transportation. So much so that—*[Interruption]*

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

*Motion made,* That the hon. Member's speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. *[Dr. H. Rafeeq]*

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Mr. W. Dookeran:** I thank hon. Members for the extension of time. As I was saying, even the laws are not in place. Eleven years after the establishment of the EMA, there are no regulations to deal with these very threatening issues. The EMA has drafted air and pollution rules since 2000 and none of these has yet been made into law. There are no rules, drafts or otherwise, for toxic wastes and substances.

In Australia, which is often used by those who are trying to refute the claim, there is a place for these laws and in other jurisdictions, but yet it is said that these countries have been able to handle their problems and we have not been able to do so and it is only a matter of time. That evidence that we have before us is to suggest that there is not the capability to handle the problems, but at least what should be done is to have a direct discussion with the community on how these matters can be dealt with.

Let me say a few words more on this principle of community rights, for I believe at the heart of it, this is where the problem is. This Government does not fundamentally acknowledge community rights as a part of governance in Trinidad and Tobago. They see it as a matter at their discretion. They see it as a way in which they can exercise public relations in the name of public consultations; something that we will warn against, particularly in the new debate that is going to emerge on the constitutional issue. Once again, we cannot allow ourselves to be fooled; that public consultations, which are aimed at public relations, are a substitute for the enshrinement of community rights in this country. That is at the heart of this issue; that the very philosophy of the Government of governance does not take that into consideration. Effective public participation in taking decisions enables the public to express and the decision-maker to take account of opinions and concerns that may be relevant to their decisions, thereby increasing accountability and transparency of the decision-making process and contributing to public awareness on environmental issues that will support the decisions that are taken.

There are conventions along these lines and later on I would point out where the Government disconnect between what they sign and what they do is now increasing on this particular issue. As of now, even the system by which we can comply with the very fundamental right of community rights in this matter, has not been adhered to by the Government. We are facing a serious issue of democracy in this matter. When you are facing a serious issue of democracy, the society at large is not going to come back and sit down and say to itself that they will accept the Government's dispensation of democratic rights.



The society will rise to demonstrate it. That is what you have seen happening within recent times. It is the denial of community rights for the citizen that is creating the possibility of social havoc in this country in the years to come. It is a fundamental right that any government, in a major project of this nature, ought not to ignore. When they ignore it, they do not ignore it at their will; they ignore it at the will and the safety of the entire society of Trinidad and Tobago. It is not a matter only for the Government now, it is a matter for the people of Trinidad and Tobago to take stock and restore this country to a semblance of decency and rights of communities in governing ourselves.

Mr. Speaker, the very critical issue of the relocation of residents of Chatham and its environs has been raised and yet there is no real solution to that problem. What has happened is that Alcoa has said that they will follow something called World Bank Standards Operational Directive Policy, a long name. They said to the residents that is what they shall follow. When we checked into that, we found that is a facility that is not used for industrial relocation. In fact, it is used only in cases in which there are tragedies and disasters. It is an operational guideline, not for this particular purpose, but for other purposes and they are using this to hoodwink the population. Mr. Speaker, the Government stands idly by and they do not expose the fact that the World Bank Standards Operational Directive Policy, of which Alcoa is talking, really applies to conditions of natural disasters, civil unrest and global warfare. That is what this is about, but they used that name to try to establish to the people that they have some higher standards, when in fact they have no standard whatsoever.

This Government has a public duty, a national responsibility and a civic need to have a signed agreement between all the residents who are going to be affected. This must be between them and the workers so that there can be, in the signed agreement, a solution to all the concerns of the people. This signed agreement must have the force of law because, other than that, they, themselves, may be faced with the problems that my friends and the constituents in Oropune have been facing; problems that they have been waiting for 15 and 20 years to have those agreements honoured because there was no signed agreement between the residents and the Government. There were also assurances given by Ministers and assurances that were never upheld. We cannot have that anymore. Citizens of this country must have their rights enshrined. I call now for the Government to start immediately on working out a signed agreement between the community in Chatham to deal with all the concerns that they have expressed as they start the relocation process, if it has to start.

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These are not ordinary rights that ought to be denied the people; these are fundamental rights to our democracy. Today, when we see that the Government is making it into a political issue, and the Government is saying that those who have opposed it have a vested interest in opposing it, and the Prime Minister is going and siding with what he calls the post smelter situation, he is doing that and reducing a national development issue into a political partisan matter. This cannot be tolerated. This is the source of the problem. This is where the problem has begun. That is why today we are faced with all these concerns. What does the community want? In matters of this nature it is very easy to determine the community demands, apart from the health and environmental concerns which I have raised, and they have been raised even more eloquently by many others in this field.

There is also the issue of societal infrastructure. That is to say, when you undertake such big projects, you must provide for the infrastructure for the people's development—whether it is in the field of health, education, leisure, safety, security or the building of hospitals, schools, firefighting or supporting facilities—these are all matters that should be in the legal contract between the people and the Government, so that they can ensure a higher quality of life when this investment takes place. This is what we are talking about; quality of life. We cannot impose on our people, a method of governance that, perhaps, was existing some time before and perhaps may be existing in other countries in the world. In Trinidad and Tobago today, we cannot stand this anymore. We need to hold the Government accountable and the only way we can do so, since we cannot hold them accountable on the basis of politics right now, we must hold them accountable on the basis of laws and accountability.

Mr. Speaker, I raise these points not only because I believe in them strongly, but I do believe that this is the underlying problem that we are facing and it has allowed the people to feel a sense of hopelessness. They have real concerns about the children's future and their relocation. One hundred families, I am told, are going to be directly affected by this relocation. As of now, they have no idea how, what, when or why. The community in Oropune had to wait for 15 years and to date the matter is not finally resolved, although I hope that because of discussions I have been having recently with the Minister, that should be resolved. I wait for that to be resolved finally, but it took 15 years. In the meantime, many of those who are affected died in the process. Are we a society that is now going to tolerate death at the expense of inept public policy management in this country? Should we not hold the Government accountable for the deaths that have emerged

because of the fact that they are unable to deal with these problems on a timely basis and our people were not able to reap the rewards of their own labour and enjoy a good life in this country because of the inept government management? Mr. Speaker, you sit and say to yourself that this is politics. The new generation and the generation that is now coming on the scene are not accepting the answer that this is politics. They shall decide what is politics in Trinidad and Tobago.

There is a list of amenities that will go together with such a major undertaking; amenities that are normal, amenities that would provide support for the development of the infrastructure in the communities and the development of the people.

When I went to Point Fortin I visited a school that was recently built, I was told, within the last few years. I was told that school would now be closed down and would be converted into some kind of administrative office because its location was too close to the smelter. The question is: What will happen to the children. That becomes the secondary question. In a government that is people-centered, that will be the first question before you answer the second question. That is why we bring development to the people and we bring quality of life to the people. We must not be in a situation where the government is opposing quality of life by the method in which they are handling this issue. We can put forward and the Members have put forward these arguments in so many different ways and at so many different times, in order to have a proper solution.

Mr. Speaker, there are other issues on this matter that are equally important and that is the entire issue of a national policy on gas pricing. Having dealt with the community rights, there is also the national issues of who shall benefit and who shall lose in this particular project, because if you are going to incur various concessions, then there must be some benefit that would be derived. I am not denying that there are benefits, but it has not been brought forward openly.

The entire issue of gas pricing remains in a cloud of secrecy. To date, as far as I have been told, it has not been revealed what kind of issue have emerged or what kind of answers have emerged to the questions on gas pricing. This is a critical issue, because what you might find is a situation in which we are in fact subsidizing these multinationals and that subsidization eventually reflects itself in higher electricity prices in the country for consumers. When people are faced with higher electricity prices, they must link that to a government's inaction on gas prices in an aluminium smelter. Those are the kinds of issues that have been placed on the agenda. I thought it would have been an opportunity for the

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Government to clear these issues with the population and the community and to have their inputs in determining whether these have been solved through an equitable basis and in the interest of development.

I asked a few questions on this issue. What is the price of gas agreed upon to ensure economic viability of the project? What is the cumulative loss to the country as a result of the difference between the market price and the subsidized price to Alcoa? Why is Alcoa being allowed to export 100 per cent of the output of the aluminium smelter. Is it yet another primary processing facility such as the LNG, ammonia and methanol? Where is the value added that would emerge out of this? Earlier on I said that was at the heart of developmental issue and are we going to lose the benefits of that? We do not know. We have no opportunity and the Government may have the answer, but they are not sharing it with the population. This is a secretive Government and we must make sure that this Government loses the secrecy and opens its accountability to the people of the land.

What is the opportunity cost for gas that is imposed here? What are the alternative uses? Where is the feasibility study and what has come out of the feasibility study? Is there a tax holiday and if so is it perpetual? What is the gas price at wellhead? Is it based on the agreed price on the plant? Did the Government look at the most effective way in which such a study should be based; whether such a plan would be better based on gas-fired energy, or it would be based on hydroelectric energy? These are some of the technical questions which have been raised by people who are concerned about these matters. Most important, where is the memorandum of agreement between the Government and the company on this matter? I do not know. When people have no information, it is no wonder they form different opinions, but what they do know is that their lives are at risk, their future is at risk and they have a right to be concerned about their lives and their future and a government has the responsibility to respond to the rights of our people when they have expressed their concerns about their future. No government today must be allowed to get away.

The commercial arrangement and the terms of agreement remain an open question and we cannot simply hide under the rubric that this is confidential information. This is information that will affect the future of the country and there must be a way. There are rules by which this can happen. The Government has indicated that they will support such rules in public forum. I have some information in which the Minister of Finance, on the issue of transparency in the oil/gas sector—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Manning:** Thank you very much for giving way. I wonder if the Member for St. Augustine will agree that there are certain commercial arrangements that, because of the very nature to the conduct and successful conduct of the business of a particular business organization, ought to be treated with a certain level of confidentiality. Do you agree or do you not?

**Mr. W. Dookeran:** Mr. Speaker, I agree, but what I am talking about is not those commercially sensitive data, I am talking about information and data that affects the lives of the people and they have a right to know about the consequences of that. There is a whole agreement.

**Mr. Manning:** I thank the hon. Member again. Would you put the question of gas pricing in that category; the particular price that an enterprise pays for natural gas? Would you put it in that category or not?

**Mr. W. Dookeran:** Certainly not. I think gas pricing is a matter of national concern and the entire country ought to know what the gas pricing of a country is. It cannot hide under the rubric of commercial intelligence. In fact, more often than not, it is known by everybody in the industry, other than the people of Trinidad and Tobago. It is the nature of the world today. I am very sure that everyone in the gas field would know what are the prices involved, but the people of Trinidad and Tobago do not know it. We have to pay the price for it.

There is a comment by Sen. The Hon. Christine Sahadeo, Minister in the Ministry of Finance, when she attended the extractive industry transparency institute workshop. She gave her government's commitment at that time, on January 12, 2005, to transparency in the extractive industries. She stated that they are committed to the importance of transparency by governments and companies in the extractive industries; specifically the extractive industries, because that is an area in which there has been great lack of disclosure and the need to enhance public financial management and accountability. The Minister gave these commitments. She stated further that the Government is committed to encouraging high standards of transparency and accountability in public life, government operations and in business. In addition, the belief in the broadly consistent and workable approach to the disclosure of payments and revenues that is required, must be used to undertake the investment; also on payments disclosure in a given situation in spite of that public announcement by a government Minister that is not honoured in practice when the situation arises. That is the issue. What you have now is a Government using the forum to declare public statements that put them in a good light in the international community. Having given this commitment on behalf of

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the Government, they continue to maintain secrecy with respect to the memorandum of agreement that is signed between the Government and Alcoa.

If the Government does not wish to reveal all the specific commercial intelligence data, which the Prime Minister spoke about, that does not obviate the need to explain what the memorandum of agreement is all about and what would be the benefits and the cost to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. It is a fundamental right of information. It is the same right of information that we have been calling upon so often on this side of the House, in order to restore faith and confidence in our country.

That is why the people of this country, in a recent survey, identified politicians and parliamentarians as those people, including all of us, for whom they have the least respect for truth.

**Dr. Rowley:** Speak for yourself.

**Mr. W. Dookeran:** That is because we are not providing the information, based on democracy, that is the requirement of this country today.

It is in this context that even a few days ago, we heard on the BBC a report that in China there was a major toxic waste problem that went into their waterways and is a major issue in Asia now because of the inability to handle that problem by the government there. I noticed that we are using Chinese technology in the Alutrint plant. I do not know what is the record of maintaining environmental standards out of China and whether they have such a record that we can rely upon, but they have been used here. When I saw this I began to think about what is at stake here. I do not have the full information of that but it is an example of the kinds of risks that we are to undertake if we do not get to the heart of it.

