

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES*Tuesday, January 22, 2013*

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: hon. Stephen Cadiz, Member of Parliament for Chaguanas East, is currently out of the country and has asked to be excused from the sittings of the House during the period January 20, 2013 to January 23, 2013. Mr. Patrick Manning, Member of Parliament for San Fernando East, has requested leave of absence due to medical illness for a period of 42 days with effect from January 23, 2013. Hon. Rudranath Indarsingh, Member of Parliament for Couva South, has asked to be excused from today's sitting of the House. The leave which the Members seek is granted.

ICT STRATEGIC PLAN

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, in 2012, the Office of the Parliament in collaboration with the European Union, the United Nations and the Caribbean Centre for Development Administration (CARICAD) developed a four-year ICT strategic plan with the following overall objective and I quote:

Enhancing the ongoing services to Members and sustaining the institution through the implementation of a series of initiatives to upgrade technology services and facilities while ensuring their security and resiliency so that Members and employees can better serve the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

Some of the key goals of our plans are:

1. All documents received or produced by the Parliament will be made available in an accepted electronic format.
2. The *Hansard* will be available in an open format that will be searchable and reusable by internal and external partners within the next three years.
3. The public website will contain all information needed in line with the IPU guidelines within one year.

4. The Parliament will adopt a standard open format for legislation shared between all government partners within the next three years.
5. Within the next year the *Hansard*, without verified quotations, will be published online, 90 per cent of the time within 24 hours of the completion of the debate.
6. Parliamentary applications and information will be securely accessible by authorized users from anywhere at any time within the next two years.
7. Paper usage by the Parliament will be reduced by 50 per cent by the end of 2013 compared with the year 2012 usage.

Hon. Members, you would be pleased to note that we are well on target with all of these goals. However, today, I am pleased to announce that implementation of two of these important goals, namely (6) and (7), have begun.

Firstly, the launching of what is called the Rotunda—that is an application developed by the Office of the Parliament to facilitate the sharing of documentation in electronic form with Members.

Secondly, the distribution to each Member of Parliament an issued iPad with the application: “The Rotunda Installed”.

We propose to commence the distribution of iPads on Monday, January 28, 2013 and arrangements will be made and communicated to you for the training of Members who so desire.

Hon. Members, the issuing of iPads to Members allows the Office of Parliament to do the following:

1. Reduce its use of paper which will result in significant cost savings.
2. Improve communication and delivery of documents to all Members of Parliament.
3. Provide all Members of Parliament with a single online repository for the collection and sharing of parliamentary documents.

Hon. Members, we hope that you will find this new initiative beneficial. We encourage you to use the iPad and The Rotunda as you perform your parliamentary duties and look forward to receiving your feedback.

PAPERS LAID

1. Annual Audited Financial Statements of Trinidad and Tobago Film Company Limited for the financial year ended September 30, 2012. [*The Minister of Finance and the Economy (Sen. The Hon. Larry Howai)*]
2. Annual Report of the Financial Intelligence Unit for the period ended September 30, 2012. [*Sen. The Hon. L. Howai*]
The Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the Financial Statements of the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund for the year ended September 30, 2012. (*Sen. The Hon. L. Howai*)
3. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the Financial Statements of the National Lotteries Control Board for the year ended December 31, 2001. (*Sen. The Hon. L. Howai*)
4. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the Financial Statements of the Environmental Management Authority—Environmental Trust Fund for the year ended September 30, 2011. (*Sen. The Hon. L. Howai*)
5. Audited Financial Statements of the National Commission for Self Help Limited for the financial year ended September 30, 2011. (*Sen. The Hon. L. Howai*)
Papers 1 and 7 to be referred to the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee.
Papers 4 to 6 to be referred to the Public Accounts Committee.
6. Annual Report of the Ministry of Public Administration for the year ended September 30, 2011. [*The Minister of Public Administration (Hon. Carolyn Seepersad-Bachan)*]

JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE REPORTS**Municipal Corporations and Service Commissions****(Presentation)**

Mrs. Joanne Thomas (*St. Ann's East*): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following reports:

1. The Fifth Report of the Joint Select Committee established to enquire into and report to Parliament on Municipal Corporations and

Service Commissions with the exception of the Judicial and Legal Service Commission and the Public Service Commission.

2. The Sixth Report of the Joint Select Committee established to enquire into and report to Parliament on Municipal Corporations and Service Commissions with the exception of the Judicial and Legal Service Commission and the Statutory Authorities Service Commission.

**FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT 2012
(Presentation)**

Sen. The Hon. Larry Howai: Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following report:

The First Report (2012/2013) Session of the Finance Committee of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on proposals for the Supplementation and Variation of the 2012 Appropriation.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

The Minister of Housing, Land and Marine Affairs (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal): Mr. Speaker, this afternoon, the Government is in a position to answer all questions on the Order Paper, but to note that question No. 11 which is stated on the Order Paper, I am instructed that last week the Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development had already answered that and it may be repeated here today. Correct?

Mr. Jeffrey: No.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:.. We will sort it out, Mr. Speaker, but we are in a position to proceed with all the questions.

**Federation Villas, Federation Park
(Occupancy of)**

2. **Miss. Marlene Mc Donald** (*Port of Spain South*) on behalf of Dr. Keith Rowley (*Diego Martin West*) asked the hon. Minister of Housing, Land and Marine Affairs:

With respect to the occupancy of housing units at Federation Villas, Federation Park, Port of Spain, for the period June 01, 2010 to October 31, 2012, could the hon. Minister identify:

- a) all the Ministers and/or public officials who have been allocated or who have had use to these units and the period during which they occupied these units; and

- b) the details of the terms of occupancy as they relate to each Minister/official who has had use of these premises?

The Minister of Housing, Land and Marine Affairs (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal): Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, in relation to question No. 2, part (a): It is to be noted that on April 19, 2006 a contract was awarded to Buildings Concepts & Construction Limited for the construction of 16 town houses and associated infrastructure at Federation Park. The initial contract totalled \$16,261,957.51. Mr. Speaker, additional variations were incurred; a total in terms of variations, was \$12,513,037, bringing the total amount for the 16 units at \$27,774,994.91.

It is to be noted that these units are not assigned to Ministers of Government. The units are assigned for use by Ministries of Government for specific short-term purposes—particularly, to host foreign consultants and advisors. This policy was adopted by the previous Government in 2009, when at that time consultants and advisors from Singapore stayed at the Federation Villas. It is a policy that the HDC adopted in 2009.

At this moment three units have been assigned for use by the Office of the Attorney General to facilitate accommodation for legal counsel and advisors who generally reside overseas. This took effect from April 2011. Three units have also been assigned to the Ministry of Tobago Development for Members of Parliament who on occasion and on a needs basis may need to overnight in Trinidad.

Mr. Speaker, please note that this is not permanent residence nor permanent occupation by any Member of Parliament, and these persons are requested on short notice to vacate, which they vacate without a court order—[*Laughter*]—which they are requested to vacate so that those units can be used by other advisors, officials or visiting officials for various government purposes. The assignment took place in July 2010.

Mr. Speaker, three additional units have been used on a needs basis by officials of the Office of the Prime Minister, including both local and foreign advisors, on a needs basis as and when they are required. May I reiterate that these officials are not in permanent residence and this is in no way a long-term solution for housing. The three units, as I said before, have also been assigned for use by the Ministry of Public Administration for consultants working on the ICT programme. From approximately May 10, 2009—I repeat, approximately May 10, 2009—this policy took effect. Persons have been there and have left. Those persons were on a three-month basis for specific and periodic times during the period 2009—2011.

1.45 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, part (b), the details of the terms of occupancy as they relate to officials who had been in use: there is no rental for the units and short-term occupiers are responsible for the general upkeep of the units. The accommodation at Federation Park formed part of the Singaporeans' package of work then negotiated with those advisors. Mr. Speaker, that is question No. 2.

Miss Mc Donald: Supplemental, Mr. Speaker. I just want to ask the Member for Oropouche East: are you saying that no Government Minister, or Minister of State, or Parliament Secretary, backbencher, no one is occupying any of the units at Federation Villas? Is that what you are saying?

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, I am saying that these units, as I identified before, are assigned by specific Ministries of Government and the Ministries will identify the occupiers. I, myself, am not privy to who is there or not.

**Housing Units at Federation Villas
(Receipt of Housing Allowance for)**

3. **Miss Marlene Mc Donald** (*Port of Spain South*) on behalf of Dr. Keith Rowley (*Diego Martin West*) asked the hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy:

With respect to Ministers/officials who have had use of housing units at Federation Villas, have these persons also received any housing allowance in the State offices which they hold?

The Minister of Finance and the Economy (Sen. The Hon. Larry Howai): Mr. Speaker, following from the answers provided by the Member for Oropouche East, there are no Ministers or officials who are currently allocated on a permanent basis the housing units at Federation Villas. Ministers and officials therefore receive allowances in accordance with existing contracts.

**Federation Villas
(Housing Allowance Paid to Officials)**

4. **Miss Marlene Mc Donald** (*Port of Spain South*) on behalf of Dr. Keith Rowley (*Diego Martin West*) asked the hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy:

Could the Minister state the amount of housing allowance paid to each Minister/official during the period he/she also occupied housing units at Federation Villas?

The Minister of Finance and the Economy (Sen. The Hon. Larry Howai): Again, Mr. Speaker, following from the previous two questions, there are no Ministers or officials who are permanently allocated housing units at Federation Villas and, therefore, the Ministers and officials receive allowances in accordance with their existing contracts.

Mr. Jeffrey: Mr. Speaker, question No. 12 to the Minister of Food Production.

Mr. Speaker: All right, we will come back to that, but No. 11 has not been answered.

Dr. Moonilal: Okay. Well, Mr. Speaker, we will ask for the answer to be deferred for one week.

Mr. Speaker: So we can proceed. Question—

Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise is in a position today to give the answer.

Mr. Speaker: You are in a position to answer No. 11? Okay, before you answer hon. Minister, could you pose your question?

**LABIDCO/Union Industrial Estates
(Details of)**

11. Mr. Fitzgerald Jeffrey (*La Brea*) asked the hon. Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development:

Could the Minister state:

- a) the number of jobs created, by categories, on the LABIDCO and Union Industrial Estates since June 2010; and
- b) the number of jobs lost, by categories, on the LABIDCO and Union Industrial Estates since June 2010 ?

The Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development (Hon. Errol McLeod): Mr. Speaker, I will repeat what I essentially said to the House last week—the same question. The question asked: The number of jobs created in the La Brea/Point Fortin area since June 2010—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker: No. This one deals with LABIDCO. Number 11 deals with the number of jobs created by categories on the LABIDCO and Union industrial estates. It has nothing to do with Point Fortin and La Brea.

Hon. E. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, the National Energy Corporation (NEC) of Trinidad and Tobago manages the operations of the La Brea Industrial Estate and port through the La Brea Industrial Development Company (LABIDCO) as well as that of the Union Industrial Estate. NEC was incorporated in 1979 to continue the work first started by the Coordinating Task Force in monetizing the country's natural gas resources and developing and managing industrial and marine infrastructure. It has been mandated by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago to identify and develop new industrial estates and ports for location of petrochemical, inorganic and downstream industries. This includes the Union Industrial Estate and the La Brea Industrial Estate which are in close proximity to each other. The information on job creation and job loss on the La Brea Industrial Estate and the Union Industrial Estate has been supplied by the NEC.

