

**THE  
PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES**

**OFFICIAL REPORT**

*IN THE FIRST SESSION OF THE NINTH PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF  
TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO WHICH OPENED ON DECEMBER 17, 2007*

---

---

**SESSION 2007—2008**

**VOLUME 1**

---

---

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

*Monday, December 17, 2007*

**10.00 A.M.**

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

REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

No. 9 of 2007.

[L.S.]

By His Excellency Professor GEORGE MAXWELL  
RICHARDS, T.C., M.T., Ph.D., President and Commander-  
in-Chief of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

/s/ G. Richards  
President.

**A PROCLAMATION**

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

Now, therefore, I, GEORGE MAXWELL RICHARDS, President as aforesaid, do hereby appoint the Red House, Port of Spain, Trinidad, as the place at which the First Session of the Ninth Parliament of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago shall be held and 10.00 a.m. on Monday the 17th day of December, 2007, as the time at which the said Session shall commence.

Given under my Hand and the Seal of  
the President of the Republic of  
Trinidad and Tobago, at the Office  
of the President, St. Ann's, this 7th  
day of December, 2007.

**ELECTION OF SPEAKER**

**Clerk of the House:** Hon. Members, in accordance with Standing Order 3(1) of the House of Representatives, I now invite proposals for the Office of Speaker of the House.

**Mr. Maharaj SC:** Madam Clerk, as part of the agenda I want to state what is the position of the Opposition. The Government did not initiate any consultation with the Opposition to achieve a consensus on the election of a speaker. One would have thought in the circumstances that we find ourselves, the Government would have done that; that has not been done.

One of the leading newspapers this morning mentioned that the impartiality of the office of Speaker is critical to the functioning of Parliament. We would have thought that in the light of what has happened in this Parliament that the Prime Minister would have initiated some form of consultation so that the public of Trinidad and Tobago would see that parliamentary justice is being done here in respect of the parliamentary business. I would not say five years but the next three years, so we wanted to mention that.

**Mr. Imbert:** Madam Clerk of the House, I propose that Mr. Barendra Judistra Sinanan do take the Chair of this House as Speaker.

*Seconded by Mr. M. Abdul-Hamid.*

*There being no other nominations, the Clerk of the House declared Mr. Barendra Judistra Sinanan duly elected Speaker of the House of Representatives.*

**OATH OF ALLEGIANCE**

*Mr. Barendra Judistra Sinanan took and subscribed the Oath of Allegiance as required by law.*

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, in accordance with Standing Order 4(1) of the House of Representatives, I invite proposals for the office of Deputy Speaker of this House.

**Mr. Imbert:** Mr. Speaker, I wish to propose that Miss Penelope Beckles do take the Chair of this House as Deputy Speaker.

*Seconded by Mr. M. Abdul-Hamid.*

*There being no other nominations, the Speaker declared Miss Penelope Beckles duly elected Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives.*

*Oath Of Allegiance*

*Monday, December 17, 2007*

**OATH OF ALLEGIANCE**

*Miss Pennelope Beckles took and subscribed the Oath of Allegiance as required by law.*

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

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

Mr. Colm Imbert	Mr. Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj SC
Mr. Patrick Manning	Mr. Basdeo Panday
Dr. Keith Rowley	Mr. Jack Warner
Mrs. Karen Nunez-Tesheira	Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar
Mrs. Paula Gopee-Scoon	Mr. Kelvin Ramnath
Ms. Christine Kangaloo	Dr. Roodal Moonilal
Mr. Mustapha Abdul-Hamid	Dr. Tim Gopeesingh
Mr. Rennie Dumas	Mr. Vasant Bharath
Mr. Joseph Ross	Mr. Subhas Panday
Mr. Peter Taylor	Miss Mickela Panday
Mr. Kennedy Swaratsingh	Mr. Chandresh Sharma
Mr. Neil Parsanlal	Mr. Winston Peters
Miss Marlene Mc Donald	Mr. Nizam Baksh
Mr. Gary Hunt	Dr. Hamza Rafeeq
Miss Esther Le Gendre	Mr. Harry Partap
Dr. Amery Browne	
Mr. Stanford Callender	
Mr. Fitzgerald Jeffrey	
Mr. Nileung Hypolite	
Mr. Junia Regrello	