The issues of the gas pricing and the feasibility of this study were relegated, not for the Government officers to do, but, from my information, to the enterprises themselves to provide this information. What has happened to our own capability to do these things? Are we negotiating with multinationals without the knowledge to negotiate? Are we relying on them to supply to us the options that are available to us? Are we, therefore, following the rules in which they are saying that things are now commercially sensitive and we simply abide by that? Where is the sovereignty of Trinidad and Tobago under this PNM Government?

In spite of the fact we have so much unprecedented funds flowing in the country and we have such a great opportunity open to us, we, without realizing it, in the name of bureaucracy—one of the good things; the Prime Minister, is an expert on how a bureaucracy should be run. He does not know how a country

should be run. That is a different issue. That is why he has always raised, in this Parliament, issues of a bureaucratic nature; in the very way in which he is dealing with the Constitution reform debate, but identifying a procedure.

Constitution making is not a matter of procedure. Constitution making is a matter of philosophy and politics. The Prime Minister outlines the procedure and sits back and says: "Now I have public consultation." This was wrongly diagnosed and the requirements of the day is in fact lending credence to the view that the Government cannot be relied upon to solve the problems of today. They can only be relied upon to create the problems of tomorrow.

What I am saying here today is to try to avert that possibility, to try to ensure that the Government does not find itself where it is imposing an investment without looking at the right of the citizens, without having a signed agreement and without having an enforceable method by which these particulars should be adhered to. They are creating problems and I, therefore, am in great sympathy with those who have found that their voices have not been heard on this matter. It is a fundamental issue and the way to handle this, in spite of the fact that it went to the Joint Select Committee—my information is, when I looked at the report that there was a denial of information. When you go to the Joint Select Committee and the Minister were supposed to bring answers, in some cases, I was advised, the Ministers were not even present to provide that information, so that became another source of irritation to the people who are searching for answers. I have never seen a community so patient. The communities of Cedros and La Brea have been patient and rational.

**Mr. Bereaux:** Would you please give way? I hear you calling the name La Brea all the time and I do not know if you know, but if you do not know, let me now advise you that the persons who came to meet the hon. Prime Minister supporting the smelter are all from La Brea, Sobo and its environs. Why are you misleading the House by saying that La Bea people are against the smelter?

**Mr. Ramsaran:** All of them support the smelter?

**Mr. Bereaux:** Regardless of that.

**Mr. W. Dookeran:** Mr. Speaker, I do not think the hon. Member for La Brea understood my point.

**Mr. Bereaux:** I listened to you carefully. I have been listening to you.

**Mr. W. Dookeran:** Is he trying to say that the people in La Brea are fine, but the people in Chatham will require a different political treatment?

**Mr. Bereaux:** That is not what I am saying.

**Mr. W. Dookeran:** Is that what he is saying by implication? Mr. Speaker, I think I have made the point and I am glad that the hon. Member for La Brea rose in defence of the people of La Brea because I have noticed within recent times that the people who represent Point Fortin and La Brea never stand up for the people in those areas.

Let me conclude by saying that, it is time we must get our fundamentals right. It is time that we are able to deal with these issues. Time would not allow me, but I have all the issues that appear today at yesterday's consultation that supposedly took place on the issue. It talked about very simple things; that people were not publicly notified as they were supposed to be and that they were in fact not allowed to continue their views. There was a lot of recourse to confidentiality. I have the entire report, which I will pass on. This happened at yesterday's meeting and was today aired on one of the radio stations. One of the members from the community was good enough to send it to me since he knew this debate was taking place. It is on the fundamental issue on how the public consultation is being treated; whether it is for La Brea or it is for Chatham, it is the same process that is taking place and it is a process that is no longer tolerable in this country of Trinidad and Tobago.

I therefore call on the Government to immediately initiate what has to be done, to sign an agreement between the communities and the affected workers and the people who are going to be directly affected to resolve all the fundamental issues that they have raised and to be able to ensure that the signed agreement has the force of law and has the capability of being enforced, so we can restore and defend the rights of our people against what has turned out to be arrogance of power by this Government.

Thank you very much.

**The Minister of Housing (Hon. Dr. Keith Rowley):** Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. In preparing to enter this debate today, I spent a considerable period of time putting myself in a position to clarify some of the issues that have been attracting national attention and making the news on a regular basis; driven by a number of concerns. But, having listened to the Member for St. Augustine, I am tempted to deviate from what I came to say and deal with what he has just said and done, and that temptation would allow me to treat with a lot of the misconceptions, which he so passionately espoused in the last half of an hour or so.



I am sure that after this evening's meeting in the tea room I would have much opportunity to respond to my colleague from St. Augustine, to demonstrate that he is very good at misleading the population. Maybe later when I come into my contribution I would make a few pointers of established fact of leadership by my colleague from St. Augustine.

What is the issue in front of us today, which is generating so much passion and for us on this side, which holds out so much hope? Because of what my friend from St. Augustine has done, I think I should start by putting to bed this whole argument and these accusations against this Government about doing certain things in a certain way and all these high-sounding, highfalutin chidings about government, how you should conduct governance and how you should behave. It appears as though the PNM is being held to a standard on this matter, which others are not being held to. When they are in government, they know how to behave and what to do and when they are in Opposition, they take a different position. The new philosophy in Trinidad and Tobago outside of the PNM is, yesterday was yesterday and that today is today. Whatever we did yesterday has no bearing whatsoever on what we are saying today, doing today, or intend to do tomorrow. I call that hypocrisy and it is bad when it is being used to mislead the national population.

I have a document in my hand, which I would start my contribution with, just to put in perspective what my friend from St. Augustine has just said and done and what his colleagues and friends outside have been doing. What I have in my hand is an address by the hon. Basdeo Panday—his leader and mentor to whom he espoused his undying love—Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago; no ordinary citizen. He might be convict number one today, but at that time he was the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago—on the occasion of the signing ceremony for the project agreement. I want you to pay particular attention in light of all that you have just heard. This was on the occasion of the signing ceremony for the project agreement for an aluminum smelter in Trinidad and Tobago. This was a signing ceremony. This is the speech of Basdeo Panday, the Prime Minister of our country, at the Trinidad Hilton on November 12, 1998 at 12.30 p.m. I would take out a few extracts to put into this whole debate; this political debate that he talks about. We are being political. He is not being political by taking a position to a support smelter in 1998 and opposing it bitterly now, because he is looking for political benefits, but he is not being political. Listen to what Mr. Panday had to say about aluminium and smelter. This is just a few extracts. I am quoting Mr. Panday, Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago.

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“It is with great pleasure that I address you today on what for my Government and the country is a most important and an historic occasion.”

That is at the signing ceremony.

“Today heralds a new dawn—the start of what might be considered a new industry with the signing of the Project Agreement for the establishment of an Aluminium Smelter in Trinidad and Tobago.”

When the UNC is in office, a smelter is a new dawn, but when the PNM is in office, a smelter is wrongdoing and bad governance. Do you understand where the mischief comes from? Do you understand why they are misleading people and why the people of La Brea will not take them on and eventually the people of Chatham, who will have their questions properly answered. At the end of the day the people's interest will prevail, because this hypocrisy thing cannot last. Prime Minister Panday went on to say—I quote him again because the Motion asked: what are the economic benefits of the smelter. He said:

“Ladies and gentlemen,

There are important socio-economic bases for the establishment of a world-scale Aluminium Smelter in Trinidad and Tobago.”

He goes on to say:

“This factor couples with the fact that Trinidad and Tobago is blessed with adequate supplies of competitively-priced natural gas-based energy from experienced and proven gas supply companies, a well-developed natural gas infrastructure and experienced workforce.”

That is what the Motion is asking us: why a smelter. If the Member for Tabaquite was listening to his Prime Minister he would not have had to file a Motion to ask me why, he could have listened to the Prime Minister, his own Prime Minister, and he would have known.

Incidentally, we have heard a lot of talk from the Member for St. Augustine about gas-base and the price of natural gas. I want to ask him, when he was Governor of the Central Bank, ensconced over there writing their manifesto, and the Prime Minister was talking about signing this agreement for competitive priced natural gas-based energy, was that secret governance? You come here today and accuse us of secret governance, turning your back on the need for confidentiality in commercial agreements, but Prime Minister Panday was talking about adequate supplies of competitively-priced gas—at what price? Do you know? Did he tell you? Was it published in the *Guardian* or the *Express*? No, but your hypocrisy can bring you

here today to accuse us of secret governance and highfalutin arguments about government has to change and what the community must do. He is a fraud, an absolute fraud and this hypocrisy is what—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Speaker:** I do not think it is right to call a Member of Parliament a fraud. Please, you are capable of better language.

**Hon. Dr. K. Rowley:** Mr. Speaker, if that is offensive I withdraw but I hope I demonstrate for those who are interested in the facts that when they speak, what they say is valued when they are speaking. The value their statements have is when they are spoken.

Mr. Panday at the signing with Norsk Hydro said:

“And when these factors are combined with the other enabling factors such as the hospitable investment climate, a stable government and political system, and the favourable geographical location of the country at the gateway to potential markets in the Americas and Europe, it is clear that Norsk Hydro has selected Trinidad and Tobago as the location for the next major investment of Aluminium Smelter facilities.”

All these attributes are good when the UNC is in office, but when the PNM succeeds in getting a smelter where they have failed, all of a sudden it is to the detriment of the people of Trinidad and Tobago; and that is the issue.

Then they promote themselves as agents provocateurs, instead of going out there and providing leadership on major economic development. They go out there and try to incite people to create hysteria and obstruct national development. That is what they are about. They are not content with going in front the UN and badmouthing the country with placards, but to provide leadership, so as not to develop us, but to hinder us. Do you know what they call that? There was a time that was called treason and you would have lost your head for it.

**Mr. Partap:** So many matters of treason you would be in.

**Hon. Dr. K. Rowley:** Mr. Speaker, the Motion asks us—

**Dr. Nanan:** Would the Member give way?

**Hon. Dr. K. Rowley:** Sure, sure.

**Dr. Nanan:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. Member for giving way. The issue here is the failure of the Government for environmental protection. That is the issue, not the issue about the smelter.

**Hon. Members:** Oh really?

**Dr. Nanan:** If you read it, that is the issue.

**Mr. Manning:** Mr. Speaker, I am very grateful indeed for the elucidation of the hon. Member for Tabaquite.

**Mr. Speaker:** I think you have asked the Member to give way.

**Mr. Manning:** Yes and I thank you very sincerely. I just merely wish to confirm what the Member for Tabaquite has just said, that the issue is not really the smelter. He accepts the smelter, but the concern of hon. Members opposite is the environmental impact of the smelter. Is that a correct interpretation?

**3.00 p.m.**

**Dr. Nanan:** If you read the Motion, hon. Prime Minister, you would see what the Motion was speaking about and you would also see in that Motion we were asking what price was Alcoa getting for the natural gas. That was the issue also; so that has to be cleared here.

**Hon. Dr. K. Rowley:** Mr. Speaker, I am happy that this whole issue of whither goest the smelter has been settled in the Parliament, because it is clear now that what we are being told is that what the Prime Minister of 1998 said stands and what the Prime Minister of 2006 says still stands; one and the same, that we support the establishment of aluminium and aluminium industry in this country, by way of not one, but two smelters. [*Desk thumping*] So that is settled.

In the context of the presentation of my colleague from St. Augustine, I really must go on a bit to point out what Prime Minister Panday said in 1998. He is talking about the benefits because the Motion asked in recital three:

"state clearly the economic benefits to be derived from the construction...of the said smelters."

Again, if you had read this or if you had listened to the Prime Minister then you would have had it. He said:

"For the National Gas Company, the successful conclusion of negotiations for the investment of an aluminium project, represents a key element in the diversification of its gas sales portfolio. Investment in the project means for NGC, additional natural gas sales in the order of 200 million standard cubic feet of gas per day for a minimum term of 25 years."

So the very question he was asking was answered by Mr. Panday in 1998. And to put the whole thing in perspective, the Prime Minister then, Mr. Panday, said:

“The coming together of these diverse concerns to bring to life this dream of an aluminium smelter in the country is a very real manifestation of my Government’s core unity message.”

That was the UNC position which he has just confirmed. So at least there is some element of consistency with respect to the coming of an aluminium smelter in this country as far as they are concerned.

**Dr. Nanan:** Would the Member give way? One more time.

**Hon. Dr. K. Rowley:** No, no, you had your chance. You would have a chance to wind up, do not take my time. You would have a chance to respond to me, you are the mover of the Motion; you would have ample time to wind up.

Mr. Speaker, the gobbledegook of the Member for St. Augustine talked about the need for all this debate, dot all the “i”s and cross all the “t”s before we proceed. Listen to what Mr. Panday was saying when he was Prime Minister, and he was a follower of Mr. Panday then:

“However, it is important to keep in mind what constitutes the critical success factors in business success.