It should be noted that it is difficult to precisely indicate the number of jobs created on the La Brea and the Union industrial estates as work is undertaken on a projects basis. As with any project, one must be mindful that the demand for labour will fluctuate during the course of the project from start to finish. It must also be noted that the demand for unskilled labour is usually higher at the commencement of a project and it dwindles as the project comes to completion and operations are about to commence. It is at this point that the demand for skilled labour increases.

Accordingly, for the period June 2010 to October 2012, a total of 733 persons were employed at the La Brea Industrial Estate. It is estimated that a total of 453 persons were employed at the La Brea Industrial Estate as at October 2012, from La Brea and environs. That is, of the 733 persons employed on the estate, 453 are reported to be from La Brea and the environs. At the Union Industrial Estate, a total of 655 persons were employed from June 2010 to October 2012, and 227 persons employed as at October 2012 came from La Brea and environs.

Some significant developments on the La Brea and Union industrial estates should be noted. In August 2011, the country saw the commissioning of three gas turbines at the Trinidad Generation Unlimited power plant located at the Union Industrial Estate. The commissioning of three additional gas turbines was achieved in December 2011. The output of these six gas turbines brought the capacity of the plant to 480 megawatts. The final phase of construction has been projected for completion by the end of December 2012.

This third and final phase is expected to bring the rated capacity of the plant to 720 megawatts. Presently, all power produced at Union Industrial Estate is supplied to the national grid. The commencement of operations of the TGU plant was a major achievement for NEC since natural gas was brought to the estate. It is

important to note that along with the other infrastructural work completed in 2011, Union Industrial Estate is now 100 per cent tenant ready.

In the second quarter of 2012, the pipe coating division of ShawCor Limited, Brodero Shaw Middle East Limited (BSMEL) began operations at site A of the Union Industrial Estate. BSMEL will undertake the coating of 36-inch diameter pipe for a 100-kilometre undersea pipeline in Venezuela. It should be noted that ShawCor Limited completed similar work for the National Gas Company of Trinidad and Tobago in 2010 whilst operating from the same location.

The La Brea Industrial Estate welcomed a new and significant tenant during 2011—that is, Bayfield Energy; and Bayfield Energy is currently sharing the Gorilla Rig II with Niko Resources and Centrica and has chosen to do all its logistics from the estate. According to the Bayfield Energy 2011 half-yearly report, preparations are also proceeding in relation to a seven-well exploration and appraisal drilling programme. Deliveries of casing for the programme have already been received in Bayfield's warehouse facility adjacent to the LABIDCO port.

In 2011, Well Services Petroleum Company and ADGas brought in a new revenue stream to the La Brea Industrial Estate when both companies signed five-year leases to use approximately 80 metres each at the Brighton port. NEC once more proved that it is a driver of innovation in the energy market when it partnered with Trinidad Offshore Fabricators Unlimited (TOFCO) to engage in a dry-docking exercise. The history-making event took place in April at the TOFCO fabrication yard, also located on the La Brea Industrial Estate.

Part (b) of the question: a similar difficulty is experienced in quantifying job loss on the La Brea and Union industrial estates as there are fluctuations in the employment of persons depending on the project being pursued. According to data provided by NEC, it is estimated that from June 2010 to October 2012 there was a change in the workforce due to a decrease in demand for labour of 280 persons. For the Union Industrial Estate, this figure stood at 428.

Toxic Chemical Usage on Agricultural Crops

(Status of)

- 12. Mr. Fitzgerald Jeffrey** (*La Brea*) asked the hon. Minister of Food Production:
 - A. What measures have been taken to ensure that the use of toxic chemicals on agricultural crops are properly monitored in such a manner that consumers' health and well-being are not compromised?

- B. What is the name of the monitoring agency with direct responsibility for the control of toxic chemical usage on agricultural farms?

The Minister of State in the Ministry of Food Production (Hon. Jairam Seemungal): Mr. Speaker, in reference to part (a), measures are taken to ensure that the use of toxic chemicals on agricultural crops are properly maintained in such a manner that consumers' health and well-being are not compromised.

The use of toxic chemicals on agricultural crops is governed by the Pesticides and Toxic Chemicals Act, 1979, which is, "An Act to regulate the importation...storage...sale, use and transportation of pesticides and toxic chemicals and to provide for the establishment of the Pesticides and Toxic Chemicals Control Board and for matters incidental thereto."

This Act was amended in 2005 by section 4A(1) which allows for the monitoring of pesticides exported out of Trinidad and Tobago. Mr. Speaker, the Act, by virtue of section 3 established a Pesticides and Toxic Chemicals Control Board whose functions include:

- To advise the Minister of Health on matters relevant to the making of regulations under the Act.
- To advise on the monitoring and implementation of those regulations.
- To furnish such returns as the Minister of Health may require from time to time.
- To determine all applications for registration, licences, research permits and general research permits within a reasonable time after the applications are received.
- To grant or cancel registration, licences or permits in circumstances where the board deems it fit to do so.

Mr. Speaker, the Pesticides and Toxic Chemicals Control Board is at present attached to the Ministry of Health. It comprises 12 members from various stakeholder agencies involved with pesticides and toxic chemicals, the Ministry of Food Production being one such stakeholder with two members on the board.

Although the use of toxic chemicals on agricultural crops and the associated safeguarding of consumers' health and well-being are primarily the responsibility of the board in the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Food Production plays a critical role in these activities, insofar as it relates to agriculture. These activities include:

- To guide the board on all matters concerning agricultural pesticide and toxic chemical importation, sale, transportation, usage, storage and disposal.

2.00 p.m.

- To recommend duty-free concession for importers of agricultural pesticides. This concession is granted only for pesticides that are registered with the board.
- To develop and maintain a list of the safest pesticides (Class IV) and recommend these for use in agriculture, where necessary.
- To educate farmers, home gardeners and members of the public on the correct use, storage and disposal of pesticides.
- To educate farmers, home gardeners and members of the public on the adoption of integrated pest management, a management system on crop production that greatly reduces or eliminates the need for pesticide use.
- To implement a farmer's certification programme where only farmers that practise good agricultural practices use the integrated pest management as certified as such.
- To conduct research and development of alternatives to pesticide use.

For example, the use of natural enemies and bio-pesticide. An example of the successful use of this natural enemy is the mass production and distribution of the ladybird beetle by the Ministry of Food Production to control the pink hibiscus mealy bug. The use of extracts from neem, for instance, is another bio-pesticide recommended as a good and safe insecticide with little toxicity to human beings.

- To offer in the Ministry of Food Production an incentive programme—a subsidy of 50 per cent of the cost of purchasing environmentally-friendly chemical, or Class IV, and bio-agents as an alternative to chemicals. This would encourage the adoption of the integrated pest management strategies.
- To recommend and use the resistant varieties of plants so that the pesticide use may not be necessary.

In the Ministry of Food Production Action Plan 2012—2015, the question of pesticide misuse is explicitly mentioned for attention, the Ministry of Food Production paying particular attention to the judicious use of pesticides in crop production for safe and healthy food for both local consumption and for export.

With respect to part B, it is the Pesticides and Toxic Chemicals Control Board of the Ministry of Health. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Jeffrey: Supplemental, Mr. Speaker. How often is the testing done on agricultural produce that is being offered for sale to the general public?

Hon. Member: Uh hmm!

Hon. J. Seemungal: Mr. Speaker, that is done on a needs basis and it is done regularly. It is under the control of the board of the Ministry of Health. So maybe that question can be directed directly to the board.

Mr. Jeffrey: Supplemental. The question is, we would like to find out when last was a test done on any agricultural produce that is being offered for sale?

Hon. J. Seemungal: Mr. Speaker, can the Member file a question, so we can answer that s well?

Protection of Fishermen (Measures Taken)

13. Mr. Fitzgerald Jeffrey (*La Brea*) asked the hon. Minister of National Security:

What measures have been taken by the Government to protect our fishermen from criminal activities on the high seas since June 2010?

The Minister of National Security (Hon. Jack Warner): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago is committed to ensuring the safety and security of all its citizens, both on land and on sea. To this end, we continue to employ resources in a manner that would yield positive and effective results to ensure a safer environment for citizens to conduct their daily activities. One of the perennial issues has been the attacks on the nation's fishermen whilst at sea—fishermen who have been the targets of various offences including robberies, larceny and murder.

Since June 2010, the Government has undertaken several measures to ensure the safety and security of local and other fishermen who fish within the waters under its jurisdiction under lawful licence provided by the Fisheries Division of the Ministry of Housing, Land and Marine Affairs. As the country's primary maritime surveillance and control authority, the Trinidad and Tobago Coast Guard does the following:

- Has deployed the Australian-built fast-patrol craft to the coastal outstations located at Cedros, Tobago and Galeota to monitor fishing

activities and to ensure the safety and security of fishermen through regular routine patrol schedules.

- Continues to work closely with Caribbean Fisheries Training and Development Institute and holds a position on its executive board which allows the coast guard to keep abreast of developments and issues within the fishing industry, and in so doing aids the pursuance of relevant security strategies and effective patrols.
- Collaborates with the University of the West Indies on the Fisheries project which provides communication and navigational equipment. This equipment, in the form of Smartphone devices, enables timely communication with respective stakeholders and, in particular, the Trinidad and Tobago Coast Guard when they encounter difficulties and require urgent assistance.

The coast guard maintains a continuous liaison with the Tobago House of Assembly and conducts special surveillance patrols utilizing both surface and aerial assets and also engages a number of special focus operations to ensure safety in fishing tournaments and activities.

This Government, Member for La Brea, is in the process of refurbishing 24 fishing centres and depots throughout Trinidad and Tobago. It is anticipated that this initiative will foster better dialogue with fisherfolk with a view of understanding their issues, and in so doing, initiate measures aimed at reducing the incidents of crime which have been perpetrated against them.

Additionally, the upgrade and improvement of the 360-degree radar system was completed in the first quarter of 2012. This would assist in improving the detection rate of criminal activity at sea—of course, effectively reducing the occurrence of such incidents.

The Government has also worked towards integrating security flights by the Trinidad and Tobago Air Guard with maritime patrols by the coast guard. In support of this movement, four helicopters were acquired to patrol Trinidad and Tobago air space, including the maritime areas frequented by this country's fishermen.

Improved relations between Trinidad and Tobago Coast Guard and the Venezuelan Navy and other law enforcement authorities have also assisted in reducing fishing-related incidents in close border areas. You will agree that there has been almost a total reduction of incidents between the Venezuelan coast guard

and the Trinidad and Tobago fishermen. Therefore, it has reduced the need for the use of force, while at the same time enforcing the provisions of the Fisheries Act and other related legislation.

Further, Member for La Brea, the Government has cooperated with its regional partners and the relevant agencies in the US and the UK in developing intelligence sharing protocols to respond to and prevent maritime criminal activity. A number of joint marine and air patrols by the coast guard and the police service, by the Immigration Division and the Customs and Excise Division have reduced the instances of theft of fishing vessels and apparatus by criminal elements.