*Oath Of Allegiance*

*Monday, December 17, 2007*

Mr. Anthony Roberts

Mr. Roger Joseph

Mrs. Indra Sinanan Ojah-Maharaj

*Miss Donna Cox and Miss Alicia Hospedales took and subscribed the Affirmation of Allegiance as required by law.*

#### PRAYERS

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, His Excellency the President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, desires to address all Members of Parliament. This sitting is now suspended.

**10.45 a.m.:** *Sitting suspended.*

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

**11.14 a.m.:** *Sitting resumed.*

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

[INVOCATIONS]

#### PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

*His Excellency the President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, Professor George Maxwell Richards TC, CMT, PhD, addressed both Houses of Parliament as follows:*

*The Hon. Patrick Manning, Prime Minister, Sen. The Hon. Danny Montano, President of the Senate, the hon. Barendra Sinanan, Speaker of the House of Representatives, the hon. Justice Roger Hamel-Smith, Acting Chief Justice, Cabinet Ministers, members of the Diplomatic Corps, heads of religious organizations, the hon. Basdeo Panday, Leader of the Opposition, members of the Judiciary and the Caribbean Court of Justice, other Members of Parliament, representatives of the media, other distinguished ladies and gentlemen:*

*On this, the ceremonial opening of the First Session of the Ninth Parliament of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, I take the opportunity to congratulate all the newly elected and appointed Members of Parliament. Some of you are experiencing the Parliament as Members for the first time, and I am sure that you are approaching your job with enthusiasm and the necessary commitment.*

*President's Address*

*Monday, December 17, 2007*

*As you are aware, it is not a light matter as the future of our beloved country depends to a considerable extent on how you perceive that which you have been elected or appointed to do.*

*For those who recently presented themselves to the people, you are the people's choice and that recognition brings with it tremendous responsibility. For those of you who are new to this occupation, let me warn you that your constituents, and that translates to all of Trinidad and Tobago, regardless of portfolio, are not concerned about the obstacles that you may encounter in your attempt to satisfy needs or wants, and there is no such thing as a grace period, as I am quite sure you may have already noticed.*

*I would like to believe that you are committed to the long haul, and this is as it should be in politics. As time passes, you will come to understand better the saying in Latin, dulce et decorum est pro patria mori; literally, "It is sweet and fitting to die for one's country". It is the matter of sacrifice to which I refer; sacrifice which will manifest in different ways, but you have signed on voluntarily for the task ahead and hopefully, will go the distance. For those who have been appointed, the sacrifice is no less, and all must be mindful of the requirements of shared or collective responsibility in the system which guides the conduct of the Government. Policy decisions bear no individual names, but the concern of the people at whatever level is how they are affected by them.*

*Ladies and gentlemen, at this time there are several matters that engage our thoughts as a developing country, one that is in the forefront of scrutiny, certainly in the region, if not the world. While I do not intend to dwell upon it on this occasion, I must say that headline news gives us little comfort as a nation and can well have the effect of removing from our consciousness whatever good is taking place in our country. It is not just the heinous crimes that come to our attention, but it is being brought to our notice when an incident occurs, the extent to which a number of unseemly activities are taking place, sometimes within family settings involving children and older persons.*

*These are things of which we are made aware through the local information network, and even as we know that there are several positive outcomes of our efforts in many areas, we ought to be mindful of how we are being assessed internationally in terms of our development. We do not exist in isolation and some of these negative occurrences do have their effect on the international perspective.*

*The Global Competitiveness Report 2007/2008, featuring 131 countries for the period, produced by the World Economic Forum in conjunction with the*