They are innovation, swiftness to market...”

So when the UNC was doing it, swiftness to market was the critical factor of success, but today they want to tell us do not do anything until every “i” is dotted, every “t” is crossed, every individual consulted and an agreement is had by everybody who lives within these borders. That is what they are telling us, you know. So we are saying to the people of this country, when you have a national issue of importance, whom do you listen to; the PNM or the UNC. You listen to the UNC and you get yourself in big trouble because they stand for nothing, represent nothing, commit to nothing and are detrimental to the national well being.

Mr. Speaker, I cannot help but go back to 1986 because those who forget the past, if I may quote Frantz Fanon. He says:

“To ignore the past is to surrender the future”

And insofar as my colleague from St. Augustine is concerned, nothing could be a truer statement, because he was the architect of this document. He was the man who was driving NAR economic policy. We are in a good position today, in 2006,

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to read what he put in their manifesto as the party position on industrialization 20 years ago. I want you to ask yourself if they had succeeded in staying in government for that long, where this policy would have got us. Let me quote for you from page 16 because I have this in my head like it is printed like a photograph.

Page 16 of the NAR Manifesto of 1986, under the fingerprint of my friend from St. Augustine. Listen to their point:

“The NAR’s industrialisation programme will be based on the following guidelines:—

1) No further public capital investments will be made in the construction of new urea or ammonia plants in Trinidad and Tobago given the projections of world economic forces and technological developments in genetic engineering.”

They went on to say, and what is worse is paragraph 3; their industrialization policy for transforming the oil and energy sector was that they would develop an internal growth dynamic. Mr. Speaker, understand the importance of this, you know:

“Develop an internal growth dynamic in the petroleum sector that emphasizes the production of lubricants, plastic and plastic related industries...”

What they are saying, Mr. Speaker, is that they would have limited economic development in our energy sector to what our local market can absorb. [*Interruption*] You have a right to disown it, because paragraph 4 says:

“Based on the internal economic resilience...”

What does that mean? And they went on to say—

**Mr. Dookeran:** May I?

**Hon. Dr. K. Rowley:** You really want to get up? You sure you want to do that?

**Mr. Dookeran:** I want to correct your interpretation on both statements. Mr. Speaker, internal dynamics of the economy does not exclude export production and secondly, public investment in urea, et cetera, does not exclude private and international investment. So you are misreading it in the context of a different time.

**Hon. Dr. K. Rowley:** Mr. Speaker, I was hoping he did not get up, because I know that he would and that they would disown this, because the PNM's policy was the opposite of this, and the success that we have today is because we did not go down this road. Listen to how the exporting was going to be done to the extent that they have anything to export. They would:

“Explore new marketing arrangements, possibly in association with Brazil, to secure on an exchange basis regional Third World and international markets for the steel products in excess of domestic demand.”

So the dynamics was for local production and what little they had left they would have bartered with Brazil. That would have been the economy of Trinidad and Tobago—barter. Because they had said it elsewhere that no further investment would be made with those plants. It is when the PNM came into government in 1991; by 1993 we had reversed this and embarked on a course of expansion of our economy. [*Desk thumping*] That is why today we are prosperous and benefiting from a change of Government and a change of policy. Yet he is here today seeking to advise us on what we should do about aluminium.

Mr. Speaker, when we place an aluminium industry in the context of all of where we have been and where we are going; there was a time in this country when the economy of Trinidad and Tobago was centered around cocoa, grapefruits, bananas and sugar for export, that was our economy. The busiest part of the country was down there in South Quay, exporting these products. We were a producer of primary products in the agricultural sector, foreign-owned oil and the Pitch Lake as a British colony, and the lives of the people in this country were in that kind of cocoon. Then we had the Moca disease that wiped out bananas. We had the Lethal Yellowing that wiped out coconuts. We had to struggle with sugar cane for years, until eventually it limped to where it is today. Citrus, a variety of things.

When we became independent we changed from that to another kind of economy; the screwdriver economy, industrialization by invitation and we went into the negative list arrangement, and people coming in and assembling fridges, stoves and cars. Remember that period, Mr. Speaker? Where you waited three years to get a car because it was being assembled locally and so on. That was our economy then. Later on, we went further and got ownership of the energy sector and then we started benefiting significantly from what that had to offer. And other world developments outside of our control assisted us in benefiting even better from the energy sector, which we at that time, owned.

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Today, when we listen to those who talk about diversifying the economy, the coming of an aluminium smelter is a signal to that. Because an aluminium industry is not a knock-on of what exists here now, it is a creation of a completely new aspect of our economic development. As Prime Minister Panday was saying, it is something significant, new industrial base being created. As of now, we are an importer of aluminium products. Except for iron and steel, aluminium is the most highly used metal in the world—all over the world economy—because of the nature of that substance, alumina.

Aluminium itself is very common all over the world. In fact, if you go anywhere in the world and pick up a handful of clay, the earth is made up largely of aluminium. It is silicon, oxygen, aluminium in that order. But in terms of an ore, where you find it concentrated enough to be used as an ore, you have the bauxite in places like Jamaica, Suriname and elsewhere around the world, and they have their industries to create from that bauxite, alumina, which we would import, aluminium oxide. And we would start our industry with aluminium oxide which we would import. The whole issue of what happens as my colleague from Tabagite says, is about environmental relationships and outcome of trying to treat with an industry that is treating with aluminium oxide.

So we import aluminium oxide and we have an industrial plant that would have to convert aluminium oxide to aluminium. And why aluminium? It is because that product is so saleable, so marketable, it is so useful. It is lightweight, non-corrosive and strong. You make a variety of alloys by introducing into the process all kinds of trace elements like bismuth, vanadium copper, chromium manganese; all these things give you different qualities in the aluminium and that product is saleable and is used for making foil for chewing gum to making aircraft parts, motorcar parts, train bodies for railroad carriages, the overhead lines that we have at T&TEC, the bases for light bulbs, pots and pans for the home, windows in construction; you name it and aluminium is used for that. That is the market that we want to enter as an exporter of as many of those products as possible. The day we have an aluminium industry in this country, we become an exporter of new products, whether it is motorcar wheels; whether it is other car parts; whether it is aluminium rods for electricity and wire and so on, we become an exporter.

The reason we can do that is because we are blessed with energy by way of natural gas. Because the breaking of the bond of aluminium oxide to create aluminium, is a high energy consumption process, and we happen to have that energy so we can combine our energy attributes with our alumina, which we can buy from our Caribbean neighbours and put ourselves in a position to create a



new industry in this country, and make ourselves an exporter of a high value product in the world. [*Desk thumping*] That is the issue. But in so doing there are some issues, nobody is saying no, virtually anywhere in any industry. There is nothing that life loves more than water; our body is three-quarters water, but if you go under water for too long and hold your breath water would kill you.

Mr. Speaker, in any industry there are issues to be dealt with; that is a simple matter. What are the issues in smelting alumina to make aluminium? The process by which alumina is smelted, dating back to 1886 or thereabout, you have to put that aluminium oxide in a bath with a fluoride-based product, sodium, aluminium fluoride; the chemical reaction in the electrolysis process generates hydrogen fluoride. Hydrogen fluoride, as a gas, is a product that is deleterious to life and limb; there is no question about that. But the question is, how does the plant treat with that by-product so as to prevent it from entering the environment around the plant in concentrations that would be dangerous, and that is all taken up in the engineering of the plant.

Of course, in an earlier time when older plants were devised, there were arrangements in smelting aluminium which allowed that hydrogen fluoride to escape into the atmosphere. Such a process had a number of bad results, but over time the technology has changed. The new technology prevents that from happening. So a lot of what you are hearing about the dangers with aluminium smelters relate to aluminium smelters of old technology and old experience. If one looks at it in that logical way, you would not get this hysteria which is being promoted by itinerant political leaders trying to promote themselves among people who should be provided with facts and information.

Rather than lead them down the correct path and let them await a process, which would point out that they have examined what the company would do; examined engineering; set the standards and ensured that the engineering designs meet the standards that you want at the out-turn; you are riling up people so that they would take decisions based on emotion rather than fact. That is what is going on and it is unfortunate, because we as a small country should be very happy to see a toehold in the world's aluminium industry, because that is where we want to be as a developed country. We want to have a piece of that aluminium pie that is so lucrative.

Unlike oil and gas which tend to go up and down, aluminium tends to be steadily priced over time, and its usage is increasing. It is a non-toxic element; it is a non-toxic product; it has all kinds of little attributes, and over time you invest

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in that industry, like 50 countries are doing. You hear them talk you would think we are inventing this, and we are exposing our people to some experimental thing which will cause us to turn into little green men, and we would all have brittle bone disease and so on. You would not think that there are 50 countries in the world producing aluminium and benefiting from selling it in the world market, competing with steel, with a bright future; developing countries and developed countries.

How many times you heard on the recent CNN news that little green men have been found in Australia, New Zealand and Canada? But our friend comes here leading a Motion, in fact I want to take issue with my friend from Tabaquite because he should know better, he is a dentist and I presume that he is familiar with scientific expressions. In his discourse, all in an attempt to fuel the hysteria, we are talking about the concentrations of hydrogen fluoride because that is problem number one in the aluminium smelter. What hydrogen fluoride produces and what is to happen to it. We acknowledge that hydrogen fluoride emissions will be a problem with a smelter, but in that smelter the technology for scrubbing the gas would be such that what comes out of the stack would have to meet very high and stringent international standards.

In the discourse somebody asked about the quantity of hydrogen fluoride to be emitted in the atmosphere in the vicinity of the plant. The lawyer from Naparima said more than one part per million. He was in the correct ballpark, one part per million. But the dentist from Tabaquite says it would be more than five parts per million and anything more than five parts per million would be considered deadly. Mr. Speaker, that is an incorrect scientific statement meant to create hysteria. Because the facts are—

**Dr. Nanan:** Would the Member give way?

**Hon. Dr. K. Rowley:** You would respond to me when it is your turn.

**Dr. Nanan:** But you are misleading the House.

**Hon. Dr. K. Rowley:** Mr. Speaker, I am quoting from *Hansard*. That was the statement of Mr. S. Panday, “more than one part per million”, in a response to a comment from Mr. Hinds. Then Dr. A. Nanan responded, “it would be more than five parts per million, anything over five parts per million is considered deadly.”

**Mr. Bereaux:** That is correct.

**Dr. Nanan:** That is correct.

**Hon. Dr. K. Rowley:** Mr. Speaker, with respect to the Alutrint plant, you see when you confront them with what they have said they have to disown themselves, because at that point they cannot bring themselves to accept that they did and said that. That is why my friend from St. Augustine is disowning the manifesto and he is now disowning the *Hansard*. But he did say, and it was reported in the news and fooling people that five parts per million of hydrogen fluoride is deadly, and that is what is fuelling some of the hysteria in Trinidad, because they rely on people like that for information.

In setting standards for the aluminium plant the process requires that the companies submit their engineering out-turn to the EMA, where the experts are, who will determine what these plants can and cannot do. And on that basis the EMA will grant or not grant approvals because certain standards will or will not be met. What are the standards we are aiming for with respect to the Alutrint plant? Initially, the EMA were looking at three micrograms per metre cube. They now set a standard of one microgram per metre cube.

If you go through the molecular calculations, the universal gas content, standard temperature and pressure calculations, you would come to a situation where you find that if you want to compare part per million with metre cube, it is roughly one part per million hydrogen fluoride would look like about .9 milligrams per metre cube. So here it is, one part per million is what we are looking at with respect to the standard that the EMA is setting for the industry. Yet, without paying attention to what is going on—because they do not have to have facts, you know, because they are fuelling emotions and trying to score political points—the mover of the Motion comes in here and puts on record that it is going to be greater than five parts per million. That is not correct, because if it is greater than five parts per million, then we have a problem. But if on the other hand the industry would be held to a standard of one part per million, then that is within the acceptable standards of the international agencies and the international industry standards. So why are we putting ourselves in a position to deny ourselves an aluminium industry based on misinformation?

**Dr. Nanan:** You do not understand.

**Hon. Dr. K. Rowley:** “I doh understand, I name Nanan?” Mr. Speaker, it is like my friend from Caroni East who was cheering on his leader from St. Augustine; he too has questions to answer. Because you see in 1998 when I was prosecuting the case of the InnCogen sweetheart deal and my colleague from Caroni East was the Minister responsible for the InnCogen deal; when I raised the

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question about why InnCogen was handed a \$200 million contract without tender, without competition, that was beginning to become a hot potato, an embarrassment to the government and to the Minister in particular. Our current Member for Caroni East, who was then the Minister of Public Utilities under the InnCogen cloud, came to this House and in seeking to treat with the allegations of the InnCogen underhandness, made a statement in this House, and I want to draw your attention to the statement made on February 06, 1998:

“Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission (Status of Negotiations)

The Minister of Public Utilities (Hon. Ganga Singh): ...”