There are approximately three joint patrols per week. I want to say that again. There are approximately three joint patrols per week. The joint patrols are supplemented by regular patrols of the police, and by road checks around fishing areas such as Cedros, Toco, Matelot, Mayaro, Chaguaramas and along the north coast of Maracas.

In Tobago, similar strategies have been instituted. On a daily basis the police service interacts with the Customs and Excise Division to inspect boats and special craft that dock at all legal ports of entry. Further, the speedy work of the police and other law enforcement agencies has led to the arrest and charge of some perpetrators who were involved in the murder of three fishermen in early last year.

As such, therefore, Member for La Brea, these are the efforts being made by the Government to protect our fisherman from criminal activities on the high seas since June 2010. I thank you.

**FINANCE (SUPPLEMENTATION AND VARIATION OF APPROPRIATION)
(FINANCIAL YEAR 2012) BILL, 2013**

Bill to supplement and vary the appropriation of the sum the issue of which was authorized by the Appropriation (Financial Year 2012) Bill, 2013. [*The Minister of Finance and the Economy*]; read the first time.

Motion made: That the next stage be taken later in the proceedings. [*Hon. L. Howai*]

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I seek your indulgence to revert to this item sometime later on in the proceedings. Do I have your indulgence and support?

Assent indicated.

FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT

(Adoption)

The Minister of Finance and the Economy (Sen. The Hon. Larry Howai): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the following Motion standing in my name:

Be it resolved that this House adopt the First Report (2012/2013) Session of the Finance Committee of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on proposals for the Supplementation and Variation of the 2012 Appropriation.

Mr. Speaker, the Finance Committee of the House of Representative met earlier today and agreed to a number of proposals with respect to the accounts for the fiscal year 2012.

The committee agreed to:

1. the supplementation of the 2012 appropriation;
2. a variation of the 2012 appropriation; and
3. the write-off of losses approved for fiscal 2012.

The Finance Committee also noted a transfer of funds between subheads of the same Head of Expenditure for fiscal 2012.

Before I begin my presentation, please permit me to make a short remark on the fiscal operations of 2012 which have now been substantially finalized. The deficit for the fiscal year 2012 is now \$3,113,500,000 much smaller than the projection of \$6,675,800,000 made in the national budget 2013.

This now moves the deficit from 4.3 per cent of GDP to 2.02 per cent of GDP. I shall return to this matter later in my presentation to address the reasons for the change in the deficit, but I simply say this now to reassure this honourable House that the supplementary appropriation of \$1.5 billion does not further exacerbate the fiscal deficit of 2012. Having said this, I shall now speak on the detailed accounts for fiscal 2012.

Mr. Speaker, the first proposal was for the provision of supplementary funds in the sum of \$1,568,166,725 to fund urgent and critical recurrent expenditure to September 30, 2012.

2.15 p.m.

The second proposal was for the variation of the appropriation for fiscal 2012, in the sum of \$2,009,425,948.

The third proposal was for the approval of write-off of losses in the sum of \$128,530.57 approved by the Cabinet during fiscal 2012.

Fourthly, the Finance Committee noted a transfer of funds between subheads under the same Head of Expenditure in the sum of \$698,715,894 for the 2012 fiscal year.

Mr. Speaker, the total increase in the Heads of Expenditure being proposed is \$3,442,318,413, and the total decreases amount to \$1,874,151,688 which represents a net increase of \$1,568,166,725, which is currently being sought by way of the Finance (Supplementation and Variation of Appropriation) (Financial Year 2012) Bill, 2013.

The details of these proposed changes were circulated to all Members of the Finance Committee and discussed at its meeting at 11.00 a.m. today, where clarification was sought with respect to some of the proposed changes to the appropriation for fiscal 2012. A commitment was also given to provide some responses during the course of this debate. Mr. Speaker, it is also anticipated that during the course of the debate that the proposals contained within the Bill will be addressed on this side. Please permit me at this time to advise this honourable House on the proposals applicable to the three Heads of Expenditure for which supplementary funding is being proposed.

Under Head 22, Ministry of National Security, an increase of approximately \$23.8 million is being sought to bring to account an outstanding sum needed to cover loan disbursements associated with the cost of the acquisition of four AW medium twin-turbine helicopters. The financing agreements for this purchase were executed in April 2010.

Under Head 61, Ministry of Housing, Land and Marine Affairs, an increase is needed to retire advances made from Treasury deposits which were utilized by UDeCoTT to pay in full an amount of \$544,359,425, owed to Scotia Bank Trinidad and Tobago Limited, in respect of a bridging loan facility of TT \$720 million, which was raised in May 2007 for the construction of the Chancery Lane Administrative Complex.

Under Head 69, Ministry of Works and Infrastructure, an increase of \$1 billion is being sought to retire advances made from Treasury deposits to honour financial obligations associated with the extension of the Solomon Hochoy

Highway to Point Fortin project, since the agreed financing arrangements on the local and international markets have not yet been sourced.

Hon. Members are asked to note, that in accordance with section 17(1)(b) of the Exchequer and Audit Act, Chap. 69:01, advances made from Treasury deposits are recoverable within 12 months after the close of the financial year in which the advances are made.

Mr. Speaker, it is necessary to have a variation of the appropriation in the sum of \$2,009,425,948 for the 2012 fiscal year to realign the provisions in the fiscal accounts in accordance with the new assignment of responsibilities to Ministers, and the creation of new Ministries as effected by the *Trinidad and Tobago Gazette*, Nos. 76, 78, 120 and 126, Volume 51, dated April 12, 19 and July 06 and 19, 2012, respectively.

Mr. Speaker, the Finance Committee also agreed to the write-off of the sums totalling \$128,530 for 2012 under Head 23, Ministry of the Attorney General; Head 25, Ministry of Food Production, Land and Marine Affairs and Head 68, Ministry of Sport.

In the case of the Ministry of the Attorney General, the write-off of the sum of \$51,025 represented overpayments to a field investigator in the Ministry during the period January 03, 1983 to December 31, 2001. The Attorney General at that time was of the view that the officer received her salary in good faith and that the overpayment was the result of an administrative error, and succeeded in getting the Cabinet to agree to the write-off of the overpayment.

In the case of the Ministry of Food Production, Land and Marine Affairs, the write-off of the sum of \$42,859 represented overpayments to a retired dairy technician in the then Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources and the Environment during the period February 25, 1977 to August 06, 2001. The Minister of Food Production, Land and Marine Affairs was of the view that the officer received a salary in good faith and that the overpayment was the result of an administrative error, and succeeded in getting the Cabinet to agree to the write-off of the overpayment.

Finally, in the case of the Ministry of Sport, the write-off of the sum of \$34,645.34 represented overpayments to a retired Cook 1 in the then Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs during the period January 01, 1980 to December 31, 1998. The Minister of Sport was of the view that the officer received the salary in good faith and that the overpayment was as a result of an administrative error, and

succeeded, again, in getting Cabinet to agree to the write-off of the overpayment. Hon. Members are reminded that full details on all of these write-offs were circulated to the Finance Committee.

Mr. Speaker, I now refer to the transfer of funds between subheads of the same expenditure. With effect from August 01, 1988, Cabinet delegated its authority to approve transfers between subheads under the same Head of Expenditure to the Minister of Finance, when it agreed among other things as follows: request for transfer of funds between separate subheads under the same Head of Expenditure should no longer be submitted for the Cabinet, but can be decided by the Minister of Finance on the advice of the Budget Division.

Consequently, in fiscal 2012, the hon. Minister of Finance approved a transfer of funds in the sum of \$698,715,894 between subheads under the same Head of Expenditure. It should be noted that the transfers were approved by the Minister of Finance based on written requests from the respective Ministers requesting the transfer.

Mr. Speaker, it should also be noted that these transfers are requested to reflect changed circumstances in Ministries and departments, and a consequential reordering of priorities. They do not increase the total appropriation in any way. Statements showing the transfers approved by the Minister of Finance and the Economy and explanations for these transfers were attached to the agenda which was provided to the hon. Members of this House.

Mr. Speaker, hon. Members may recall that at the time of the presentation of the 2012 budget in October 2011, oil revenue was projected using an oil price of US \$75 a barrel and a gas price of US \$2.75 per million cubic feet. Based on these assumptions, among others, the total revenues projected for fiscal 2012 was \$46,992 million. Correspondingly, the forecast for expenditure was \$54,634.4 million, resulting in an anticipated deficit of \$7,642.4 million for fiscal 2012.

In September 2012, at the time of the preparation of the 2013 budget, a final projection for fiscal 2012 was prepared for inclusion in the draft estimates 2013. The revised revenue was projected at \$47.7 billion and revised expenditure at \$54.4 billion, yielding an anticipated deficit of \$6.7 billion. This revised position was laid and presented to the Parliament at the time of the delivery of the 2013 budget in October 2012.

The fiscal data for 2012 is now substantially finalized and the provisional out-turn in central government fiscal operations for fiscal 2012 is now a deficit of \$3.1 billion. This was approximately \$3.6 billion less than the final revised projections. The variance was mainly as a result of a higher than projected

revenue of \$1.2 billion, the effect of which was complemented by a lower than projected expenditure of \$2.3 billion.

I will now move to apprise this honourable House of the details of the significant variances with respect to revenue and expenditure arising therefrom. Permit me to apprise this honourable House of the variances on the revenue side between that presented at the time of the presentation of the 2012 budget in October 2011 and the provisional out-turn.

Mr. Speaker, as indicated earlier, the revised revenue for fiscal 2012 was \$47.7 billion, whereas the actual amount collected was \$48.9 billion, which was \$1.2 billion higher than the revised projections. The positive variance was due mainly to higher receipts under taxes on income and profits of \$2.1 billion, other taxes of \$26 million and unemployment levy of \$221.7 million. These were partially offset by lower receipts under taxes on goods and services of \$189.8 million, taxes on international trade of \$23.3 million and non-tax revenue of \$895.7 million.

In the category of taxes on income and profits, receipts from the oil companies were \$1.7 billion higher than anticipated, mainly because actual oil and gas prices were significantly higher than those assumed for the last quarter of fiscal 2012, and arrears of payments were received for the years 1996, 2001, 2006, 2008, 2010 and 2011 as a result of the completion of audits of production-sharing arrangements.

The higher take of \$405 million from other companies and \$122.4 million from individuals was primarily due to larger than expected amounts received from companies in the energy and non-energy sectors. The positive variance of \$221.7 million from unemployment levy was also as a result of actual oil and gas prices in the last quarter of fiscal 2012, being higher than that projected, and outstanding amounts which were received for 2002, 2006, 2010 and 2011.

The higher take from the preceding areas was partially offset by lower receipts from withholding taxes of \$87.8 million, which was mainly attributable to lower payments of dividends and branch profits remitted, and health surcharge of \$21 million due to a decrease in payments from the non-energy sector.

The higher take from the preceding category was partially offset by lower receipts from:

1. Taxes on goods and services of \$189.8 million which reflected reduced collections from excise duty of \$42.2 million and from value added tax of \$156.9 million, mainly as a result of diminished activity in the energy

and non-energy sectors, especially exploration and production, refining and processing, and service industries, and also because a quantum of refunds of VAT was increased to reduce the backlog.

2. Taxes on international trade of \$23.3 million which was due mainly to a reduction in the level of imports in the non-energy sector also contributed to this decline. In addition, non-tax revenue of \$895.7 million and from royalty on oil of \$79 million was also reduced as a result of decreased production.