*President's Address*  
[HIS EXCELLENCY]

*Monday, December 17, 2007*

*Universities of Harvard and Columbia and which has partnered institutes around the world, including the Arthur Lok Jack Graduate School of Business, gives us some idea of this.*

*It should be noted that, in the authors' view, the index is, and I quote:*

*"...an instrument that can be used to identify the competitive strengths of a country as well as the barriers that impede its economic progress, whether these be labour market inflexibility, fiscal imbalances, lack of governance, inadequate infrastructure or education, poor public ethics, red tape, insufficient innovation or sophistication of business activities or underdeveloped financial markets."*

*The index is constructed by combining hard data with the opinion of the top business leaders answering the survey questions. It helps to explain why some countries are more successful than others in raising income levels and opportunities for their respective populations and, according to the forum, should provide policymakers and business leaders with useful information in the formulation of improved economic policies and institutional reforms, identifying suggested priorities in the process.*

*The survey employs 12 pillars of competitiveness, none exclusive to the other, grouped under three headings as follows:*

*Basic requirements—key for factor-driven economies: institutions, infrastructure, macroeconomic stability, health and primary education.*

*Efficiency enhancers—key for efficiency-driven economies: higher education and training, goods market efficiency, labour market efficiency, financial market sophistication, technological readiness, market size; and*

*Innovation and sophistication factors—key for innovation-driven economies: business sophistication, innovation.*

*On a scale of 1 to 7, Trinidad and Tobago scored an average of 4.5, 3.8 and 3.5 respectively under the above three headings. Its highest scores were registered at the third pillar: macroeconomic stability, 5.8, and the fourth, health and primary education, 5.5. Six other pillars registered scores representing 50 per cent and upwards, making a total of eight such pillars of the 12 employed. These were institutions, higher education and training, goods market efficiency, labour market efficiency, financial market sophistication and business sophistication.*

*The survey suggests that Trinidad and Tobago, which stands midway in the rankings of the Latin American and Caribbean countries assessed, is making*

*good progress towards its goal of developed country status, but much remains to be done. Indeed, in the list of countries' economies shown at their respective stages in the three stages of development, stage three being the highest, our country is in transition from stage two to stage three. This is a most encouraging note.*

*Another area of global interest that impacts on us is the environment, and I will deal with one aspect of it, that is, climate change. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) released its Fourth Assessment Synthesis Report on November 17, 2007, in Valencia, Spain, and the recent United Nations climate change conference held in Bali over the past fortnight, will, hopefully, in spite of all the obstacles that continue to stand in the way, be that catalyst which will launch negotiations for a comprehensive agreement on climate change, to which all nations can adhere. Regrettably, however, while delegates have agreed to a compromise on curbing climate change, the expectations for this conference have not been fully realized, and binding targets for greenhouse gas emission reductions have not, so far, been agreed upon.*

*The IPCC report tells us, inter alia, that in Brazil rain forests are being threatened and can transform into savannah; that in the Punta Arenas in Chile, parents sometimes do not allow their children to play outside or go to school for fear of the negative effects of ultraviolet rays. Eleven of the last 12 years rank amount the 12 warmest years in the instrumental record of global surface temperature since 1850, and land regions have warmed faster than oceans. I am sure that you do not need to be convinced, because of the perception of a dramatic rise in temperature that we are experiencing right here in Trinidad and Tobago.*

*In this regard, the report further indicates that human influences have had significant effects on climate change and that continued greenhouse gas emissions at or above the current rates would cause further warming and induce many changes in the global climate system during the 21<sup>st</sup> Century that would very likely be more than those observed during the last century.*

*There is evidence that human influences have very likely contributed to sea level rise during the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and likely contributed to changes in wind patterns affecting extra-tropical storm tracks and temperature patterns. Increases in sea surface temperature as well as progressive ocean acidification, which has been a reality since 1750, are expected to have increased negative impacts on marine shell-forming organisms, for example, corals and their dependent species, apart from other forms of marine life, with consequent negative impact on our tourism industry year, inter alia.*