Hear what he had to say in response to competition or lack thereof with respect to the InnCogen deal:

“The three co-generators who had expressed a desire to supply additional power to T&TEC...”

So he was trying to cover himself by saying that the InnCogen deal was not a sweetheart sole selective award, but that there was a competition among three companies, okay. And if he was able to establish that he would have proven me a liar, because I was saying that the InnCogen deal was a sweetheart hand-me deal, handed to the InnCogen people. To prove me wrong, he got up in this House in this statement and said that there were three co-generators who had expressed a desire. Company number one, Norsk Hydro Aluminium; so they are against smelter, you are not supposed to have any smelter. But when you want to protect yourself against allegations of corruption, Norsk Hydro Aluminium company exists in Trinidad and Tobago. Company number two, the Aluminium Company of Trinidad and Tobago (ALCOTT), you ever heard of that? And company number three, Innercob Industries equals InnCogen.

So when they wanted to cover themselves in the InnCogen arrangement, they had not one but two aluminium companies in Trinidad and Tobago. He goes on to say:

“With respect to the Norsk Hydro Aluminium, T&TEC indicated that discussions commenced about a year ago and according to the Hydro’s project implementation schedule, T&TEC’s deadline of September 1999 could not be complied with.”

So there was a project implementation schedule for Norsk Hydro. Then he goes on to say:

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“Consistent with the Government’s policy, these companies are likely to meet T&TEC’s Phase II generation capacity requirements for the year 2001.”

According to their policy there should have been these two aluminium companies operating in a position to provide T&TEC with power by 2001. But of course, they go out of office, they are in the Opposition, the new Government is pursuing the aluminium smelter for the country’s benefit and all of a sudden they have not got a good word to say about it because they do not want anything good for the people of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, I was talking about the hydrogen fluoride concentrations. When you have to deal with a project like that, the engineering would result in the gaseous effluent being scrubbed at a stack in the plant and you begin to look at what comes out of the plant. We want to know, given that we are having our first plant and given all that has been said, where do we fit with other people’s plants, because, as I said, we do not hear on the news that certain people in New Zealand, Australia, United States being damaged by aluminium smelters and so on. So we want to look at what standards other people are meeting with respect to the concentrations of hydrogen fluoride that they consider to be tolerable and acceptable in an environment where a plant exists, and I am just searching my notes here to find the comparisons, because I did do some work to find those comparisons so that we could see how our one milligram per metre cube measures up.

Mr. Speaker, while I look for that, I want to draw your attention to the fact that, as we acknowledge that there will be these products which need to be managed properly at the industrial plant, we have to also understand that there is nothing particularly peculiar about an industrial plant or an industrial enterprise having to deal with products that are nasty and possibly carcinogenic or so on.

If we take our current environment without the aluminium smelter, what are we handling in this country; what are we exposed to? Take the refinery in Pointe-a-Pierre, which has been there for the longest while. I have found that the refinery has a list of chemicals that are utilized by Petrotrin. I got that list and it is a list of 213 chemicals. There are 213 chemical compounds currently handled routinely by Petrotrin in refining gasoline or other hydrocarbon products. If you look at that list cursorily and run down the list, you would see some products which immediately will stand out as products which are dangerous. Forget the explosive nature of gasoline, that is another story, I am talking about the chemical composition

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and chemical effects of these products. One that catches the eye immediately is MTBE. There is a whole big debate now in America about MTBE, which at one time was a popular chemical in the industry, now it is a chemical to be watched with a “coki-eye”. We are a producer and handler of MTBE down at Petrotrin.

### **3.30 p.m.**

We have naphthenic acid, sulphuric acid, ammonia, ammonium chloride, ammonium hydroxide, anhydrous ammonia, caustic soda, chlorine, chlorine dioxide, cobalt molybdenum, KF757, and the reason I am listing these—I pick them as I go along—is because these are popularly-known products which have certain deleterious consequences if you do not handle them properly: Hydrochloric acid, lead acetate, mercury, mirux No. 8 catalyst, mirux plus, methyl orange, methyl molybdenum KF842, sodium alkali benz sulphonate, sodium hydrochloride liquid, sodium beta disulphide, tetraethyl lead, tetra sodium EDTA, tri-sodium phosphate, these are products which you find in the refinery. Workers handle and manage them and a product comes out at the end of the day.

A refinery is a dangerous place, but you have to have the engineering, the environmental standards, the training and the industry behaviour to handle these to get an outcome at the end where you get your finished product without getting disasters associated with these products. So you have all these in the refinery. Does that mean that we do not refine oil in this country? Given the behaviour of my friend from St. Augustine, who is now the advocate for community rights without defining what that means. If community rights mean 15 people shouting down the majority and anything that is said that does not meet their cause would be shouted down, then that cannot be community rights. Because having said now that Petrotrin has all these deleterious chemicals on its compound down at Pointe-a-Pierre, maybe in his quest to become leader of whatever he wants to be leader of, he can go to Pointe-a-Pierre now and mobilize more than 15 people to say that our current attempt to have an additional refinery in Pointe-a-Pierre on land, which we are now clearing from other usage so as to have another refinery to expand our economic base, community rights can now prevail and say, “Look, we do not want that refinery there because these chemicals would be available and they would destroy us.”

Community rights can also be invoked according to him in that way so that the people of Point Fortin can say, “We do not want LNG here because it is dangerous”; because it is dangerous. Then the people of Carenage can say, “We do not want the Alcoa trans-shipment port down here because aluminium oxide

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dust is still dangerous”, and the people of Couva can say, “we do not want the Point Lisas ammonia plants here because they are dangerous.” You cannot run a country like that. My advice to him, Mr. Speaker, try simplicity, so when you start a sentence at 2 o’clock and it finishes at 4 o’clock, people must know what you said. Do you understand?

Mr. Speaker, you understand that the Government has put in place an agency with experts whose job it is to ensure that proper analyses are made of the issues that surround, not just the smelter, but any attempt to create things of this nature in this country, they must go through that process and all that is happening now, is that there are some people who are saying we do not trust the process or we would not allow the process to prevail. That is all that is happening. The EMA has been put in place as a government agency and we are paying high priced staff; staff that know the chemistry, that know the physics and who would not rely on people who do not know to tell you what the facts are and to make a ruling to protect our national interest. And all that is happening is that this thing has to go through a process.

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

*Motion made,* That the hon. Member’s speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. [*Hon. K. Valley*]

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Hon. Dr. K. Rowley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I want to thank my colleagues for the extension. Mr. Speaker, one of the points that was raised by the Member for St. Augustine was the fact that we do not have all the standards legislated at this point in time. That is a point that we have to treat with and we are treating with that because the evolution of the EMA results in the draft of certain standards being advanced and eventually they would come to this Parliament and be put into law and so.

In fact, the Motion itself starts off by making that point, the first point in the recital. But that does not say because that is not done that we ought not to go forward, because if we take that position we would have to close down T&TEC. When I examined T&TEC from an environmental standpoint, what do I get from it? T&TEC acknowledges natural gas is the cleanest burning fossil fuel. But it goes on to report that while there are no country standards that meet EMA standards at present for air emissions, specifications for new gas turbine generating equipment include World Bank standards for nitrous oxides and

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carbon monoxide emissions. Westinghouse units currently being installed at Point Lisas will be fitted with dry, low nitrous oxide burners.

So, therefore, even though we have not reached the point in our country where we can establish our own national standards, it is possible to proceed to industrialize as we have done, using standards which are acceptable elsewhere. It is the same thing with the earthquake building code. For years we have been working towards establishing our own national building code in this country.

Mr. Speaker, we have built many buildings in this country, including the twin towers and a lot of public and private buildings and they are all built to the California standards. So the point is, you do not have to establish your own standard to have a high standard; you can choose a standard which is accepted internationally and work towards that standard and that is what we are doing now. That does not represent any bad behaviour on the part of the company or the Government.

With respect to the comparison with other countries that I was looking for a moment ago, this is what we are looking at with respect to hydro-fluoride concentration guidelines in micrograms per metre cube. The 24-hour average in the Trinidad second schedule which the EMA is using to evaluate these projects is one microgram per metre cube over a 24-hour period; that is the standard. How does that compare with Canada? Canada is .85 to 1.1; United States, 1.2 to 2.9; Netherlands, a small country in Europe, while we are establishing a standard of 1 microgram per metre cube, in the Netherlands it is 2.8, almost three times the level. Almost three times the concentration of hydrogen fluoride is deemed by the Dutch to be tolerable in their environment. In the case of Australia, it is 2.9; New Zealand 1.5 and 2.9; Japan the same as ours, 1. So we are using a standard which is acceptable on the world stage as a standard which is reasonable and, in fact, better than most.

**Mr. Imbert:** Very high standard.

**Hon. Dr. K. Rowley:** Very high standard we are using. But while that is the case, there are people who are misrepresenting the facts and fuelling hysteria because they are gutturally opposed to the project or they genuinely believe that the process is not trustworthy. But we have to acknowledge that citizens have a right to express their concerns. Make no mistake about it, I would be very surprised, indeed, and disappointed if citizens whose rights could be affected, whose physical environment could or would be affected, sat down and showed no interest in the matter. But having shown an interest, let us not behave in a way



that gives the impression that we cannot properly scientifically assess these matters and come to a conclusion that would protect our interest; protect our environment and protect our industrial expansion. That is what is required. That is all that is required to ensure that those who are charged with the responsibility of protecting our environment, of establishing standards, that they do their job.

My friend from St. Augustine accuses the Prime Minister of taking sides. Apparently, he wants the Prime Minister to become the adjudicator in a highly scientific operation where the determination is not to be made by political office, but by scientific experts dealing with scientific data. And to accuse the Prime Minister of taking sides with a company, I want to draw the attention of my friend from St. Augustine that one of those plants, Alutrint, is 60 per cent owned by the people of Trinidad and Tobago. So, if the Prime Minister speaks up in defence of that, he is not taking sides, he is promoting the cause of the people of Trinidad and Tobago and that is something that is unknown to the UNC. Because when we were going to de-monopolize TSTT, it was the UNC that brought a certain Minister Gillette into the government and when they asked him what is his role in the government, he said he has experience in telecommunications and he has been brought in to deal with TSTT. TSTT, you know, a company that is majority owned by the people of Trinidad and Tobago, the UNC brought in a Minister specifically to shaft TSTT.

**Mr. Imbert:** What?

**Hon. Dr. K. Rowley:** Do you understand that? So he would have a difficulty with the Prime Minister speaking up in defence of Alutrint. Do you see the difference? Again, they would disown that, but the record is there for all to see; a Minister of government, he is here to deal with TSTT.

So, Mr. Speaker, we have had a lot of them; we have had a lot from them. I draw your attention, Mr. Speaker, to the OSHA, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, US Department of Labour, which, again, is among the highest standards in the world, and there are guidelines. They, too, deal with hydrogen-fluoride emissions. They do not take the position that if the hydrogen-fluoride is produced, no industry. There are guidelines; there are standards.

The guidelines summarize pertinent information about hydrogen fluoride for workers and employers as well as for physicians, industrial hygienists and other occupational safety and health professionals. So anybody who goes into an industry which would expose workers to hydrogen fluoride, there are established guidelines for what goes on in that industry, in that factory, from the clothing to

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the face mask, to the breathing, all of that is there as guidelines to be followed by any industry. And we have the authority in this country to ensure that people follow the guidelines set.

The terms of reference which the company would have to meet and satisfy the EMA, they have to accept certain conditions and the EMA is guided by these international standards. So why are we behaving as though we are inventing something here and we are behaving in a wanton way, exposing our people to the dangerous chemicals because we are wicked and stupid? Why are we behaving like that? These are specialist items which require specialist attention and sometimes some people who take the lead in advancing causes, do so without enough information and when that happens, you can find people being misled.

In the specific instance of the Alutrint plant, the nature of the process that would be used is the process involving electrolysis where you have the cathode and the anode. The potliner would have the carbon cathode, and the core in it would be the anode and the anode is made from baking coke and pitch, and when that is done, a problem arises. Certain chemicals are given off and those chemicals are the benzene group and the PAHs. We know that. So what the industry has done—the old industry—is allowed those PAHs to go into the environment and cause problems. And also people carelessly disposed of potliners which contained fluorine. Of course, if you dispose of potliners which contain fluorine, they can be leached into water and cause problems. Even though fluorine in toothpaste is useful, a high concentration of fluorine can cause cancer; can cause brittle bone diseases and so.