Mr. Speaker, I now turn to the expenditure side. Whereas the revised expenditure for fiscal 2012 was projected at the time of the presentation of the 2013 budget at \$54.4 billion, the actual amount spent was \$52 billion, which was \$2.3 billion lower than the revised level. The major areas in which expenditure was lower than projected were as follows:

One, personnel expenditure which was lower by \$223.8 million. In this category, salaries and COLA accounted for \$88.5 million and allowances for monthly paid officers accounted for \$71.2 million of the variance. This was mainly the result of delays in recruiting trainees for the prison service, and the payment of arrears of increments to fire officers in the Ministry of National Security. Other areas of lower expenditure were spread across the various sub-items under all Ministries and departments and have been explained in previous documents.

2.30 p.m.

Two, other goods and services' expenditure was lower by \$888 million mainly under the subcategories of goods and services of \$507 million and minor equipment purchases of \$149 million, and management expenses and expenses of bond issues of \$292.4 million.

Three, interest payments were less than projected by \$577 million. The lower expenditure is attributed to the issuance of less treasury notes and treasury bills than were anticipated in the revised projections. In addition, no new loans were negotiated and repayments on some loans were less than projected because of favourable interest rates.

The lower expenditure in the preceding categories was partially offset by higher expenditure under current transfers which was more than projected by \$120.3 million. This was attributable mainly to expenses in connection with international financial institutions of \$80.5 million, grants to assisted primary schools of \$50.6 million, Infrastructure Development Fund expenditure of \$53

million, Heritage and Stabilisation Fund transfers of \$719 million, First Citizens Bank Limited indemnity clause of \$68 million, Caribbean Airlines Limited transfers of \$214.7 million and Eximbank equity injection of \$22.7 million. This higher-than-projected expenditure under current transfers was partially offset by lower-than-projected transfers to state entities and lower disbursements from the GATE Fund and the Caricom Petroleum Fund.

Transfers to statutory boards and similar bodies were less than projected by \$100.9 million. With respect to local government bodies, a number of corporations experienced delays in processing payments before the end of the fiscal year, and in obtaining approvals to complete various works of a total value of \$45.5 million.

Under the THA, expenditure was less than the revised projections by \$26.3 million as a collective agreement for the daily-paid staff was not finalized. Development programme expenditure was \$629.4 million lower than projected. Expenditure was lower under the Consolidated Fund by \$192.3 million and under the Infrastructure Development Fund by \$437.1 million.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I wish to reiterate that the Finance Committee met at 11:00 a.m. and agreed to the supplementation of the 2012 appropriation as outlined, the variation of the 2012 appropriation, the write-off of losses approved for fiscal 2012, and noted the transfer of funds between subheads of the same Head of Expenditure for the 2012 fiscal year.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move.

Question proposed.

Mr. Colm Imbert (*Diego Martin North/East*): Mr. Speaker, it is not my wish to speak in any great detail this afternoon because I am sure that hon. Members would wish to be elsewhere. Hon. Members opposite might wish to be engaging in some form of group therapy [*Laughter and desk thumping*] and hon. Members on this side would prefer to be elsewhere celebrating [*Desk thumping*] because, Mr. Speaker, it was wetting after wetting after wetting. [*Laughter and desk thumping*] But, anyway, Mr. Speaker—[*Interruption*]

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Today is today; there will always be a tomorrow.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Today is today and tomorrow is tomorrow.

Mr. C. Imbert: Yes. Mr. Speaker, before I get into the subject at hand, I notice that some of the Members opposite are so “bazodee” with “licks”.

Miss Mc Donald: “Dey quiet!”

Mr. C. Imbert: The Member for D’Abadie/O’Meara is wearing a tie that is

almost red. [*Laughter*] Almost red! The Member for Pointe-a-Pierre is not here but he too is wearing a tie that is almost red.

Hon. Member: “Allyuh color blind, ah what!”

Mr. C. Imbert: And my—well, burgundy, and my spies in Tobago told me that the Prime Minister, when she left Coco Reef this morning, was resplendent in a red outfit [*Laughter and desk thumping*] which she has since changed. [*Laughter*] But, you know, [*Crosstalk*] “Nah, doh try dat.” Bright red; “bazodee”!

But, Mr. Speaker, you know, the Minister made the point that the Finance Committee meeting was at 11:00 a.m., and this new Minister of Finance and the Economy clearly is about breaking records. Because, we had a situation last month where the hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy subjected us to a situation where we had to go through 158 pages of a securities industry Bill in two weeks to meet some deadline that they knew about for two years, and here we are again. Everybody in the Ministry of Finance and the Economy knows that you must close the accounts within four months of the end of the last financial year, and the financial year ends on September 30, so everybody in that Ministry knows—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: That is right!

Mr. C. Imbert:—that you have to do your business and close your accounts by the end of January, but here we are on January 22. This is why I have nicknamed him “Last-Minute Larry” [*Laughter and desk thumping*] because the hon. Minister, Mr. Speaker, he is making a habit of this—a habit.

Hon. Member: He is a nice guy!

Mr. C. Imbert: Next week, we are going to do a finance Bill; that is two or three days before the deadline for the confirmation of taxes announced in the annual budget address of last year. Last-Minute Larry.

So we came here today—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: “Licks like fire!”

Mr. C. Imbert: “Yes, that was a licking, boy!” [*Laughter*] So we came here today, and we are presented with these documents missing all sorts of important information. We are told, Mr. Speaker, if you go to pages—I believe it is pages 14 and 15 I think, that there has been an increase in the appropriation for a number of Ministries totaling \$2 billion, and a decrease in the appropriation of a number of Ministries also totaling \$2 billion. Some of these increases have been substantial and the Minister gave no explanation.

For example, the Ministry of Tertiary Education and Skills Training has increased \$882 million; Ministry of Science and Technology decreased by \$927 million, and right through these two pages: substantial increases, substantial decreases. No explanation! No details!

It is incredible that you have a \$2 billion variation in expenditure, and the Minister comes to this House and does not present us with a single detail, and when we raised the question in the committee, we were glibly told by the hon. Minister—well, not glibly, let me take that back because the Minister was simply repeating what he was told by someone—that these details are not normally provided. So we are supposed to come here and debate billions of dollars in variations of expenditure, and we are being told “these details are not normally provided and that is why you did not get them”.

Well, Mr. Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth. I have in my possession the minutes of the meeting of the Finance Committee of May 2011 and the minutes of the Finance Committee meeting of May 2012, and in each case these minutes dealt with, among other things, supplementations of appropriations for the fiscal year. If I go to the minutes of May 2011, one will see that when the Minister at the time indicated that there would be an increase in expenditure of some \$2.7 billion in a number of Ministries, and a decrease in expenditure, approximately \$600 million, if I am reading it correctly.

In this document, explanations for the proposed increases are as follows, and it went through: Elections and Boundaries, Tax Appeal Board, recurrent expenditure, debt servicing, Ministry of National Security, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Local Government—there was an explanation for every single change, every single increase in expenditure in the document presented to the Finance Committee in 2011. Similarly, in the minutes of the Finance Committee May 2012, supplementation, again, Mr. Speaker, detailed explanation for every single increase. But the new Minister comes and tells us “this information is not normally provided”.

Mr. Minister, listen, you have been in office now for a while, stop listening to people because they are leading you astray. It is an insult to this Parliament to come and ask us to agree to changes in expenditure of \$2 billion and not provide a single detail far less a single explanation. Because when we queried it, we were told, “Well, we will get the explanation just before the sitting”. Well, this is what we get—the Schedule; not a single explanation inside of here. This is just details of the changes in heads of expenditure but unlike the information presented in the Finance Committee of 2011 and 2012, there are no explanations.

So, since you have given none to us, I would like the Minister to tell us in his winding-up, if he can—explain, for example, why the allocation to the University of the West Indies has been decreased from \$713 million to \$492 for fiscal 2012. What happened? “Yuh stop sending money to university? The University of the West Indies no longer important? Yuh cut de allocation by \$220 million.” Explain, Mr. Minister because we certainly are not going to agree with this. You have cut the allocation to the Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex from \$65 million to \$42 million; a cut of \$22 million under the Ministry of Science and Technology. So that is the university services that have provided teaching of doctors at Mount Hope cut by \$22 million. What is the reason for that?

The subsidy for Mount Hope students gone from \$44 million to \$29 million; a chop of \$15 million; the National Training Agency reduced from \$41 million to \$22 million; a decrease of \$18 million. The University of Trinidad and Tobago—you know, Mr. Speaker, we are hearing all sorts of things about that institution, it seems to be in turmoil—cut from \$419 million to \$313 million; reduced allocation in an amount of \$105 million.

Dr. Rambachan: Efficiency!

Mr. C. Imbert: Efficiency, efficiency—incompetence! Because you see when you come to this Parliament and you ask the Parliament to approve—[*Crosstalk*] yes—you ask this Parliament to approve expenditure of \$54 billion and you end up spending only \$52 billion, that is not efficiency, that is incompetence.

Hon. Member: That is right! [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Volney: “Cut out de bobol!”

2.45 p.m.

Mr. C. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, and yes, hear this one at the back there, cut out the “bobol”. You have no clue about what you are talking—Mr. Speaker, through you. No clue. So, cut the University of Trinidad and Tobago by \$100 million, cut the University of the West Indies by \$220 million and that is efficiency. That is efficiency.

Servol, reduced from \$20 million to \$13 million, a cut of \$7 million. YTEPP, cut from \$94 million to \$66 million, \$27 million reduction. National Energy Skills Centre, cut from \$40 million to \$24 million, a cut of \$16 million. Mr. Minister, please explain? Your Government has no interest in education? This is all in one Ministry I am calling here, you know. Cuts to the University of the

West Indies, University of Trinidad and Tobago, Servol, YTEPP, National Energy Skills Centre and National Training Centre.

It is really an insult to this Parliament for the Minister to come here and not explain these substantial reductions. You know, we ask questions and we knew we would not get the answers. If you look at the minutes that have been circulated, we asked a number of questions. For example, we asked for the final cost of the Chancery Lane Complex project. The information has not been provided, and I know that there are some Members on the other side who want the answer to this as well. We are not the only ones who want to know how much the Chancery Lane Hospital is going to cost. We also asked for the cost of converting the complex to a hospital. No answer.

Miss Mc Donald: The contractors.

Mr. C. Imbert: We are asked for the names of the contactors who worked on the conversion of the Chancery Lane Complex to a hospital, and the amount spent. No information.

With respect to the highway, we asked for the anticipated cost of land acquisition. No information. We asked for the names of the persons whose lands had been acquired, and the amounts paid to them. No information. This is what happens when you have a Finance Committee meeting at 11.00 and you want to have a sitting of the House at 1.30. It is impossible to provide the information.

Mr. Speaker, what I found was one of the most ludicrous answers—this is why I do believe that, you know, they are “bazodee” with licks, because when you look at the answer to the question with respect to the helicopters. What are the helicopters being used for? Listen to the answer: the use for which the helicopters are being applied cannot be disclosed for security purposes. [Laughter] “Yeah”, taking Machel Montano to Tobago?

Hon. Member: “Nah”.