*President's Address*  
[HIS EXCELLENCY]

*Monday, December 17, 2007*

*Sea level rise can lead to loss of coastal areas and associated impacts and can even inundate small island developing states, of which we are one. Imagine wanting to bathe at Icacos in county St. Patrick, ladies and gentlemen, but having to stop at Granville because Icacos and all the intervening settlements have been claimed by the sea. That is one of the realities of climate change.*

*Climate change will affect developing countries the most and over the next half century it could impede achievement of the United Nations' millennium development goals. Reduced rainfall, a fallout from climate change, will aggravate water and food insecurity which will erode some of the positive steps that have been taken towards poverty eradication and other development goals. There can be negative impacts on agriculture, forestry, ecosystems, water resources, human health, industry, human settlement and society as a whole.*

*Key mitigation technologies and practices currently commercially available in the following sectors: energy supply, transport, buildings, industry, agriculture, forestry/forests and waste must be employed, and industrialized and developing countries must collaborate in order to stem the tide of impending disaster. Funding for clean energy technologies is necessary and, particularly, transfer of clean technologies for energy supply and adaptation. Unmitigated climate change would, in the long run, be likely to exceed the capacity of natural, managed and human systems to adapt, but in several sectors climate response options can be implemented to realize synergies and avoid conflicts with other dimensions of sustainable development.*

*But what does this mean to the man in the street? How does this translate into his interest and why should these issues be raised at a ceremonial opening of Parliament? It is because they bear strongly upon the development of the people of this country. As you begin this term of office as representatives of the people's interests, reflection on them will certainly not be amiss. You must find ways and means of inspiring them to greater consciousness of their responsibilities as individuals and communities towards the environment and other matters connected to our country's development in their respective capacities.*

*For example, the references that I have made to the environment, while having implications for corporations engaged in the industrialization process, also call to mind the everyday activities of all of us as individuals. Many of us have been careless about the environment and are contributing to its degradation in ways that have become second nature, such as the disposal of garbage and the indiscriminate felling of trees, to name but two. This state of affairs must be reversed.*



*President's Address*

*Monday, December 17, 2007*

*Your debates in the Parliament must convey that you are ever mindful of the trust that has been placed in you to promote the welfare of every citizen. This would sometimes require compromise on both sides of the political divide, but does not suggest, by any means, the suppression of different or diametrically opposed views. There should be room, however, for mature collaboration inside and outside of the Parliament, having as its primary objective the people's interest.*

*This demonstration of interest in the public above the cut and thrust of politics, is likely to influence the population at large to take a sustained interest in and to be more a part of the work that you do in this Chamber, in the Upper House and in your constituencies. It can lead to a more participatory approach in the decisions that emanate from parliamentary debates, and the development of a more inclusive society. Such a society would tend, on a wider scale, to make use of the benefits that become available to it, education being a critical one with heightened interest in tertiary education to which increasing access should continue to be a priority.*

*In our thrust to diversify the economy education would continue to play an important role in optimizing our human resource capability. The statement that our human resource is our most valuable asset may justifiably be regarded as overworked; nevertheless, we need to remind ourselves that it is making use of our human potential that will turn around our condition of poverty, crime, family disintegration and whatever ills we must tackle.*

*I posit that, as we seek to advance together as a nation, we must be equipped with a sound knowledge of our Republican Constitution of 1976, the essence of which is captured in the words of its preamble, all of which are important. Knowledge of our Constitution, as it now exists or as it may be in the future, will also promote intelligent dialogue on what can be properly and reasonably required of executive officers of the State, including the Head of State. It is an objective to which we as leaders should set our minds and take appropriate action, including within our schools.*

*I choose on this occasion to highlight one section as follows, in keeping with some of the positions that I have advanced today. I quote:*