So what do we do with the potliners in this industry in Trinidad and Tobago? Do you know what we do with them in today's world? We take them out of the pot very carefully; you package them and you ship them to a facility in Oklahoma that was specifically built to receive such products, not only from us but from other people around the world who have the same problem, who send to that plant their tightly sealed and secure packages of potlining containing dangerous fluoride for treatment and processing in Oklahoma.

So, therefore, there is no question of us throwing around potlining in Cedros and Chatham to pollute our water. That is not so. So all those persons who are jumping up and down and saying, "we want our aquifers protected", as though we are going to wantonly destroy the aquifers by allowing the company to do that, that is not so. We have an EMA that insists that certain standards are met and one standard they must meet is to treat with the potliners and the solution is that it is a

commitment and a requirement to take the potliners from here to a processing plant in Oklahoma.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar:** Can you give way?

**Hon. Dr. K. Rowley:** Sure.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar:** I thank the hon. Minister for giving way. If you have to ship this out into the United States, it means that you would have to pass through the Caribbean Sea, through the Caricom basin. Would we require permission from these other countries in order to take these dangerous toxins through their waters?

**Hon. Dr. K. Rowley:** I know there are protocols that would allow it to be done and it is being done all the time. In fact, the Canadians ship their stuff down the St. Lawrence seaway, all the way along the US seaboard, around Florida, up through the Gulf of Mexico and up to the same plant that ours would go. Do you understand? So if it is good for the Canadians, why is it not good for us? Why do you want to use this to deny us an aluminium industry in Trinidad and Tobago?

As I said, Mr. Speaker, we are not inventing anything here; we are joining the international marketplace to be able to export a product; a product which is in high demand in packaging. I mean, there is no packaging in the world that does not involve significant amounts of aluminium products, aluminium foil, aluminium boxes, aluminium cans. We want to sell that too; not just to buy it, and we are positioned to do that because we are an energy-based economy with gas to use and, therefore, we want to use the same systems. Why deny us that? Why? In the hope of getting what?

As we want to expand our economic base and we look around, what do we do? Okay, we can raise more cattle. Yes, that is a good thing; more beef. We must raise more cattle in the country. But do you know what happens? You are raising cattle and the next thing you hear, I see a note at Cabinet that we are going to cull a whole herd and kill thousands of cattle because there has been an outbreak of brucellosis.

Mr. Speaker, there is no guarantee in life. So in the raising of cattle, there is disease, brucellosis, you have to cull all of them. So, what do we say? Do we raise no cattle at all because that might happen? The same thing with sheep. Let us go to small ruminants, and the next thing you hear 90 per cent of the flocks of sheep in the country is suffering from Johne's disease. Do you know that, Mr. Speaker? My lambs were born recently and they are all clean and pure because I

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was aware of Johnne's disease before. But, you know, there is nothing that you would do, even in agriculture; nothing you can do, whether it is in agriculture or industry, that would be there without something to attend to and there are problems of every sort in every endeavour and it is how you treat with those problems that allow you to go forward and get the benefit of it.

So to get up and mention a chemical and say that it causes cancer, do you have any idea what gasoline can do? Let us take gasoline. Gasoline is a commonplace product. You are driving on the highway, there are mobile bombs passing you. Those tankers are, in fact, mobile bombs, as Al Qaeda has shown. Gas stations, you go in there and you are breathing the fumes. But it is all a matter of "everything is relative". Do you stand next to the pump and inhale the fumes for two or three hours for a day, nonstop? Or do you pass through and there are certain concentrations of gas there that are not detrimental to you, passing to and fro, and if you work there, that the levels are such that you cannot be exposed to dangerous levels? Or do we say that because gasoline is dangerous, explosive and chemically reactive, that we do not touch or use gasoline?

There are people who are more active than the people you spoke to in Point Fortin who are opposing the use of overhead high tension lines because they are convinced that the electromagnetic rays from those lines cause cancer and abortions and all kinds of things, because they see it as a cause to fight and they believe in some data advanced to them by some quarter. But at the end of the day, the overall learning in science says that it is not as it is made out to be. So while we are concerned about it, you want to know what the facts are so you can react to it in a sensible way. All we are asking in Trinidad and Tobago from our population, from our leaders and especially our political leaders, is to show good sense, reason and civility and let the scientific exercise tell us what our position should be with respect to the getting or the coming into being of an aluminium smelter.

I make no bones about it, Mr. Speaker. I support the establishment of an aluminium smelter in this country because I know that it is possible to treat with the engineering and the environmental concerns in such a way that the existence of a smelter in this country will not be anything other than to the benefit of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. That is why I support it.

I mean, my friend from St. Augustine mentioned the use of natural gas, other uses. What other uses? We are selling ammonia right now. I wonder if he is aware that in the production of ammonia there are, in fact, chemicals; not only ammonia

itself being dangerous, but there are chemicals which are just as dangerous, and we handle them on a routine basis in all our plants every day. Every day the people in the aluminium industry handle those things because there are ways of handling them so as to ensure that they do not become a problem for you.

**Hon. Member:** Name one.

**Hon. Dr. K. Rowley:** So, Mr. Speaker, when we have the opportunity to use aluminium, I am advised—and the research I have done has shown—that in terms of job creation, using natural gas to produce electricity, to produce aluminium, the ratio of gas to jobs is such that far more jobs are created than the other industries which we are currently engaged in. That is one of the concerns we have, that now that we have developed our energy sector to where it is, we are placing emphasis on those industries which generate large numbers of high quality jobs.

I understand that 50,000 standard cubic feet of gas in the aluminum industry would generate about 12 jobs, directly. In the case of ammonia, it is about two and LNG, if there is such a thing, about one-third of a person. So, you see, whereas in LNG we are getting high returns on the gas we are selling, in terms of job creation, it does not fit that bill; it fits the bill in terms of generating revenues.

In ammonia, we go into a market, of course, to generate revenues. Aluminium would generate large number of jobs and revenues because the Alutrint plant is meant for total local production. All the production there would be fed into other plants in the country, producing products for export: vehicle parts, wire rods, electricity wires and so on, and we would then export that. In the same way you have a plant smelting aluminium oxide creating aluminium, there would be a number of other plants using the ingots to make these high-value products which would then be exported. So that should answer my friend's concern, what are the economic benefits.

**Mr. Imbert:** But he is not listening.

**Hon. Dr. K. Rowley:** You know, it is easy to get up and criticize and talk about what is the benefit. But if I tell you that jobs are going to be created, do you have any alternative? There is chorus of, do not do this, do not do that. I like to hear that, fine. But, tell me, if you were in our position, what would have been your alternative? I started by reporting to you what the alternative was. Their alternative was the same aluminium industry, except that they were unable to bring life to the dream that Prime Minister Panday spoke about. It is the same thing; same thing.

**Hon. Member:** Cheap gas price.

**Hon. Dr. K. Rowley:** Gas price? Do you want to discuss gas price? In fact, it is the gas price that we renegotiated, the one that they put in place that we renegotiated and got in return a benefit from BP, that benefit of over 100 million cubic feet per day that we got as a give-back from what they negotiated, and as a result of getting that gas we decided to use that gas to make electricity to be used in the aluminium industry. And he has the gall to come here and talk about gas price? It is a renegotiation of their work that gave this administration and this country now that body of gas which is now the basis for the aluminium industry. Without the PNM, that gas would have remained with BP as per their arrangements and we never would have had the basis for the aluminium industry. Do you understand? [*Desk thumping*]

So when they stay over there and throw phrases, “gas price”, what does that mean? We know about gas price; we know how to negotiate; we know how to renegotiate because we do it for the benefit of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] When they negotiated, it was open warfare in the Cabinet between the Minister of Energy, Steve Ferguson, the head of the NEC and the Prime Minister and at the end of the day it took the courthouse to sort them out. At the end of the day, they are all before the court trying to sort out how they handled the country’s business. So gas price—and making those statements as though we have something to hide. We have nothing to hide. What we have to do is to move the bushel and let the PNM light shine because we have the light of the people of Trinidad and Tobago to shine in the darkness that they created. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, when the aluminium smelter comes, I guarantee you the outcome would be the same as what happen with LABIDCO, because when we looked at the decline in La Brea—he comes here this afternoon talking about La Brea, La Brea, La Brea, I guess it was the b-r-a-y you were hearing. When La Brea was seen by us to be an area in decline after the oil industry subsided down there and Brighton became a place of depression, the PNM decided to use what natural asset La Brea had to recreate the economy in La Brea. The deep water harbour in Brighton, we spent \$40 million to dredge that deep water harbour, because a deep water harbour in the Gulf of Paria is a treasure, a gem, and its hinterland could become an industrial complex.

The Government changed. What did they do? What was their vision? Their vision was to conduct two enquiries trying to jail Manning and Ken Julien, because they made all kinds of wild allegations against Malcolm Jones, Prakash Saith, Patrick Manning and Ken Julien, and for six years the deep water harbour remained idle in La Brea because

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they had to prove their allegations that LABIDCO was something bad and corrupt and the people from La Brea sat there for six years in depression. The PNM came back into Government, thank God, and today LABIDCO is a shining star in the nation's industry. [*Desk thumping*]

**4.00 p.m.**

Today if you go to the La Brea Industrial Development Corporation (LABIDCO), it is full wall to wall with industry because that was the original PNM vision. There are 750 persons employed and we are building offshore platforms, a first for the local industry, and I guarantee you that in the not too distant future, building plants and jackets for export. That is the PNM's vision. If you listen to the other side, they still shamelessly continue with their tirade against Ken Julien, Patrick Manning and Prakash Saith, even though after six years of government and two enquiries they have found absolutely nothing wrong with them; that is their behaviour. I am accustomed to them; I am PNM.

I was in Tobago when political parties opposed to the PNM told people to lie down in front the bulldozer to block the Claude Noel Highway. The PNM was not put off by that; today, go to Tobago and ask yourself, "Where would Tobago be without the Claude Noel Highway?" It is like asking, "Where would La Brea be without LABIDCO?" In the future, 10 or 15 years from today, if you look back, you would ask yourself, "Where would South Trinidad have been without the aluminium industry of Trinidad and Tobago?"

I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar** (*Siparia*): Mr. Speaker, it was ironic that the Member for Diego Martin West would speak of commissions of enquiry, would speak of convict number one and of persons before courthouses, when his Government conducted a commission of enquiry with respect to the use of materials siphoned off the Scarborough Hospital site. [*Crosstalk*] There were recommendations from that commission of enquiry that the Larceny Act should be visited to deal with where those materials went, who "tiefing" materials and by whom they were removed. [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Order!

**Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar:** The truth offends. I stayed and listened to my friends on the other side, but the truth offends. When you want to speak about commissions of enquiry, I want to ask the hon. Prime Minister, through you, Mr.

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Speaker, what has happened to the recommendations of the Landate enquiry. [*Desk thumping*] When you say that Mr. Panday was convict number one, we have had allegations of an Attorney General in this country speaking to the Chief Magistrate delivering the judgment in his case, there were serious questions of political interference when that judgment was delivered.

It is ironic that the Member for Diego Martin West would rise in this House and have the effrontery to speak about commissions of enquiry, when right now it is because this Government is preventing those recommendations from going through that he could sit here and talk about convicts and not find himself in jail. [*Desk thumping*] If we are to follow his arguments, if we are to follow his reasoning, it is the most distorted reasoning I have heard for a long time.

He told us that we must develop this country and I have no problem with that. He told us that even in agriculture we could not have a herd of cows, because diseases would come and wipe them out and if we were to plant crops, diseases would kill them out. If I were to follow his reasoning down to the wire, he was saying that it was better we kill people with the smelter than to put the monitoring mechanisms in place. [*Crosstalk*] That is what he was saying. I could not believe it, when this country has a food import bill of \$3 billion; when people cannot afford to buy food in the market and supermarket, this Member would come and tell us, "You know, development objectives."

Mr. Speaker, there is a dilemma always; every nation has its national development objectives, but there are instruments used to achieve those objectives. We have seen from this Government that the instruments being used to achieve its development objectives are instruments that inflict anguish and pain upon the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago; and the smelter is a point in question. It is very instructive to remind ourselves that the Government is representative of the people. It is selected by the people to represent interests, to listen to concerns, to take action to address those concerns. So the primary goal of government, which we all know, is to improve the quality of life, to secure the well-being of its people and that of the future generation.

Good governance, therefore, means development objectives, yes; gross domestic product (GDP) and gross national product (GNP); but good governance is not simply about GDP and GNP and about development and product; good governance is about people. So when the Member for St. Augustine spoke about community interests, I totally support that view. [*Desk thumping*] We talk about people; there is no ostensible definition of "people", the collective. You can point



to individuals; I can point to Joan, Mary and Harry. At the end of the day, governance cannot be about people; it has to be about individuals, because when it is about people, you do not talk about any specific person, therefore you do nothing.