Mr. C. Imbert: We know, you know. We are simply seeking confirmation of what the whole country knows. [Desk thumping] Going to Tobago to campaign? We know. [Desk thumping] I was in Tobago on Saturday and I saw a national security helicopter on the tarmac whole day just waiting to ferry persons from the other side back and forth to campaign in the Tobago campaign. But you know, these things are not taxis, these pieces of national security equipment.

You know, we have had an issue with crime recently—there is a lot of denial on the other side. They come up with all sorts of elaborate approaches to dealing

with issues. When you look at the crime statistics for 2012, considerably worse than 2011. When you look at every category of violent crime, there has been an increase in virtually every single category of violent crime in 2012 when compared to 2011. When you look at larceny, when you look at wounding, shooting, murder, kidnapping, sexual assault, all of these categories of crime in 2012, the numbers are significantly more than 2011. And you want to know why?

You see, Mr. Speaker, when we demitted office, the previous administration had a plan to deal with our porous borders. You know, we did have a plan. It involved the acquisition of offshore patrol vessels. It involved the acquisition of helicopters which is what we were talking about, because the helicopters—these helicopters, these particular four AgustaWestland helicopters were designed to be used on the vessels with one in reserve. There were three offshore patrol vessels and each vessel designed with a helipad to accept one of these helicopters.

So the way the system would work: you would have the offshore patrol vessel patrolling a considerable distance out to sea with a helicopter on it. You would have one helicopter on land as a backup. When you have the radar system or some other surveillance equipment pick up a drug trafficker coming out of Venezuela or coming out of perhaps Colombia, and so on, heading into our territorial waters—the whole point was that as the radar picks up the drug trafficker, the helicopter can take off, flying at a much faster speed and intercept the drug trafficker together with the fast interceptors that are on the offshore patrol vessel as well, and on land. So, these helicopters were designed specifically to be used as part of a matrix of vessels that had the capacity to operate in deep water, with a helicopter on it with the fast interceptors in back up, together with the fast patrol craft, Mr. Speaker.

Look at what is happening now. These helicopters are not being used as part of a matrix of defence, as part of defending our territorial waters. Not at all because there is nothing for them to land on. There is nothing for them to be transported on offshore, so that our borders remain porous. [*Desk thumping*] You see, there is a lack of understanding on the—this is not politics you know, there is a complete lack of understanding of the situation on the other side.

When the contract was cancelled for the offshore patrol vessels, the statement was made that the battle against crime is on land, it is not at sea.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: “That’s right”.

Mr. C. Imbert: That was the statement made. Two years later, you hear the current Minister of National Security recognizing belatedly that we have porous

borders, and that we need to put in a marine surveillance system to deal with our porous borders, Mr. Speaker. So, these helicopters, instead of being used as part of an overall maritime defence strategy, are being used as taxis to carry soca stars, soca singers and calypsonians to and from various political rallies in various parts of Trinidad and Tobago.

It is unfortunate. It is entirely unfortunate—until we deal with this problem, until we deal with the fact that we need to have a maritime defence strategy that involves offshore deep-water capability, together with various forms of maritime equipment, including the helicopters that are designed to be used at sea, until we recognize that, we will continue to have porous borders, and it will continue to be virtually impossible to make any gains in the war against illegal drugs and crime.

Some years ago I read out a report from a police station up in the north-east part of the country. I think it was Balandra or somewhere around there, where there was a—I was reading a report from within the police station itself where they were talking about the amount of marijuana that comes out of St. Vincent that is offloaded in Toco and those areas—[*Interruption*] It is all right, you asked me that same question when I read it out two years ago. “How ah get it?” Trinidad is a small—how do you think, Mr. Speaker, I knew that the Prime Minister was wearing red this morning? [*Crosstalk and laughter*] Trinidad is a small country.

Hon. Member: That is not so. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. C. Imbert: You were not there. [*Crosstalk*] Mr. Speaker, the fact is—[*Interruption*]

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: [*Inaudible*] Colour blind!

Mr. C. Imbert: “Yeah”, okay, “an all yuh win 10 seats too.” [*Laughter, crosstalk and desk thumping*] The fact of the matter is, it is well known that the north-east quadrant of Trinidad is a landing stage for compressed marijuana coming out of St. Vincent. It is in all the information. You could read—there are papers on this; there are documents; people have studied the movement of narcotics out of the producer countries in South America through Trinidad and Tobago and out to Europe. I mean, this is an open secret.

So, Mr. Speaker, I call upon the Government to stop using the military helicopters as your personal taxi. Stop it! [*Desk thumping*] Stop using the helicopters to take people to political rallies. Stop it! Stop it! I mean, the people are getting tired of this. They are tired, and you saw it. You saw it—[*Desk*

thumping—that election was a complete rejection of the policies of the Government over in the last couple of years.

Dr. Gopeesingh: “Dat is your view.”

Mr. C. Imbert: [*Desk thumping*] It is a fact, a total rejection. Imagine, Mr. Speaker, an ejection of the economic policies of this Government. [*Crosstalk*] I mean, what kind of Government comes to a Parliament year after year, and asks for an appropriation of \$55 billion and then [*Interruption*] when they close the account, “dey cyar spend de money. Dey cyar spend de money. Dey come here every year talking about projects and dey cannot spend the money. Cyar spend de money.”

I took the opportunity before this debate to take a look at the *Public Sector Investment Programme* for 2011, *Public Sector Investment Programme* for 2012, *Public Sector Investment Programme* for 2013. Let us take a look in particular at the PSIP for 2012, Mr. Speaker. If I go to page 55 in this document, let us take a look. When you look at these three documents, in each one of them, you see all sorts of promises with respect to projects. Let us take page 111 in the *Public Sector Investment Programme* for fiscal 2012 which is the year under review. This section deals with roads and bridges. What did they say they were going to do in fiscal 2012? They said:

- commencement of construction of pedestrian overpasses at Wrightson Road, MovieTowne, Oropoune Gardens and Charlieville—

Now, Mr. Speaker, you are a man who travels all over the country. I am sure you have travelled along Wrightson Road. I am sure you have driven past MovieTowne. I am sure that you know where Oropoune Gardens is, up by the airport and I am sure you know where Charlieville is. Have you seen pedestrian overpasses at Wrightson Road, MovieTowne, Oropoune and Charlieville? It is a rhetorical question. The answer is, no. So, they took the whole of 2012 and they did not build a single pedestrian overpass in these locations.

Let us go to my own area. This is what they said they would do in fiscal 2012, the accounts that we are closing today:

- commencement of Diego Martin Highway expansion involving the construction of a third lane between Morne Coco and Western Main Roads southbound and construction of a two-lane carriageway from Victoria Gardens to Acton Court northbound—

Mr. Speaker, the whole of fiscal 2012 came and went, from October 01, 2011 to September 30, 2012, not a blade of grass was moved on this project. Not a blade of grass! In fact, activity on this Diego Martin project only commenced in November to December of 2012, after the financial year had been closed. Look at this one, promising it for three years:

- widening eastbound and westbound bridge B1/14 at Arouca on the Churchill-Roosevelt Highway to accommodate lanes—

You know where that is? That is by Trincity Mall.

3.00 p.m.

There have been a number of Ministers of Works in this country since this new Government came in, every single one of them promising to widen the bridge by Trincity Mall to three lanes because it is dangerous. If you are going up towards the airport, you have three lanes, and as you pass Trincity Mall, you have to go down to two lanes and then back out to three.

There was an ill-fated attempt by a former Minister of Works to get this done—ran into trouble, they had to cancel the project. The bottom line is, Mr. Speaker, projects like this which are designed to assist the country—this is not politics; we need to widen that bridge at Arouca by Trincity Mall. It is dangerous. It leads to traffic congestion. It affects everyone. If you look at the 2011, 2012, 2013 PSIP, the project is there. It is just on paper, but when you look at it in terms of implementation—complete failure.

Look at what they said they would do as well; that they were going to allocate \$230 million to the East-West Corridor transportation project, funds to be used for completion of Package C of the interchange which involves the construction of a flyover to take traffic from the Uriah Butler over the Churchill-Roosevelt.

Now, you would have driven up the highway, Mr. Speaker. *[Interruption]* No, I will explain. You see that is why you all cannot do anything. You cannot do anything right! You cannot get anything right! You went and spent three weeks in Tobago, up and down, campaigning, canvassing, painting the road yellow; everywhere you go, you see TOP in yellow on the asphalt. *[Desk thumping]* You look so, as you “bend a corner”, you see a yellow truck coming down the road—TOP. When you watch so, you see banner. When you watch so, you see flag—and you get zero. #Zero. *[Desk thumping]* You do not understand how to do anything. You cannot even win one seat. You have your chairman saying you “go” win 10. There is an article in the *Express* on Monday saying: “10 seats for TOP; two for PNM. If we ‘cyah’ win this election, we ‘cyah’ win none”. Well that is a true statement. You get zero.

The point is, Mr. Speaker, those of you who drive up the Churchill-Roosevelt would have seen the construction of Package C of the interchange. That project started maybe a year, 18 months ago, maybe two years, I am not certain exactly when. You see this concrete structure going up and the abutments go up and the beams go on and the deck is constructed, and then it stops. So all you see in front of you is a concrete bridge hanging in space, Mr. Speaker. So the travelling public has been looking at this concrete bridge that has been constructed there about 12 months and wondering what is going on. Well, I will tell you what is going on, Mr. Speaker.

The geniuses who decided to construct Package C on the Churchill-Roosevelt interchange, which would allow traffic coming from south on the Uriah Butler to go over the Churchill-Roosevelt, they forgot the approach and exit ramps. That is performance PP style. You build the concrete bridge in the middle and you forget the two approach ramps that take you up and down over the concrete bridge. So you leave the concrete there hanging for 12 months. That is why the project cannot finish. That is why the statement made in the PSIP of 2012, “the funds will be used to complete package C”, is nonsense. Complete what? “Dey now doing it; now doing the approaches to the concrete bridge. [*Interruption*] Talking bout ‘London bridge falling down’. You doh even understand that a bridge, you ha to go up and yuh ha to come back down. Yuh cyar use a helicopter; doh mine yuh have plenty helicopter and you use them as taxi; but yuh cyar helicopter up to the bridge and then helicopter back dong. Yuh ha to drive up and drive dong.”

Ask yourself: who is planning in this Government? Who is planning? What upsets me when I am looking at this schedule from 2012 and I am looking at this Finance Committee minutes—there was something I went looking for. I went into the Ministry of Education. Let us forget the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure for the time being. “Let us forget them because they ain’t build no pedestrian interchange; they ain’t widen no bridge; they cyar finish de thing up by de interchange; dey just doh know what dey doing.”

Let us look at the Ministry of Education and let us see what the hon. Minister of Education told us he was going to do in terms of construction of schools. When you go into the document and you look at 2011, you look at 2012, you look at 2013, there is a repetitive statement. I think it is best illustrated in the *Public Sector Investment Programme* of 2012, since this is what we are discussing. If we go to page 68 of that document where the Minister is telling us what he was going to do for fiscal 2012 and we go to Early Childhood Primary/Secondary Education, PSIP. This is what he says he is going to do:

Commencement of construction of Belmont Boys' RC, Rose Hill RC, Paramin RC, St. Barbara's Spiritual Shouter Baptist, La Pastora Government, Manzanilla Government, Cap-de-Ville Government, etc.