*“Whereas the people of Trinidad and Tobago...*

- (b) respect the principles of social justice and therefore believe that the operation of the economic system should result in the material resources of the community being so distributed as to subserve the*

*President's Address*  
[HIS EXCELLENCY]

*Monday, December 17, 2007*

*common good, that there should be adequate means of livelihood for all, that labour should not be exploited or forced by economic necessity to operate in inhuman conditions but that there should be opportunity for advancement on the basis of recognition of merit, ability and integrity;"*

*In recalling these words, I am mindful that our gross domestic product over the last five years averaged some 9.2 per cent per annum, but at the same time the poverty level stands at 17 per cent; this is far too high. We must, therefore, strive for sustainable ways of lifting the poor out of their condition.*

*Much of this thrust will be played out in the parliamentary Chambers, the difficulty, particularly in the House of Representatives, is how in representative government a relatively small number of men and women can represent the opinions, aspirations, desires and interests of an electorate comprising different social strata, possibly half of whom, under the party systems, may be opposed to them in politics. Perhaps we might learn something from other democratic systems, perhaps the Swiss, which eschews much of the atmosphere of personal combat, directing attention more to issues and less to persons.*

*In that circumstance, the citizenry is more inclined to recognize itself as having a stake in political power and to see the officers of the State as exercising the functions entrusted to them. We must forge a political system in which, as someone has described it, government is in constant and organized relationship with the world of the people as a whole. This brings to mind Aristotle's position, which can hardly be debated, that there is a right inherent in the people, by virtue of their capacity of collective judgment to elect their rulers and call them to account.*

*The principles which regulate public life in a morally healthy society, which we should all be seeking to develop and sustain, should also be recognizable in private life, as we seek to nurture a gentler and more caring society, working together for the betterment of ourselves, our families and our communities. It is an objective from which we seem to be very far at the moment.*

*There should be no room for our cupidities and gratification of personal ambitions. We should not have to embrace Plato's conviction, deeply disappointed as he was in the duplicity of his political contemporaries, that there is no place for a man of conscience in active politics. That need not be the prevailing sentiment in our country. [Laughter] But we should give careful consideration to the foundation of his doctrine, that is to say, that true*

*President's Address*

*Monday, December 17, 2007*

*statesmanship means the promotion of national character as the one thing which matters and is, therefore, the application on the grand scale of the principles of absolute morality. What falls short of this is opportunism masquerading as statesmanship.*

*And so ladies and gentlemen, Members of this august body, the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago of which I am constitutionally a part, the people have placed their trust in us. By our leadership they will be guided. It is my hope and my prayer that they will be properly and effectively encouraged to realize their full potential as a vibrant people, a people of ideas and actions; ridding itself of unnecessary impediments of half measures, mediocrity and imitation; becoming more and more knowledgeable of its past, and under our guidance using such knowledge to shape our present and our future for the benefit of all of us, as individuals and as members of the communities in which we find ourselves at home and abroad.*

*In closing, may I remind us all, as a beacon for the way forward, that we the people "have affirmed that the nation of Trinidad and Tobago is founded upon principles that acknowledge the supremacy of God, faith in fundamental rights and freedoms, the position of the family in a society of free men and free institutions, the dignity of the human person and the equal and inalienable rights with which all members of the human family are endowed by their Creator;"*

*Thank you, ladies and gentlemen, for the courtesy of your attention. I express best wishes to you all for the Christmas season and many blessings in the New Year 2008.*

*May God bless our nation.*

**12.05 p.m.:** *House suspended.*

**12.05 p.m.:** *His Excellency, the President, accompanied by the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives, left the Chamber.*

**12.31 p.m.:** *Sitting resumed.*

#### **PAPER LAID**

Address by His Excellency the President on the occasion of the opening of the First Session of the Ninth Parliament of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. [The Minister of Works and Transport (Hon. C. Imbert)]

*To be printed as a House Paper.*

*Immigration Bill*

*Monday, December 17, 2007*

**IMMIGRATION (ADVANCE PASSENGER INFORMATION) BILL**

Bill to make provision for the transmission of advance passenger information respecting of persons travelling to Trinidad and Tobago and for related matters [*The Minister of National Security*]; read the first time.