You say that you are going in the best interest of the people; that it is in the best interest of the people to build the smelter, “We would make plenty money; we would have a good product,” but in doing that, you ignore the individual person who would be working in the plant or living near the plant and drinking the water, who would develop the diseases, who would die from those diseases. The Member for St. Augustine was correct; this Government continues to ignore the individual citizen in this country.

There is a Native American proverb which says that we do not inherit this earth from our ancestors; we borrow it from our children. The acts we have seen committed by this Government in Chatham, the Cedros peninsula and Point Fortin—and now I am told that there is a proposed extension to Point Lisas—have very far-reaching consequences that would affect our generations to come.

In this debate, the key issue is not so much to deal with the development objective of bringing in more GDP and GNP or getting in more money, it has to do with people and the environment in which they live. The environment we must know and remember is very fragile. It must be handled with care. We cannot transport flora and fauna and regenerate a whole new habitat somewhere, after we have destroyed a thousand acres and millions of species in the Cedros peninsula. We cannot lift those and say, “Look, I am going to create a little wildlife reserve here and I am going to transplant them.” It is the same with people; you cannot pull them out of Port of Spain East and say, “I am going to transplant you somewhere.” There is a natural community that develops within a living environment. You create a society of internally displaced persons when you uproot them, like you want to do down in Chatham, Port of Spain East and other areas, where they have lived in their communities; you uproot and displace them and break their traditions, customs and community living.

More importantly, when we speak of the environment, we speak about the health risk to the people of this country. So I am very happy to rise in support of this Motion that has been moved by the Member for Tabaquite with respect to the smelter. It allows us to raise wider concerns raised by the wider national community on the process. That is why I spoke about the instruments to achieve the objectives; the process that this Government has been adopting in spending

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from the public purse, in discussing its policies and the effect of those policies and its treatment of the concerns of the persons who will be affected by the aluminium smelter programme.

I have listened to the contributions from the other side. I was hoping that, in fact, they had read and appreciated the content of the Motion moved by my colleague. I congratulate the Member for Tabaquite for standing up and, in fact, pointing out to the Member for Diego Martin West, "Look, what are you on about?" "This Motion is not saying to stop the smelter; it did not say that; the Motion is saying that you need to look at several issues; you need to come out openly and transparently and deal with issues." So for the Member for Diego Martin West to say, "Well you know, when Panday was Prime Minister he made a big speech about the aluminium smelter, so what are you all coming to talk about?" "You have nothing to talk about, because Panday did it, so what is wrong with us doing it?" The Member has not appreciated the text of the Motion.

I come back to the whole concept of the development objective, yes the smelter, but what is the instrument to achieve that end, the product? In every regard, they have taken the instrument as a saw, a baton, a big stick to beat the people of Trinidad and Tobago, to create anguish, fear and suffering. This Motion was not based on any narrow interest. This Motion was based on national interest; it was founded on national interest. We are asking Government to strengthen environmental protection legislation immediately. They cannot disagree with that. There can be no disagreement with strengthening the legislation and the framework for protection of the environment.

When the Member for Diego Martin West stood up, he admitted that all over the country there were harmful toxins and chemicals; all the more reason to agree with this Motion to strengthen legislation for the protection of the environment. What are we asking in this Motion? We are asking Government to inform the nation of the levels of emissions we can expect from the plant? What is wrong with asking this Government to tell us? This entire deal, as several Members have indicated, has been cloaked in secrecy. People have a right to know.

**Mr. Imbert:** What is it that you want to know?

**Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar:** In the Motion we ask about the kinds of health and environmental risks that we can expect from the smelters. What is wrong with that? We want to know the exact benefits which this country is going to get from the smelters; how much, where and when. What is wrong with wanting to know that? So to get up and shout down the place, as though this side of the House is

not interested in development objectives, as if the louder you shout means that you are right—as we say strong and right or might through the voice—might is right would not convince anyone. Shouting down people seeking information and raising concerns would not get us anywhere.

We call this an august House because we have a duty; we have a trust to the persons who elected us for whom we are the representatives. Sitting in these chairs, we cannot forget that we are, indeed, servants of the people. When we sit here, we cannot just hand down policies from the top and who “doh” like it, get out of here; that is their attitude. When you seek information, it is to find out what is happening and to raise concerns on behalf of citizens of this country. They shout you down and say, “If yuh doh like it, get out of here.” That cannot be; the representatives in this Parliament have a duty to raise the concerns of individuals in this society. They cannot come here themselves to raise those concerns.

When residents raised their voices against the risks involved in this development project, no less person than the hon. Prime Minister said that their motives were otherwise. He said that they had a different agenda, different motives and that they should not really be speaking out; even when they raised genuine concerns. We want to know exactly what the Government should have told the country before the project started. It is this very fact of secrecy that has cloaked arrangements with the proposed smelter plant, which has resulted in so many objections to the plant. We are representatives and we demand answers.

For example, was a cost benefit analysis conducted by Government prior to signing the memorandum of understanding? We know a feasibility study was done, but who did it? The investor, the people who came here to make the money did the study. That does not say if the project is financially viable for us. It does not tell us the cost benefit to citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. It tells the person investing, “Look, I am going to make money; it is financially viable so to do.”

Was a cost benefit analysis done on behalf of the people of Trinidad and Tobago? Has this Government done any type of assessment of the social and economic costs associated with converting the Cedros peninsula into an industrial estate? These are legitimate questions; it may well be that Government has done its homework, but we have not been told. So there is no need, in my respectful view, for personal attacks on persons inside or outside of this House; there is no need for political posturing, public relations and propaganda, as the Member opposite has attempted to do.

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It is the duty of the Parliament to look at this issue as a whole, objectively and dispassionately; see where there are shortfalls and failures, examine them, analyze causes and pose solutions. That has not been forthcoming; we have not had that kind of information coming from the other side at any point in this debate.

We have seen, up to today, reports coming from the media where persons in Cedros were objecting yesterday to the smelter, because they just did not have enough information. We saw in March of this year where Mr. Manning indicated that persons protesting against the smelter had other motives. We heard him say, "Many of the lips speaking on this matter are by no means speaking from knowledge." That was in March last year; if these persons are still speaking it is because they do not know; they do not have the information or the knowledge. Why does the Government not provide the information to the citizenry of Trinidad and Tobago?

I have listened to the issues with respect to development objectives, but we need to really say how we could protect our citizens and how we can ensure that this matter is dealt with. *[Interruption]* *[Cellphone rings]*

**Mr. Speaker:** Please, there is a cellphone ringing in the House. I would urge whoever is responsible to take it off and please not let it happen again.

**Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar:** The hon. Member for Tabaquite gave an informed illustration of the multiple health risks, not just to the people of Cedros, but to every citizen of this country. There is no doubt there is international evidence to support this. The fact is that aluminium smelters worldwide have been linked to the prevalence of diseases, including cancer, as the Member for St. Augustine pointed out. What is interesting is that up to yesterday the residents of Chatham went to a gentleman by the name of Wade Hughes, who represents the Alcoa company, the smelter people. When they asked him about the health risks of living and working around a smelter plant, Wade Hughes, who chaired the meeting, said that he could not give a yes or no answer. He was being ambiguous, misleading people, when they raised issues about the health risks associated with the smelter.

You are saying, "All right, we went there to give information", and up to then you could say yes or no. But people in this country are bright; we have the Internet and technology. People nowadays are not like they were long ago; they go on the Net and do their research. The research shows clearly the health risks involved with the smelter plant and the vast majority of these risks come several years after. So you could be living and working in that area and not until

sometime after the birth defects, cancer and so on show up. So there is a wealth of evidence of what happens with respect to those health risks.

I want to remind this country that we have already had the experience of Alcoa. When the Minister told us that Alcoa would follow international standards and that we have the Environmental Management Authority (EMA), we must remind ourselves that we have had experience with Alcoa previously. It took place in 1989, when there was an air monitoring report by Cariri. It was commissioned by a Carenage group, at that time, and it showed Alcoa exceeding US emission standards for residential areas at three monitoring sites in Carenage on each of five days on which they were monitored.

**Mr. Singh:** Diego Martin West constituency!

**Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar:** Do not tell us they are coming here and about international standards, when you do not have the regulatory framework; you do not have the protective machinery and the legislation in place to deal with the specifics of environmental protection such as would accrue from a smelter; we do not have it. It is not enough to say that the EMA would set up the guidelines, because we are certain that the countries in which problems emerged also had guidelines. Indeed, the Minister talked about the Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA) in the United States.

You know, Mr. Speaker, that is effrontery; in local language we would say that is “brass face”. The boldfaced effrontery of the Minister to come here to talk about OSHA, when up to today workers here are dying and are unprotected, because of their failure to implement the OSHA legislation passed by this House. [*Desk thumping*] It is not enough to talk about guidelines and the EMA. There are considerable numbers of people who are very, very concerned about the smelting; they want an assurance about their health and welfare. Government has a duty to provide us with tangible proofs of the mechanisms it has.

So now we come to the emasculation of the EMA, because this is a key plank in the argument put forward by the Member for Diego Martin West: “Listen, trees do not worry, the EMA is going to be there and it is going to monitor; those who have a responsibility for monitoring, would monitor.” This administration has been woefully gullible in policy monitoring and evaluation. This Government has an impeccable record of violating institutional sanctity. They would wait; they would coerce; they would intervene; they would misappropriate and in certain cases they would kill or injure the very institution at the first chance they get.

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The Member for Diego Martin East is reminding me that all those words mean is “bully”; they would bully if they have to do it. That is what this administration has done. They have developed a reputation for breaking the laws and for disregarding institutions that have been established to protect and established for the enforcement of laws, as it relates to our environment.

**Mr. Imbert:** You have been bullying Dookeran for months. [*Laughter*]

**Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar:** The EMA is one body that has felt the wrath of the Government’s bullying and ignorance. The EMA has been bullied time and again by Members on the other side to achieve their end. You would recall that Government rushed ahead and spent millions of dollars to start construction of the Brian Lara Stadium without having sought or received clearance from the EMA. You did not even bother with them; you went ahead constructing without any approvals coming from the EMA. You would recall that it was Mr. Manning’s driven initiative. So coming from the Prime Minister himself, that project in Tarouba, having nothing to do with the EMA, the tsunami stadium went ahead, construction started. So Government is not just conspiring to break the law, it is engaging in illegal action and this is coming from the top itself, from the Prime Minister.

Mr. Speaker, you would recall the incident in the San Fernando City Corporation where it refused to sanction a similar illegal act on the part of UDeCOTT; even when the Prime Minister again tried to force a senior public servant to aid him in breaking the law. When you commit an illegal act, it is a crime; that makes you a criminal. So when this Government, starting from the top, breaks the law with impunity, what does it tell the nation at large? What does it say to persons at large, when from the top you are breaking the law and setting that example? You are saying that it is okay to break the law; it is no wonder crime has escalated here to certain levels and law breaking has reached where it has. It starts right from the top.

**Hon. Members:** Ooh!

**Hon. Member:** Speak to the Motion.

**Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar:** That matter ended with the Prime Minister’s Office being brought into further dispute when he tried to have Ms. Coudray transferred to Point Fortin; imagine the victimization she felt. So do not tell me that the EMA is going to be there to protect the citizens of this country, when you have bullied it and broken the law in many instances. I would like to ask the Minister of Housing: Housing developments are going on all over this country,

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where is the EMA? Have you received permission for Golconda and Corinth Hills, for all those matchboxes you are putting up all over the country? [*Desk thumping*] [*Crosstalk*] Have you received approval from the borough and regional corporations? Have you received approval from Town and Country Planning? [*Crosstalk*]

Development objectives are brilliant; they are what every government seeks, but it cannot be done in a way that would cause pain, anguish and suffering to the citizenry. It cannot be done in breach of the laws of the land. So when you have your development objectives and you want to build houses, please go out there and get the appropriate approvals. [*Interruption*] [*Dr. Rowley stands*] You know damage control is only seven minutes.

**Dr. Rowley:** You know I gave way when I was speaking.

**Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar:** Yes, you did; so I would be returning.

**Dr. Rowley:** Could the Member tell the House of any housing projects where she knows the law has been broken?

**Mr. S. Panday:** All!

**Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar:** My information is that in every single one of them they have not complied with due regulations. [*Crosstalk*] If the Minister wants to give me a list of them, then he could do so, but my information is that there are several regulatory mechanisms for which you need to seek approval and that has not happened and yet they are proceeding apace.

**Mr. S. Panday:** Ask Marlene Coudray!

**Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar:** Thousands of acres of land are being cleared for houses with no concern for the environment and natural watercourses. When you look at those housing estates, they do not even have a space for a recreation ground to pitch marbles. They do not have a place for a little community centre; it is just house, upon house, upon house, like a concrete jungle. You are doing all this without approvals from the due authorities; again, no respect on the part of the Government for the EMA.