It is there in 2012; it is there in 2011; it is there in 2013. You know what is the extent of construction of the Paramin RC School, Mr. Speaker? You know what is the extent of construction? They put up a wooden shed 10 feet by 10 feet.

Dr. Gopeesingh: "You ain't build it for 15 years."

Mr. C. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, I deal with reality, you know. I had a matter on the adjournment on this issue more than one year ago. It was in December 2011—we are now in January 2013—that I brought a matter on the adjournment calling on the Minister to tell this Parliament and tell the nation and tell the people of that area when you are going to construct the Paramin Roman Catholic School.

He came to the Parliament and he said construction would start in January—and you know what they did in January? They put a wooden shed on the site 10 feet by 10 feet; they paint it white; put a sign "Construction of Paramin RC School" and since January 2012, the extent of construction of the Paramin RC School is a wooden shed 10 feet by 10 feet and a sign "Construction of Paramin RC School".

Dr. Gopeesingh: Let me explain to you.

Mr. C. Imbert: There is nothing to explain.

Dr. Gopeesingh: You know the answer.

Mr. C. Imbert: The people do not want to hear you. The people want to see. Mr. Speaker —

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member—

Mr. C. Imbert: "I doh know why he is heckling me, Mr. Speaker."

Mr. Speaker: Member for Caroni East, Minister of Education, I am sure you will speak in this debate, so if you can kindly take notes and allow the Member to speak in silence.

Mr. C. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, it is all very well, you know. There are always reasons for everything, you know; but people "doh" want to hear that, you know. If you tell the people you are going to build a school in their area and the matter is raised in Parliament and you give an undertaking and you do not do it, then, I am sorry, you have failed, and when you look at the PSIP for 2011, 2012 and 2013 and

all you see is a notation saying, “Construction of Paramin RC” and when you go to Paramin you see nothing, it is just like the pedestrian overpass by MovieTowne—it does not exist. It is just like the completion of Package C—has not been done, Mr. Speaker. It is just like the widening of the Diego Martin highway—it only started in November of last year, Mr. Speaker. It is all in the mind and you see, that is why they got that licking yesterday because they are out of touch with reality.

Mr. Speaker, I have been there and I have done that. I have won election; I have lost election. I have been in government; I have been out of government. I have been voted into government with acclamation. I have been thrown out of government with a landslide. I have been there. I understand, when people get tired of you, this is what happens—and they are just in absolute, absolute denial. *[Interruption]*

Your turn will come very soon. Mr. Speaker, when you superimpose the results of the 2010 election on the 12 electoral districts in Tobago, the PP would have won 11 out of the 12, you know. PNM “woulda win” one. That is in May 2010. Two and a half years later, “dey gone” from 11 to nought and PNM gone from one to 12. Where is the Member for Tobago West? Where is he? I have something to tell him, but he is not here.

Minister of Finance and the Economy, in all seriousness now—where has he gone?

Mr. Jeffrey: Nobody around.

Mr. C. Imbert: “You know, Mr. Speaker, dis—yeah, yeah, sure. Dat’s true; dat’s true.”

Dr. Gopeesingh: “Yuh enjoying this moment, eh?”

Mr. C. Imbert: What moment? Mr. Speaker, you think I enjoy taking a look at the *Public Sector Investment Programme* and recognizing that many of the projects that were promised by this Government have not materialized? They are simply figments of their imagination? You think I enjoy, Mr. Speaker, seeing the national security helicopter being used as a personal transport vehicle for Ministers of State? *[Desk thumping]* You think I enjoy that? You think I enjoy hearing that they are taking calypsonians and carrying them to Tobago to perform at political rallies using the national security helicopter? You think I enjoy that, when the helicopter should be used to intercept drug traffickers at sea and stop the flow of blood and murder in Trinidad and Tobago? You think I enjoy that?

I do not enjoy it, Mr. Speaker. I do not enjoy it and it is no wonder when they cannot spend the money they are collecting because the whole premise of the budgets of 2011 and 2012 was predicated on kick-starting the economy with a deficit budget, stimulating the construction sector, stimulating the productive sector. This was the explanation given for the various deficit budgets. The money had to be spent to generate economic activity. It had to be spent to create jobs. It had to be spent to grow the economy.

That is what it was all for, and we go through budget debate after budget debate, and economists in the country debating the merits and the demerits of these deficit budgets: how long will Trinidad and Tobago have to continue with deficit budgets; is it sustainable; can our economy sustain all of this loan financing, and so on. We go through all of that. We debated for two years. We debate here all the projects that have to be done to make this country better and then when you look in the documents, they are not doing the work, and that is why the deficit is less than it was supposed to be—because they are not spending the money.

There is a \$2 billion shortfall in expenditure for fiscal 2012—\$2 billion shortfall! “After dey come and dey carry on and dey ask this Parliament to agree that dey must spend all dis money to kick-start de economy, den dey doh spend it, what you expect?”

Let us look at what the Minister told us, Mr. Speaker. *[Interruption]* “I nearly done.” How long have I been going? “I nearly done.” *[Interruption]* “I know that 12:0 hurtin yuh, yuh know. Dat was a wetting.”

But, Mr. Speaker, let me look at what the Minister told us. They had an additional \$1.7 billion in oil revenue that they did not expect and I am becoming very concerned at the capacity and capability within the Ministry of Finance and the Economy. I do not remember these huge variations previously. I do not recall, in previous years, where income would have been estimated at \$46 billion and it ends up at nearly \$48 billion. I do not remember these huge variations, but let us look at what the Minister told us: increased income from oil revenue of about \$1.7 billion, but lower VAT receipts of \$156 million.

Now what does lower VAT receipts tell us? Lower VAT receipts tell us that there is a problem with the economy because VAT is derived—it is a tax on the sale of goods and services, and any time you see increased VAT collections, you can immediately come to the conclusion that you have growth in your economy.

3.15 p.m.

So, when I see a reduction in VAT—projected VAT collections of \$156 million—it explains to me why the economy of Trinidad and Tobago is stagnant. The Minister of Finance and the Economy was new, and he came to this Parliament last year and told us that there would be economic growth in 2012 of 1 per cent. Everybody looked at him as, “You are a crazy man.” No offence to the Minister, but we thought he was crazy, because if you have three quarters of negative growth, how “yuh go” suddenly turn around the economy in the last quarter and grow the economy miraculously? Of course it did not come to pass. You would have heard the new Governor of the Central—Bank he himself had said, before he became Governor, that the economy would grow—admitting that the outturn for 2012 has not been very favourable, and the outturn for 2013 still looks a bit shaky—

Speaking now as a citizen and somebody who has to live here and work here, I do wish this Government would get its act together. Get your act together. You see, what is important is that you do something to stimulate the economy. Get the economy working; get your projects; do your work. Get your construction sector going; employ people. Let people like you. [*Laughter*]

You laugh, because I know all of you are “tootoolbay, yuh doh understand dat licking yuh get yesterday”, but it is a message that people are telling to you, that talk is cheap—“ol’ talk”. Performance beats “ol’ talk” any day. It was Panday who said that, and he was absolutely right, performance beats “ol’ talk” any day.

I am calling on the Minister. The Minister must do better. You cannot be making mistakes of this magnitude, that your calculations of income are out by \$2 billion. Your calculations of expenditure are out by \$2 billion? Two billion dollars; it is not \$2 million we are talking about—\$2 billion. So you have to come to us now and close your accounts, and you have all these huge variations. You cannot explain why; you cannot explain why the expenditure on tertiary education is so reduced. You cannot explain these cuts in UWI, in UTT. What is going on? I thought this Government was committed to education.

As I said, I would be extremely short because I would prefer not to be here. I would like the Members opposite to have some time. You know, they need to talk.

Hon. Member: Recover.

Mr. C. Imbert: They will not recover. They need to talk. They need to console themselves. They need to commiserate. They need to do some introspection. [*Laughter*] They need to do a post-mortem. How could you go

from, on Monday predicting that the TOP would win 10 seats—10 seats, big and bold, 10; and: “If you cyar win this election, you would never win another one”; these were the statements made—and then it is 12/nought. I know the people on the other side do not want to be here. They did not want to come here today. They “doh” want to stay here long, they want to go home and deal with their issues, get some counselling and some therapy. [*Laughter*] Get somebody to mop their head with Limacol. [*Laughter*]

Dr. Moonilal: Bay rum.

Mr. C. Imbert: I am not bringing any alcohol into this thing. I am not encouraging “allyuh in dat”. [*Laughter*] Go and mop your head, lie down.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, I think the campaign is over. I think the results are in. I think that we should focus on the Bill.

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. [*Miss M. Mc Donald*]

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. C. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, you are right, the campaign is over, and “we win”, [*Laughter*] and “we win big”.

But as I said, none of us want to be here. This is really an unusual day, a Tuesday. What are we doing here? So I would like to give Members opposite the opportunity to go and seek counsel, try and figure out why you got that “cut tail”, [*Laughter*] and allow us to go and celebrate.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Minister of Housing, Land and Marine Affairs (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal): Mr. Speaker, I rise to make a brief intervention on the matter before us, involving the variation and supplementation measure 2012. It is also my intention to respond to a couple of issues raised this morning in the Finance Committee, specifically relating to the UDeCott project at Chancery Lane. I want to assure the Members opposite that they raised these questions at 11.00 a.m., and by 3.00 p.m. we were able to get the information to you, which I will now give you the answers to, while I address the House.

Hon. Member: It is 3.31!

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: I have no difficulty, and I am sure no one has

difficulty that my colleague opposite ensured that he would not miss a beat. Within, I think, about two seconds of his delivery he quickly went to Tobago. And he is entitled to that; this is the nature of it. The colleagues opposite are entitled to their celebratory moment, given the events of the last 24 hours or so. That is the nature of it. In fact, as my colleague, the Member for Port of Spain South, reminded us, on May 24, 2010, it was the other way around, and in local government coming later this year, it may well be the other way around again. [Laughter]

Hon. Members: No, nah!

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: So you learn with that.

Today when I came to the House I saw my colleagues opposite in red. I was assured that they were celebrating the victory of the Trinidad and Tobago cricket team [Laughter] that won the third consecutive T20 tournament on Sunday evening. [Desk thumping] We want to congratulate the Trinidad and Tobago cricket team and the captain, Dinesh Ramdin, for leading Trinidad and Tobago to a third consecutive victory in the T20. The West Indies women team, not to be outdone, also defeated South Africa in the World Cup. [Desk thumping] It is only in the contribution of my honourable friend that I discovered there may be something more to that red than I thought.

Mr. Speaker, I will respond to some of these issues, but in passing I would say that my friend opposite has all reason to—the word is not crow; I do not want to use the word “crow”—to boast. But I want to say that the events of last evening had absolutely nothing to do with any one of them opposite. [Crosstalk] In fact, their contribution to that campaign was to hide. So by hiding, they now jump up the next day and beat their chest, while they contributed really precious nothing to events there. But they are entitled to, because the logo of their party was used. [Crosstalk] So they are entitled to that, although contributing nothing and really hiding away from everything. But more would be said at another time.