**INTERNATIONAL CHILD ABDUCTION (NO. 2) BILL**

Bill to provide for the application on Trinidad and Tobago of The Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction and to provide for matters connected with or related thereto [*The Minister of Social Development*]; read the first time.

**ADJOURNMENT**

**The Minister of Works and Transport (Hon. Colm Imbert):** Mr. Speaker, there being no other business, I beg to move that the House do now adjourn to a date to be fixed. [*Interruption*]

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

Before I put the question on the adjournment of this House, permit me to extend warmest congratulations to all Members on being elected by their respective constituencies to serve in this the Ninth Parliament of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. I am indeed honoured that you have elected me to serve as your Speaker for the ensuing parliamentary term, and look forward to an enlightening session ahead.

It is my pleasure to invite all distinguished guests to join Their Excellencies and Members of Parliament at the Rotunda for light refreshments. [*Interruption*]

[*Mr. Manning rises*]

**Mr. Ramnath:** What Standing Order are you standing upon? [*Laughter*]  
[*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Maharaj SC:** Which is the Order Paper we are operating on? I have an Order Paper here; I have no supplemental Order Paper.

**Mr. Speaker:** I am on my feet and both Members should take their seats.

**The Prime Minister (Hon. Patrick Manning):** Mr. Speaker, I would be very remiss in my responsibilities if I did not take the opportunity this morning to warmly congratulate you on your re-election to the exalted office of Speaker.

Under normal circumstances, if there had been a change in the occupant of the Chair, there would have been consultation between the Government and the Opposition. In circumstances where there is a continuation—[*Interruption*]

*Adjournment*

*Monday, December 17, 2007*

**Mr. B. Panday:** That is crap! That is nonsense!

**Mr. Speaker:** Order!

**Hon. P. Manning:**—of the arrangement that has subsisted for five years, we just proceed in the normal course as is consistent with the requirements of the Westminster system.

Mr. Speaker, I also wish to congratulate all persons who are joining us here in the Parliament for the first time. A number of persons on the Government Benches, and there are a number on the Opposition Benches who are, indeed, joining us for the first time. I want to welcome them to the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago and let them know that in accepting the responsibility of sitting as a Member of Parliament, you are, indeed, accepting a very sacred trust that has been entrusted to your care by the people of Trinidad and Tobago, and that we take the oath which we have sworn this morning very seriously. We look forward to a very productive period for the Ninth Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago.

Under the Westminster system it would have been normal for a honeymoon period to have existed, both in relation to hon. Members opposite and in relation to the media. It is clear that the tradition of Westminster is fast disappearing and that hon. Members opposite and elsewhere have already signified, have already indicated, that there shall be no honeymoon period. But honeymoon or no honeymoon, we serve notice to hon. Members opposite and the wider community that the Government is ready, willing and able to discharge the responsibilities that have been entrusted to our care.

**Mr. B. Panday:** So are we!

**Hon. P. Manning:** And we will defend whatever positions we believe to be correct to the best of our not inconsiderable abilities.

I also would like to welcome back to the Parliament those who have sat here before. Among them are a number of my colleagues on the other side who—I have tell you the truth—I did not expect to see some of you all back, but you are here. [*Laughter*] [*Crosstalk*] The fact of the matter is that they are, indeed, here, and we look forward to a very fruitful and productive Parliament.