When we look at what is happening with respect to the legislative angle, in the few minutes I have left before we return on the next occasion, let me just say that there has been a deliberate neglect of legislation for monitoring and protecting the environment. This is a major area of concern, the fact that Government has yet to enact the relevant laws or drafted rules which would provide legislative framework

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for environmental protection. I speak of the air and water pollution rules; they are very important, because where these smelters are supposed to be built, the Minister talked about the aquifers, the water things underground that could be polluted. Where are the air and water pollution rules? We have been told that they are still being finalized.

What has happened to the Beverage Container Disposal Bill? What has happened to the Solid and Hazardous Waste Rules? I have already spoken of the Occupational Safety and Health Act; it is not in gear. None of these have been put in place.

There is another area for protection of the environment: the Green Fund. I believe that there is now \$.5 billion in the Green Fund; that is like a missing fund; it is like a ghost fund, because we have never heard of one single project done for the environment where moneys have been utilized from it. Is it a slush fund that has been hiding? We do not know a single thing about the Green Fund; nothing has happened with respect to that. The Planning and Development of Land Bill lapsed; nothing again there to assist us. We had the Physical Planning Commission; that has also gone through.

I want to deal with two indices in the few minutes left; one is known as the Environmental Performance Index and the other is the Environmental Sustainable Index. The hon. Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment quoted to this House from a pilot study called the Environmental Performance Index for 2006. In it she congratulated the Government on its high scores obtained on air quality, water resources and productive natural resources. We know that these, of course, would change once the smelter comes on; that study was done in 2006.

The Minister, whilst praising the levels they received, was very frank in admitting that the Government had a very poor performance when it came to the use of sustainable energy and protection of our biodiversity and natural habitats, because that is what the index showed. She was very candid when she said that the Government had been given failing marks in its use of sustainable energy. This is a new index, January 2006, but there is another index that is vitally important in the context of what is happening in Trinidad and Tobago today.

There was an index done in 2005, the Yale/Columbia Environmental Sustainability Index (ESI). It is different from the Environmental Performance Index. This was released at the World Economic Forum in Switzerland in January 2005. The performance index, which we already have, chastises the Government. The sustainability index is very frightening. It assesses 146 countries in their



ability to manage and sustain their environment over the next few years. Out of the 146 countries, Trinidad and Tobago is third to last on that list; we are 139 out of 146.

The index goes further citing that the percentage of our rich, natural endowment of biodiversity is under serious threat. This country has the largest number of species of birds, mammals, amphibians and eco regions out of the 146 nations. When it came to land management or the percentage of land suffering negative manmade impacts, including inland waters, a vital indicator, given our size and population density, Trinidad and Tobago was listed as the worst ranked in the world. We were last on that index and that was before forests and so on had been destroyed in the peninsula, before the thousands of acres had been destroyed.

In the physical areas of land, water quantity and quality, air pollution reduction, reduction of stresses on water and ecosystems, we were lowest in our scores on the index. That is why we are concerned. If that was 2005 and we had not yet moved into the peninsula to destroy it, with what is taking place with the environment, we had not yet brought in all the toxins and chemicals and we were third to last in that ranking and lowest in other scores, then that is, indeed, cause for grave concern.

I would conclude with other points when we come back, but I just want to make one last point. With all these concerns being raised, the Government should give us cause to pause and consider the policy direction. We have cause to pause and consider the policy direction. [*Interruption*] I know that we are going to break; I have three more minutes before 4.30 p.m. and you told me that we are not coming back after tea. I have asked you if we could come back.

Mr. Speaker, I have just this one last point. I would bring the other points on another occasion.

Development objectives are laudable, to improve the quality of lives of our citizens, but we must not sacrifice the health of our citizens nor the environment in which they live, in order to fight for the mighty dollar. I thank you, Mr. Speaker, but I will continue on the next occasion.

#### 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 be now adjourned to Friday, September 01, 2006 at 1.30 p.m. I want to inform the House that on that day the Government plans to debate, to finality, first of all, the

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Pilotage Bill, which would be Bill No. 1 on the Order Paper and the State Lands (Amdt.) Bill, which is listed as Bill No. 1 on today's Order Paper.

**Mr. S. Panday:** What about Bill No. 2, the Supreme Court of Judicature (Amdt.) Bill? [*Laughter*] [*Interruption*]

**Mr. Ramsaran:** Mr. Speaker, this is a motion on the adjournment which affects my constituency and Central Trinidad with the spate of crimes taking place. This morning before coming here, a person living close to me was gunned down by five men. This is really becoming out of hand in Chaguanas and I want to discuss it. [*Interruption*]

**Mr. Valley:** Mr. Speaker, if we can stay now and do it—I cannot recall getting notice of that Motion, perhaps it is a carry over. Normally on Private Members' Day if we have a motion on the adjournment, as the Member knows, we would then adjourn the House at 4.00 p.m. so as to take that motion. It all depends; I am in your hands. If we can do it now—

**Mr. Speaker:** Are you prepared to do it now?

**Mr. Valley:** Yes.

**Mr. Speaker:** For us to do it now, we have to suspend the Standing Order; one minute. [*Interruption*]

Hon. Members, we move to suspend the Standing Order which says that we must rise at 4.30 p.m.

*Question put and agreed to.*

### **Criminal Activities In Central Trinidad (Government's Apparent Inability To Deal With)**

**Mr. Speaker:** We will take the Motion on the adjournment to be moved by the hon. Member for Chaguanas; you have 15 minutes.

**Mr. Manohar Ramsaran** (*Chaguanas*): Mr. Speaker, I thank you for your indulgence; I really believe if this had to continue to next week it would lose its flavour.

Children are being abused; some are mercilessly battered; some are brutally murdered. Teenagers and other young people's lives are being snuffed out daily. Previously I stopped in saying that the blood freely flowing in Trinidad and Tobago was on the PNM's hands, but I wish this afternoon that the Minister would verify if this is indeed so.

When I was preparing for this debate, I dared not say how many murders had occurred in Trinidad and Tobago for 2006; the numbers increased as if by the minute. I did go into a website and I found some heartbreaking news: On Wednesday, August 23, 2006, the murder toll in the oil rich islands of Trinidad and Tobago rose to 257 yesterday with the killing of four in a 12-hour period. Mr. Speaker, you know that number has moved on to the 260s.

Let me read into the record some of the violations against our citizens which occurred in Central Trinidad recently. When you hear this, you would understand why I am so concerned. Friday, August 18, 2006, at 9.20 p.m., Kernaham Trace, Chin Chin, Cunupia: Christopher Nelson, 48 years old, Gerald Gibson, 53 years old; Reynold Elie, 53 years old; Williard Bolivar, 31 years old, were playing a game of dominoes outside a parlour and they were gunned down and brutally murdered by masked men from the bushes. Just for the record, these people live a stone's throw away from my colleague, the Member for Caroni East.

Then on Thursday, August 17, 2006, 7.30 a.m. at Post Office Street, Balmain, Couva, Nicholas Samaroo, an eight-month old baby, was battered and had cocaine stuffed down his throat. He was beaten until he was motionless. He is still battling for his life.

On Saturday, July 29, 2006, Shazard Mohammed, 25 years old, was chased and allegedly—not to anger my friend from La Brea—shot by a coast guard patrol. Of course, he died and up to now I am still waiting on the Ministry of National Security to tell this Parliament and the country why the secrecy and why the persons who committed this gruesome murder have not yet been named. I believe that justice must not only be done, but must also be seen to be done. Is there a cover up? I want that question answered.

On Friday, July 21, 2006, a couple was travelling along Factory Road, Chaguanas, the woman was gang-raped and the boyfriend locked in the trunk. On Tuesday, July 18, 2006, Kevin Dhany Persad, 22 years old, a taxi driver, picked up two men in San Fernando. The men put a gun to his head and drove him to Carlsen Field in Central Trinidad, where he was beaten, tied up and robbed of his car and \$500. On Tuesday, July 11, 2006, a Chaguanas businesswoman and her daughter were beaten by thieves who stole more than \$150,000 worth of money and jewels.

On Saturday, July 08, 2006, a Chaguanas businessman was charged with multiple rape and sexual assault of his stepdaughter. On Thursday, June 29, 2006,

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there was a robbery at Scotia Bank, Mid Centre Mall, Chaguanas. We have bank robbers in our midst.

On Monday, June 26, 2006, Mark Reyes, a 22-year-old from Chin Chin Road, Las Lomas was shot in the head, neck and shoulder by attackers. On Monday, June 19, 2006, Marion Mohammed, 26 years old, from School Road, Chaguanas was stabbed and her throat slit in front of her two sons, ages eight and nine, who begged the man to spare their mother.

Mr. Speaker, I could go on with what we call the major murders. Of course, I cannot leave this one out: On Monday, May 15, 2006, Amy Annamunthodo, four years old, was murdered. On Tuesday, March 28, 2006, Sean Luke, six years old, was murdered and his body found in a cane field. This was in the newspapers, but I am also concerned about the crimes that were not reported in the newspaper and this happens on a daily basis throughout the constituency; I randomly selected a few: Ainsbury Supermarket—it was the second time that the owners were held up and robbed in two weeks. I got their permission to use their names; S&D Mini Mart, Saturday, August 20, 2006, the owners closed their business place, were followed home, held up and robbed. A handyman was held up and robbed on Saturday, August 20, 2006. The DVD club in Charlieville was held up and robbed. A small grocery in Warren Road, Bejucal, was held up and robbed. Bandits broke into a home on the corner of Ramsaran Trace and Warren Road and stole jewellery and money. Mr. Speaker, the list goes on and on.

I did not sit idly by and allow these things to come to the Parliament today to quarrel. I want to read into the record what I attempted to do and have been frustrated by this Government. On April 22, 2005, I wrote hon. Minister Martin Joseph and I requested the setting up of a police post on Caroni Savannah Road, Charlieville, which is a distance away from both the Cunupia and Chaguanas Police Stations. I wrote:

“The presence of the Police would act as a deterrent and also provide quick response by them to illegal unlawful activities in the area.”

Maybe I was wrong. The reply was very interesting. The letter was written in April and I got a reply in October. Listen to this letter, Mr. Speaker; if this is how the Government works, no wonder we are in trouble:

“Yours dated the 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2005, on the above subject is hereby acknowledged.”

I wrote the letter in April 2005 and got a reply in October 2005 saying that they acknowledged my letter.

“However before the Honourable Minister can effectively respond to this request, the specific location for the police post must be identified.

In the circumstances therefore, please provide the Legal Department of the Ministry with the relevant information (sketch of the area, shading portion to be used).”

Mr. Speaker, you know that our offices do not have this type of facility to deal with that.

A senior police officer visited me a couple months later. We visited the site that I proposed. The site is there, a building abandoned by the Government that could be used. The police said that it was a good location, but nothing happened since; no action. Only recently they called to ask me to rewrite the letter to the Minister. [*Laughter*] I told my staff to ignore the phone call, because they were wasting our time. We have incompetent people in place playing politics with crime, using public relations to deal with crime.

Mr. Speaker, in Chaguanas recently another phone number was added to the list, 555. Has CrimeStoppers failed? Who are they anyway? I want to ask a question one of these days about how much money the Government has paid to CrimeStoppers. Have they failed too, so you have to add another phone number for Chaguanas? Are all the other phone numbers in the police stations not working? It is public relations (PR) to deal with crime and that really worries me.

Mr. Speaker, again on July 26, 2006 I wrote to Minister Martin Joseph. It was a long letter:

“As I wrote to you previously, as an MP I am frustrated, what must I do? Visit these people with the media as a P.R. gimmick and continuously say you and your government are hopeless?”

Again, I got a reply, this time a bit more promptly, in August of 2006:

“I refer to your letter of July 26<sup>th</sup>, 2006 in which you expressed concern about the spate of criminal activities in and around Chaguanas.

This matter has been passed to the Commissioner of Police for his urgent attention.”

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If that attention was urgent, maybe these people would not have been murdered as brutally as they had been. I wrote the Commissioner myself on August 14, 2006. I told him what had happened.

Mr. Speaker, I am keeping a trail of documents to show how reckless this Government is.

“I was informed about two (2) armed robberies which were committed in the Chaguanas Constituency. These crimes took place at Caroni Savannah Road, Charlieville and Munroe Road, Cunupia...

I wish that you meet with me urgently to discuss this very dangerous phenomenon.”

What happened? The junior Minister and the Commissioner of Police visited some shadow in Chaguanas and they added another telephone number; big PR. I understand that there were drinks and food for so and that is how they are dealing with crime in Central Trinidad.