Mr. Speaker, the matter of Chancery Lane; I just want to put things in perspective. Upon assuming office in 2010, the Chancery Lane Administrative Complex was under construction. At that time, I am instructed, a total of \$550 million was spent on the Chancery Lane building. This would include infrastructure and the built out. It was at that time still a shell at a cost of \$550 million—a shell of a building costing \$550 million.

My honourable friend today carried on and on, and on, and on, talking about the Government’s failure to spend money. I want to remind him that when he was in office, they had no failure in spending money. In fact, they had no failure in

wasting money, and a shell at Chancery Lane cost \$550 million. This morning they asked; it is on record. They asked what was the cost and how much money was spent at Chancery Lane, before the conversion. It was \$550 million for the shell.

Mr. Speaker, they also asked the cost of conversion of this building. I want to indicate to the House that I am informed that upon inheriting the base building at a cost of \$550 million, there has been marginal or negligible cost in terms of conversion, because the challenge was to take the building as it existed and then redesign and outfit for the completion of a San Fernando hospital.

You see, Mr. Speaker, my friend opposite made mention of expenditure, failure to spend and so on. One of the accusations raised about the former administration was that they spent. But what did they spend on? They spent on projects—the Calder Hart years—which would not bring immediate social or economic development to Trinidad and Tobago.

As many of us in south would know, over the years we have had citizens of south Trinidad in particular—constituents of mine—who have gone to the San Fernando General Hospital, which was built in 1958. The British built a hospital in San Fernando in 1958. Citizens, particularly from south Trinidad and others from other places as well, have had the experience of going to that institution and they could not get a bed. Elderly persons, women, would stay on a bench or lie down on the ground because they could not be provided with a bed.

Mr. Speaker, do you know that they had a very archaic policy—which I pray to God is not in place now—where if you spent the night on a bench in the hospital or on the ground lying down because you could not get a bed, when they passed around in the morning to serve breakfast, the rule was that you could only be served breakfast if you were on a bed? So you had citizens of this country lying down on the ground, spending the entire night on a bench, and in the morning the position of the staff was that those persons could not be served breakfast. They could not get juice, milk, toast or eggs. They could not be served a breakfast because they did not have a bed. That was the condition we inherited.

Upon entering office, looking at that, looking at the indignity meted out to citizens of this country, by the failure to provide health care—basic health care not high-quality health care—the Government of Trinidad and Tobago took the decision that it is in the interest of our citizens that we provide health care and expand the San Fernando General Hospital, built in 1958. Therefore, we looked at the shell building, which at that time cost \$550 million, and decided to convert that into a hospital.

Today I am proud to put on record that in December 2012, as promised, the Prime Minister, myself, the Minister of Health, hon. Dr. Fuad Khan, opened and began the commissioning of the San Fernando Teaching Hospital at Chancery Lane. [*Desk thumping*]

To my friends opposite, that may not mean much, but to the 100,000 citizens in central and south that depend on those institutions, that means a lot. That visionary decision to convert to a hospital, was taken by this Government. It is interesting to note that the original cost of the Chancery Lane Administrative Complex, approved by the then Cabinet, was \$720 million. The estimate for outfitting that building, as an administrative complex, was estimated at \$150 million. Now, if you add \$720 to \$150 you get, I imagine, in the vicinity of \$870 million for an administrative complex. That, Mr. Speaker, was the policy direction of the previous Government.

3.30 p.m.

As of now, the UDeCoTT reports that they have expended a total of \$756 million for construction buildout and for fixtures including medical equipment—\$756 million. We estimate a total cost of outfitting and completion of the hospital—and this was the question raised—[*Interruption*]

Miss Mc Donald: Yeah.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—we estimate a total cost, including VAT, for the hospital at Chancery Lane to be \$900 million. Do you know what that means? Remarkably it means that for \$30 million we got a San Fernando Teaching Hospital—for \$30 million more than they were spending on an administrative centre; for \$30 million more we got, I think, a 256-bed facility.

That new San Fernando hospital—teaching hospital—will be connected to the old hospital through an air bridge, a walk. So that if you land—and I would like to speak to the Member for Diego Martin North/East—by helicopter at the helipad in San Fernando, and that helicopter is bringing a patient, you will be able to take that patient from the helipad to the San Fernando Teaching Hospital in five minutes, more or less.

I will come to the use of the helicopter in a little while because you see when my friend was Minister of Works they transported four soca artistes to go and open an overpass down at Grand Bazaar, and he does not want us to remember that. So today, to hear them talk about using helicopter and which soca artiste and which chutney artiste, and which jazz artiste; when you opened the

overpass—[*Crosstalk*] and you know, Mr. Speaker, it was not completed. It was not completed. “They pull ah piece ah iron across de road. They pull ah piece ah iron across de road.” They spent \$5 million for a function. A helicopter arrived and who was in the helicopter?

Mr. Roberts: Bunji “come off”. [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Whoever is this man they call Bunji. This man Bunji arrived with whoever—who is it, “I doh know ’bout this singer—they arrive by helicopter to entertain people because they pull a piece ah iron across de road; they say we have ah flyover.” That was the helicopter use.

Miss Mc Donald: “Oh, yuh get up.” [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: They used national security assets for that. Today, they stand up with a straight face and question about using national security assets. “So how we arrive? With parachute? How we arrive? By wind glider?”

Hon. Member: All right.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: “How we come eh, with a submarine?” It was a helicopter. There were scenes on television, and so on, in the night. They were drinking champagne. “They were guzzling whisky and wolfing down strimps when they pull de piece ah iron across de road.” [*Desk thumping*] That is what they were doing.

Hon. Member: Yes, man.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: That is what they were doing. [*Laughter*] They were wolfing down “strimps” and guzzling Johnny Walker Blue using a helicopter to transfer Bunji Garlin to open. Today, they stand up with a straight face and accuse this Government, you know, of misusing assets and so on.

Mr. Roberts: “Bunji mash up de flyover. Mash it up like chilli bibi.”

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: You know, I want to make a point to my friend from Diego Martin North/East. Let me make a point to him. Yesterday was a fairly historic day in the United States with the inauguration of President Barack Obama. But Barack Obama, President—and we extend congratulations to him as well—but when he was campaigning as President, what he used? A New York City cab? A yellow taxi? He used whatever facilities were allowed by the President of the United States, because he is the President of the United States.

Mr. Sharma: As Manning did all the time.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: So, the former Prime Minister, his leader from San Fernando East, when he was campaigning for election—“wha, he jump in a PH car?”

Mr. Warner: A bicycle.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: He used a bicycle to campaign? They used the same assets. They used the same facilities of the State, Mr. Speaker, whether it was a car or a van.

Hon. Member: He did not use that.

Mr. Imbert: “Doh worry wit dem.”

Miss Mc Donald: “He never use no helicopter.”

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Let me get back to Chancery Lane before they end up in Chancery Lane: Mr. Speaker, the Chancery Lane building, \$900 million to complete. “I want tuh tell Diego Martin North/East, he could talk how much he want, he did nothing to help in Tobago, and he won an election by 400 votes.

Hon. Member: “Where he was?”

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: He was not allowed in Tobago.

Mr. Sharma: Not one day.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: He lost Paramin and in the next election we will ensure that we have about four maxis more—

Mr. Roberts: And then we will take it from there.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—and that could well be the end of him. [*Crosstalk*] You know.

Mr. Warner: “That margin too big.”

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: The margin is too big; and we will get the man to vote who you said died, when you went to the EBC. When you went to the EBC the man who you said “dead”, we will get him to vote. Mr. Speaker, let me get back to this. He wants to distract me.

They asked about contractors as well I think, that was another question they asked. The Chancery Lane Teaching Hospital is done on a design built for conversion purposes as a government to government arrangement between the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and the Government of Austria. The Austrian contractor, technical project manager, is Vamed, and the contractor project manager from Trinidad and Tobago is Exeqtech.

It is noteworthy with this project that it is a government to government arrangement with the project manager Vamed—technical project manager—and Exeqtech, construction project manager.

Mr. Sharma: They were PNM project contractors.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: I understand, well I do not know their political affiliation.

Mr. Imbert: They asked to be contractors.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Hold on—let me indicate that the people who are working at the site, 95 per cent of those persons employed at that site are citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] So, although it is a government to government arrangement, part of our arrangement is to ensure that over 90 per cent of the workforce are locals. Might I add that several of the contractors, the subcontractors at that site, are also from the city of San Fernando and surrounding districts, not only Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Sharma: That means San Fernando East—

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: I am further informed that the subcontractors working with the project manager—construction project management team—many of those subcontractors are indeed contractors who had worked on the original building. The subcontractors who were working on the original administrative complex were retained to continue working although it was a conversion process.

Mr. Speaker, Vamed was chosen for several reasons; among them, they had a quite distinguished track record of doing similar projects, particularly in Africa, where they were able to convert buildings to general hospitals. They were able, in several areas, to convert buildings—mid-stream in construction—for use as a hospital, and they were selected for several reasons including that. Also because of their arrangement where they utilized, fully, local subcontractors on the project. At the lower level, several contractors involved there for various goods and services are also contractors that have been successful in doing work in other areas of the public construction projects.

So those were the issues raised, I think, this morning concerning cost construction, estimated final cost, et cetera. I imagine you have a question.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Minister for giving way, and I thank him most profusely for that information. But you have spoken about the project managers; we were really interested in the names of the individual contractors.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Sharma: That is private information.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: I am informed that we may have about 15 or 20 local contractors and we will seek to get the list, the names, for you of those local contractors. It should not be difficult to get, but they would be working under both Vamed and Exeqtech. Okay? Those are matters concerning Chancery Lane.

May I add that in debating this matter—variation and supplementation—a major part of this had to do with the reassignment of portfolios and the reassignment of departments from one Ministry to another. You would notice, for example, the creation of the new Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources meant that significant variations had to be made when we moved budgetary items or had to spend rather in a new Ministry for which the budget of 2012 did not provide in terms of line items, and significantly for water and environment which has a significant financial outlay.

Mr. Speaker, my friend opposite also raised the issue of crime and the use of the national security assets and we can provide a more detailed use of that. I want to inform my friend opposite who is not a security expert himself, but is a general expert on all things—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Warner: Everything.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—and he reads a lot from the cell phone and so on, but having the helicopters—[*Interruption*]*—*and the iPads and so on, where I imagine you made your contribution by Internet to Tobago, because you were not here, you did not contribute, you did nothing. So, I imagine you were the one probably sending those messages on election day with the phone. The EBC, I think, is searching you out.

On these matters of the use of the helicopter, the Minister of National Security has taken note of it, and would prepare a statement if the House this evening requires some detail on the use of those assets. The Opposition also has another trick up their sleeve—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: What is that?

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—where they make comparisons in terms of dealing with crime with 2010, 2011 and 2012. It is this very Opposition who condemned the Government—condemned and maybe continue to do so—on the institution of a state of emergency in 2011. When we stood in this Parliament, time and time again, and gave the data showing the reduction in violent crime and murder during the state of emergency, our friends opposite condemned again. They said

you “cyar” use those figures; that was a state of emergency 2011: “you cyar compare anything to 2011 because you had a state of emergency, so you artificially suppress crime.” That was their—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Warner: Yes.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—as if, you know, this was some high science, you know. So any time we spoke about the state of emergency and the successes, 40 thousand rounds of ammunition seized—

Hon. Member: Uh-hmm.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—a zero murder rate for a month. When we spoke of this, Members opposite said do not compare, you cannot. You know, they stand up in the Parliament now and compare crime data 2012 to 2011. And then, what happened to that argument? Where did it go? You cannot compare 2012 to 2011.