Mr. Speaker, there is also an approach that has become very popular in the national community at this time, of consultations between Government and a wide cross section of the national community as governments around the world implement their programme in favour of the people in their respective countries. In its widest possible interpretation, democracy will require a government to

*Adjournment*  
[HON. P. MANNING]

*Monday, December 17, 2007*

consult with the population on anything it has to do. On the other hand, there is also a requirement by the people of countries, particularly Trinidad and Tobago, and certainly a desire on the part of the Government, to achieve the programme that we have identified for ourselves in the shortest possible time.

As you know, we are embarked on a course of action to achieve developed country status by the year 2020, and to be able to achieve that requires a quantum leap in this Ninth Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago. A judicious balance will have to be struck, and we intend to strike it, between the need for consultation on the one hand, which we intend to honour, and the desire of the population on the other, to ensure that the country develops at a rate that is acceptable and will achieve the targets that we have set for ourselves.

We also assure hon. Members opposite that we do not believe that we have a monopoly on knowledge on this side. We do not believe that. Therefore, whatever contributions they make and, indeed, whatever contributions are made in the wider community, it is our intention to listen very carefully to what is being said and to cull what we consider to be relevant; even if in so doing, we do not necessarily acknowledge the source from which the idea may have come. *[Laughter]* That is the nature of the politics.

But we intend to listen and we intend to use the best that is available, in the public domain from the national community and internationally, to bring to bear on our policy decision making and our determination to give the people of Trinidad and Tobago the highest standard of living in the shortest possible time.

Mr. Speaker, once again, may I congratulate you. I also take this opportunity, since we will be unlikely to meet again before Christmas, to extend to you, hon. Members and the national community, felicitations of the season and a bright and prosperous 2008.

**Mr. Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj SC** (*Tabaquite*): Mr. Speaker, in response to the comments made by the hon. Prime Minister in respect of consultation, the fact that there has been a sitting Speaker for five years is no reason why the process of consultation should not take place.

In May's *Parliamentary Practice*, it is recognized that it has nothing to do with individuals or personality. It has to do with the principle, and the principle is that since impartiality and authority are the two important aspects of the office of Speaker, a government normally would consult; especially if the government wants the public to have confidence in what is done in the Parliament. So it is no excuse for the hon. Prime Minister to say that he did not consult and he did not

*Adjournment*

*Monday, December 17, 2007*

think it was necessary to consult, and to come here and make empty promises that the Government will consult.

Look what has happened here. We came here on an Order Paper; another supplemental Order Paper was filed; we have not gotten any. The Government did not see it fit to even consult with us with respect to any amendment or supplemental Order Paper.

On that Order Paper there was “Statements by Ministers”; since he and his Government are not afraid, I would have thought that they would have utilized that to make a statement on crime. Crime is the issue facing Trinidad and Tobago. [Applause] Everybody is unsafe. The hon. Prime Minister gets up and talks about everything under the sun, but does not mention crime at all. He obviously was not listening to His Excellency the President.

I think the Prime Minister should explain this. We came here on an Order Paper which also included “Request for Leave to move the Adjournment of the House on Definite Matters of Urgent Public Importance”; all that was skipped. This morning I lodged, before the sitting of the House, during the sitting of the House, a motion on the adjournment on the nation in crisis on crime.

The hon. Prime Minister sat there; he got up and made a speech about consultation, listening and about how the Government was going to operate. But in the Parliament he does not explain why his Government was afraid to either make a statement on crime or deal with the motion on the adjournment on crime. [Applause]

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, envelopes with the supplemental Order Paper and the Bills—[Interruption]—order! They will be delivered to Members before you leave, or alternatively if you so wish, they will be delivered to your homes. [Interruption]

**Mr. R. L. Maharaj SC:** Will you give us an explanation as the Speaker of the House, as to why we are not going to deal with the Motion on the Adjournment.

**Mr. Speaker:** Yes; feel free to consult me in my Chambers. [Interruption]

**Mr. R. L. Maharaj SC:** I am not consulting you in your Chambers!

**Mr. Speaker:** Order!

*Question put and agreed to.*

*House adjourned accordingly.*

*Adjourned at 12.31 p.m.*