I again wrote the Minister about the Shazard Mohammed incident and he replied to me:

“As soon as these investigations are completed, the Ministry of National Security will be in a better position to inform the public and yourself as to the outcome and any further action that may arise.”

Nothing, just a letter that does not make much sense to me.

I again wrote to the Commissioner of Police. At 10 o'clock this morning I took a drive through my constituency to see if any area was flooded because of the heavy rains. On my way back, I got a phone call that somebody had been murdered not too far from me. For those who visited the Munroe Road cricket ground it is about 100 yards from there. When I went there, I saw lying on the ground a youngster, 34 years old, the father of two children. A car stopped in front of his house, someone jumped out, the father and son were standing there and the person pumped five bullets into the body of Andy Ramkhellawan. He died instantly.

The rain was falling and the body was being soaked. We talk about crime, solving crime and having the PR to go with it. I, as the Member of Parliament for Chaguanas, and, indeed, a person who lives in Central Trinidad, I have noticed recently the upsurge in crime and nothing is being done about it. Just to show how

the PR works, last September I wrote to the Minister of National Security again informing him of the crime in the area. Two weeks later, the Minister and his junior Minister went to Chaguanas and met with the Chaguanas Chamber of Commerce and announced a crime plan, without even a courtesy invitation to the person who wrote to them. I was not even invited to the function.

They promised to do everything in Chaguanas: army and police patrols and so on; that lasted for a couple of weeks and went away; the public relations. The same thing happened this year; one year later nothing has happened. Crime is becoming bigger and bolder. People are being murdered; children are being murdered and what do we see? Another public relations exercise.

I want this Government to stop playing games with our lives and give us the protection that as citizens we need and deserve, because the Constitution provides for us to be protected and for our national security to be guarded.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Minister of State in the Ministry of National Security and Minister of State in the Ministry of Trade and Industry (Hon. Fitzgerald Hinds):** Mr. Speaker, the Member for Chaguanas in representing his constituents identified a number of crimes. Last year, 17,384 crimes were reported all across the nation to the police, so it is easy to get that information and list it. I want to let the Member understand, and he ought to know as a former minister of government, that listing or highlighting crimes over and over would not stop them.

**Mr. S. Panday:** Sensitizing the public would not help them?

**Hon. F. Hinds:** Yes the public is sensitized, but that would not stop them. Making pronouncements from the Parliament, platforms or offices would not stop them either; it is work that has to be done. We have set about making the police service a transformed, modern and efficient organization. We recognize that the police service, as the major platform for responding to crime, has to be fixed.

**Mr. Partap:** "By dat time everybody dead!"

**Hon. F. Hinds:** We have set about fixing it at great time and cost. Talk would not solve this, because we, too, are incensed and taken aback. In my own constituency yesterday, I visited with one of my constituents who had been shot twice in both legs. As a small business owner he was attacked and robbed by three little criminals with their dirty little guns.

**Mr. S. Panday:** You are a failure!

**Hon. F. Hinds:** One of the persons who was there when the attack ensued ran for his life and the victim told me that one of these young, reckless men was firing behind the man who was running, for absolutely nothing. When they were finished, they went to look for him in the bush where they thought he was hiding. He had to be very skilful to avoid them; had they seen him they may have killed him. They made no reference to Minister Hinds, Minister Joseph, the Prime Minister, Basdeo Panday, the Leader of the Opposition or the other leader. [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Order!

**Hon. F. Hinds:** They do it on their own. I want to congratulate the Member for Chaguanas, because at no point did he sound as though he was implying that we are responsible, in a direct sense.

**Mr. S. Panday:** But you know you are!

**Hon. F. Hinds:** We accept our responsibility to deal with the security of this nation as a Government and the Ministry of National Security. We would not shirk from that, but to say responsibility in the ordinary common Trinidadian sense of the term, as if Minister Joseph killed somebody, is a foolish argument. I want to compliment him for not taking that line this afternoon. I think he deserves to be complimented. I am glad he abstained from it.

**Mr. S. Panday:** “De PNM killing people!”

**Hon. F. Hinds:** The Member made mention of Shazard Mohammed, en passant. He asked mischievously whether there was any cover up. The answer is clearly no. The matter was investigated by the police; the file has been sent to the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) whose responsibility it is to assess the evidence to see whether criminal charges have to be laid. It is now with the DPP, very promptly, in the context of everything.

**Mr. S. Panday:** Who did the investigation?

**Hon. F. Hinds:** The police. It is out of the hands of the police now and the DPP is doing his work. There is no question of a cover up. To use the words of some of them who are in court for criminal matters, “Let the chips fall where they may.”

**Mr. Partap:** He is moving too slow.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** The Member pointed out that he was not even extended the courtesy of an invitation. Very quickly let me say that the Prime Minister,



Minister Joseph and myself were invited by a group of businessmen in Chaguanas two evenings ago. It was their initiative; they invited us and I did the feature address.

**Mrs. Job-Davis:** They invited who they wanted.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** They invited us to the launch of their own crime plan and initiative, which we assured them, as in all good things, we would support. I enquired specifically whether the MP was invited and the answer that came from the chief organizer was, “Yes, he was invited, both himself and the mayor, and they failed to show up.” So do not come here with political mischief. [*Crosstalk*]

The Member said mischievously that there was a lot of crime and nothing was being done. [*Mr. Ramsaran rises*]

**Mr. Ramsaran:** Mr. Speaker, I know that I cannot intervene—

**Hon. F. Hinds:** I am on my legs.

**Mr. Partap:** He is misleading the House! [*Interruption*] [*Crosstalk*]

**Hon. F. Hinds:** No sensible observer in this country, recognizing that the Government has allocated the second largest portion of the national budget to crime, at least, for the last three years, or no sensible person reading and listening to the pronouncements and statements coming from the Ministry of National Security could truthfully or sensibly say that nothing is being done.

**Mr. S. Panday:** Money alone does not solve crime!

**Hon. F. Hinds:** I give this country the assurance that we, too, are incensed by the behaviour of some of our citizens who commit crime and we are dealing with it to the best of our ability and spending a lot of money doing it.

The Central Police Division is one of nine police geographical areas in Trinidad and Tobago, comprising of the following station districts: Chaguanas, Couva, Freeport, Gran Couva, Cunupia, Caroni and Brasso.

**Mr. Partap:** What are you doing about it?

**Hon. F. Hinds:** As I said, there were 17,385 crimes all across the country last year. Of this figure, 625 were committed in the Central Division. This represents some 3.6 per cent. Much of this criminal activity involved the use of illegal firearms and was gang related. The strategy being employed by the Government is as follows: We have declared, within recent times, two straightforward policies

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which we have identified to the heads of security, the heads of the law enforcement agencies in this country.

**Mr. S. Panday:** The blimp is only one.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** We have identified to them, one, that they should seek promptly to remove all illicit firearms from the possession of criminal elements in the society. [*Crosstalk*] This comprises a number of land-based operations: focusing on drug blocks and areas of known gang-related criminal activities; targeting police divisions responsible for gun-related crimes, more specifically, with the highest incidents of violence. These divisions we have identified as the Western Division, the Port of Spain Division and the North Eastern Division.

The second policy position that we put to them was that strenuous efforts should be put in place to interrupt the illicit inflow of firearms into the country. This initiative entails a heightened proactive approach among border control agencies, with the aim of reducing the inflow of guns and drugs, because very often the guns come to protect the drugs and that sort of thing, into our country. We have spoken at length about the radar system, the boats, the fast interceptors, all the training, the great expense, the time, reformation and redevelopment we are putting in place, because we understand the importance of doing so, because we feel the effects of crime like everybody else in Trinidad and Tobago, in light of our responsibility as a government to provide safety and security. We are doing that.

In April of 2005, in respect of Central Trinidad, a meeting was convened with the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force, representatives of the Couva/Point Lisas Chamber of Commerce, the Greater Chaguanas Chamber of Commerce, the Tunapuna Chamber of Commerce, the San Juan Business Association and the Supermarket Association of Trinidad and Tobago. That meeting constituted part of an ongoing dialogue between the State security apparatus and these community and business interests. We understand that the success of any national initiative must be rooted in the community level. We took what they had to say on board and together we devised some strategies to respond to the problem in the Central area.

Let me reiterate, to say that nothing is being done is mischievous, at minimum, and dangerous at the other end.

**Mr. S. Panday:** No results!

**Hon. F. Hinds:** That is not correct, but that Member does not know.

**Mr. Speaker:** Member for Princes Town!

**Hon. F. Hinds:** Arising out of these discussions were a number of concerns which we immediately committed ourselves to. Primary among these was the issue of more visibility of security troops in the area. There are two direct benefits from visibility: On the one hand, it provides a deterrent to would-be and prospective criminals, those who think that crime would pay, and on the other hand, it affords a measure of comfort and a sense of security to other members of the public.

In this regard, the following assets have already been deployed throughout the Central Division: three mobile units, six double-foot patrols, two uniformed mobile patrols, four standing patrols, two in Caroni, two in Chaguanas, one in Mc Bean and one mobile unit from the Crime Suppression Unit in South. Twelve members of our Inter-agency Task Force based in Laventille were sent to the Chaguanas area.

**Mrs. Job-Davis:** Take note!

**Mr. Partap:** Take note of what?

**Hon. F. Hinds:** From the Criminal Investigation Department some were transferred into the Chaguanas area. A guard and emergency contingent was also sent into that area. The Crime Suppression Unit South and the South Divisional Task Force were assigned to the southern and central areas of the police divisions. The Northern Divisional Task Force was assigned to northern areas of that division in such districts as Las Lomas, Caroni and Kelly Village. Members of the Organized Crime and Narcotic Firearms Bureau engaged in round-the-clock surveillance of areas reputed for trafficking and the sale of drugs and arms; all these in addition to the ordinary routine police activities that we had.

They thanked us and complimented us for our increased efforts and our redeployment to meet their particular concerns, but they know that fighting crime is a dynamic activity. You do not finish conquer it today and that is it tomorrow; it is an ongoing dynamic and we must respond dynamically and we are doing that.

The Member was critical, by implication, of the 555 phone line. We said that there were Crime Stoppers and 999. When we created the 555, that was without reward, but more importantly it afforded the citizens more direct access to the police; that is all it was. So if they had one option and then we made it two, now we made it three, tell me what is wrong or bad about that?

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Had the Member been courteous enough to accept the invitation, if the organizers were right, having said that they invited him, he would have known that was their initiative. They had another hotline; they invited us. That was not Commissioner Paul's or my idea. That is the way we do business. [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Order!

**Hon. F. Hinds:** Mr. Speaker, between 2004 and 2005, the issue of kidnapping for ransom struck a significant blow to the country, because we saw increases in numbers in the Central areas, particularly. The businessmen were, for obvious reasons, particularly concerned. As a consequence of the strategic placement of officers from the Anti-Kidnapping Unit in the police Central Division, along with improved training and collaboration between that unit, other operational units of the police service and other arms of law enforcement, in collaboration with members of the business community in Central Trinidad, as well as other divisions, we could now, thanks to God, report that there has been a substantial reduction in that particular type of crime.

We are not taking this for granted. We know what we have been doing and we intend to continue more of the same. We intend to change the strategies to meet the changes that arise. We are thanking God for the reduction and keeping our eyes on it so that we could respond as we go along. We did so by identifying some of the known kidnappers. The police built lawful cases against them and then there was the no bail legislation which we had to force the other side into supporting, eventually. Let me take that back, not force them, but eventually God and good sense got the better of them and they supported it; that has helped.

We are getting a lot of support from the public through the same CrimeStoppers and now 555 and in other ways; they advise the police of certain things. In that collaborative spirit, we have seen some headway in that particular type of crime. Kidnapping is defined in a criminal law text by Smith & Hogan as containing four elements: taking and carrying away of a person by another by force or by fraud without the consent of the person or victim and without lawful excuse.

The reason I went into that definition was because when we speak of kidnapping, we recognize that kidnapping for ransom poses the most disturbance and unsettlement in the population, particularly among the business people. So while you have had a number of kidnappings or abductions, 120, we had no more than eight recorded for ransom throughout the Central Division. So far for the year we have recovered over 224 weapons seized by the police and 192 rounds of

ammunition. We know that there is a lot out there and we are going at them. Roadblocks and all the other operations are in place.

I conclude by telling the representative for the constituency of Chaguanas and all our colleagues on the other side and also reminding the national community that this Government and the Ministry of National Security are not sitting idly by, letting criminals have their way. Everyday we are pursuing them. We are arresting them and building cases against them; training our officers; providing them with resources and we are not mindless of the burden of crime on the society. We are doing our best to tackle it and we would continue. [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please!

*Question put and agreed to.*

*House adjourned accordingly.*

*Adjourned at 5.03 p.m.*