Mr. Imbert: Why not?

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: And 2011 had a state of emergency. Why do you not compare to 2009—

Mr. Imbert: Why should I?

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—the last full year that you had the opportunity to manage the affairs of the nation and to deal with crime in 2009.

Hon. Member: Tell him. Tell him.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: You see, Mr. Speaker, they would not want to look at 2009, because in 2009—[*Interruption*—why you lose what? [*Crosstalk*] I want to tell you—

Mr. Imbert: Stay in your comfort zone.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—that the strategy in Tobago may have been a successful one for you, but in no way could you import that strategy in Trinidad “eh”. [*Desk thumping*] So, if you think that strategy coming here, that [*Desk thumping*]—you have to wrap up that strategy and keep that at Pigeon Point. You have to wrap up that strategy and bury it at Castara, Calder Hall. [*Crosstalk*] Listen, that strategy cannot be imported here, and he knows that, because if you import that strategy you would be the first one to lose Member for Diego Martin North/East. [*Crosstalk*]

So the strategy worked. I am not saying it was a good strategy but it worked. Your strategy was not good, but “it work, it work.” “But doh make a mistake and

bring dat strategy to Trinidad eh. Doh make dat mistake at all, and doh think you could bring it here.” In fact, their leader has a little more sense than that. I doubt he would do that.

Mr. Speaker, 2009: so the murder rate in 2009, 507—507, but by 2010, 473; 2011—state of emergency, 352, less than a murder a day—352; in 2012, no state of emergency—377. So you have moved from 2010—well, 2009, their first full year, 2009, 507 murders.

Mr. Warner: The last full year for them.

Mr. Imbert: “Yuh doh like 12?”

Mr. Sharma: Great is the PNM.

Mr. Imbert: “May 2012, yuh doh like it?”

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: So, you can full one 25-seat maxi now. So you boast. You could fill one. You have 11 here not 12.

3.45 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, 2009, 507 murders. That was the last time that my friend, the Member for Diego Martin North/East guided national security. I think he was a member of the National Security Council.

Mr. Imbert: No. No. No.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: You were not?

Mr. Imbert: Never!

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Okay, he was never a member, so he speaks without information. [*Laughter*] He has confirmed that he speaks without information.

So my friend who sat with colleagues from the National Security Council, 507 murders in 2009; by 2012, in that three-year period, Mr. Speaker, 377, no state of emergency. None! [*Desk thumping*]

Now, when we convey this to the population, that 377—[*Interruption*] You know why the results was like that. You know why?

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Results were.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: You know why it was like that, and my friend, the Member for Point Fortin, the less said about her—Mr. Speaker, 507, 2009; 377, 2012. [*Interruption*] Wounding and shooting—[*Interruption*] [*Laughter*]

Miss Mc Donald: “What yuh all laughing at?”

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: I am not laughing at the Member for Point Fortin.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Let them laugh.

Hon. Member: “She buy tha medicine on the road.” [*Laughter*]

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, wounding and shooting, 2009, 685 cases. Six hundred and eighty-five in 2009. What is it in 2012? Five hundred and sixty-eight. More than 100 less incidents.

Mr. Speaker, the figures speak for themselves. Break-in and burglary: that is an area where it touches the ordinary citizens, “eh”. Break-in and burglary, that is something that affects a lot of people, their home, their business place and so on. In 2009 their last full year in office: 5,726 incidents of break-in and burglary; in 2012: 4,262.

Mr. Warner: Tell them. Tell them.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: That is almost 2,000 incidents less—in a short period of ’09 to 2012.

Mr. Speaker, robbery: 6,086 incidents in 2009; 6,086 in 2009. What is it in 2012? Four thousand three hundred and fifty-six, in that short period. Look at that! Mr. Speaker, it was much less in 2011, but I want to tell them, using their own logic, we “doh” want to compare with 2011, there was a state of emergency.

Mr. Speaker, all the central data here—I mean, larceny of motor vehicles—we know of the criminal conduct in that area. There was a time when if you leave your car anywhere—I mean, it does not matter—at a shopping mall, by your place of work, anywhere, anywhere; there was a paranoia in this country, and I want to remind people of that. [*Interruption*] Mr. Speaker, I am not saying that today cars are safe or absolutely safe. We still have cases of persons who leave their car in a mall or somewhere and the car is stolen. But, Mr. Speaker, you remember when you buy a car you have to buy a crook lock.

Mr. Warner: That is right.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: There was something called a crook lock, and you put the crook lock and you tie it up to the brakes; you hook it up to the steering wheel and lock it. That is Trinidad and Tobago, because it was so pervasive, anywhere. You have to buy kill switch for a car if you leave it, what you call—

Mr. Warner: Cobra alarm.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—cobra alarm. Mr. Speaker, they buy cobra alarm and other alarms.

Hon. Member: Viper.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Viper, big business, because anywhere you go you had this problem. Today, I am not saying that it is perfect. Mr. Speaker, I am not saying it is perfect, but we have moved from 1,721 incidents—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker: Member for D’Adabie/O’Meara, you are disturbing the proceedings. Please!

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, larceny, 1,721 cases in 2009—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker: Member for Diego Martin North/East, you are disturbing the proceedings. Please!

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Let me get back to Tobago, I think you are happier if we talk about Tobago. You sound happy there, “gleeing”, but hear the larceny first “nah”. Larceny of motor vehicles, 1,721 in 2009. What is it in 2012? One thousand and twenty-nine. That is a fall of over 700 cases of larceny of motor vehicles. Now it is still high. “There is still the possibility yuh go somewhere yuh leave your car it would be stolen.” Sometimes on the BBM, colleagues will send out a number of a car and so on, it is stolen. It is not perfect.

But, Mr. Speaker, when in three short years you reduce the incidents of larceny of motor vehicles by 700, that tells you that you are on the right path, you are on the right line. We have to intensify our strategies, bring new policies, more resources, but you are on the right line. Seven hundred cases less over three years. Mr. Speaker, narcotics offences, 521 in 2009; 2012, 428.

Mr. Warner: One hundred less murders.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, in terms of serious crime, all categories, 2009, 22,000 incidents of serious crimes—2009, 22,000—2012, 17,500.

Mr. Warner: Five thousand less.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: You see, Mr. Speaker, that is 5,000 less. Five thousand less incidents of serious crime in three years. What is that? I want to say, Mr. Speaker, we have much more work to do. We have much more work to do. We have a lot more work to do in fighting crime. *[Crosstalk]* A lot more. It requires new policies, new strategies, new programme and more resources.

The Minister of National Security has spoken to this issue and he will again. But 5,000 less incidents of serious crimes in three years and they cannot see anything positive in that. No, they cannot see or they will not see. They will not

see because, of course, they are beating their chest, so they will not see. *[Interruption]* But, Mr. Speaker, the people, the citizens of the country would take note.

Mr. Speaker, over the recent Christmas holiday, an observation was made by a colleague of mine, that for this Christmas holiday that just went there a few weeks ago, they went to people's homes, family, friends and so on, and it was noticeable that there were homes where people would encourage you to sit in the veranda, or on a patio on a front lawn. Mr. Speaker, this was not so years ago. Years ago when you go to visit a friend or a relative, you rush in the house, lock the door—

Mr. Warner: Burglar proof.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—snap about three locks in place. Mr. Speaker, for Christmas recently, you go into certain areas, you sit in the veranda in the yard, there was not this sense of paranoia that bandits will come, burglars will come and break in, shoot and so on. *[Crosstalk]* You did not have that paranoia before—*[Interruption]*—you had it before, sorry.

Some of them, they enjoy the outdoors more, because they do not enjoy the indoors so they enjoy outdoors more. If you have a lovely veranda—my friend from Point Fortin, if you have a lovely veranda, *[Laughter]* a lovely home, you could invite guests to come, sit in the veranda, sit in the yard, put up a “lil” garden set, have a “lil” picnic and you do not have this sense of an immediate threat that you had years ago. Mr. Speaker, under their regime you could not go to Kay Donna Drive In; you sit down watching a movie and you could be robbed before intermission.

Hon. Member: What were you doing there?

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Is so I heard from the Member for Port of Spain South.

Miss Mc Donald: Me? *[Laughter]*

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: You see, Mr. Speaker, the sense of insecurity, that level of insecurity is so sharp and so high. Over the last few months, we are sensing that while we still have problems—and I want to repeat again because they will misinterpret what I am saying—we still have problems to deal with crime, but we are on the right track by both anecdotal evidence and by the hard-core evidence presented. So, both in terms of data and in terms of our own qualitative assessment, anecdotal assessment, you have a sense that persons in the society now feel a little more secure; maybe not as much.

Mr. Speaker, do you know in this country over the last few years—first to begin you are not stopping to put gas in your car, “Yuh fraid. If night ketch yuh somewhere, yuh paranoid to stop in ah gas station to put gas. Worse than that, you doh want to go out in the Quick Shop to buy a loaf of bread; yuh scared in the night that if you go out there to buy a loaf of bread in the Quick Shop, bandits could move in immediately.” Mr. Speaker, while we still have crime and much of it, today you have this sense that persons now stop—in fact, it is even more different now.

Long time, you would stop, wind up the glass and tell the attendant put \$40, \$60 gas; today most of these stations now they have self-service; you have to come out yourself and do that, and persons do this. You do not have that level of paranoia. So while there is a level of insecurity, I do not think you have the level of paranoia, and that is being supported by the statistical evidence that is before us. That is being supported by that.

So, Mr. Speaker, the Members opposite know what they talk about when they tell us on the one hand, ignore 2011, but on the other hand they compare all the statistics to 2011, they know what they are about. They are about trying, of course, to con and fool people, but we would expose them. We must continue to do that.

My friend opposite also made several comments, and may I just add that in terms of narcotics seized for the period October 2010 to January 2013, it makes for interesting reading, because there has been a marked increase in the work of the police in terms of the results, in terms of the amount of narcotics, marijuana, cocaine and heroin seized over the period of time. The figures are there, but the one I just wanted to look at is the seizure of arms and ammunition.

Over the period October 2012 to January 2013, in that short period of time, the protective services have been able to seize 111 firearms, 3,330 rounds of ammunition. And one round of ammunition can kill. That is potentially 3,330 lives that you have saved when you seize—because do not take it for granted, when you look at the newspaper and you see there was an operation and the police officers acting, you know, whether with information from the service or external informants, when they seize arms and ammunition, as citizens, you should feel happy because those items can be used to kill—you, your relatives, your children.

Mr. Speaker, I for one when I look at the newspaper and I see the police and there is a picture that they have seized guns and ammunition and so on—in fact, I

called the Minister of National Security one day and I told him I saw this in the newspaper, excellent work, please congratulate those officers on behalf of the Ministry and the Government.

Mr. Speaker, those officers who are involved in seizing arms and ammunition, they must know and we must also know that they save lives when they do that. [*Desk thumping*] They save lives and they must be complimented and commended. The Minister of National Security has now made it his business to approach the police officers to extend commendation when they do good work, so they feel that their work is worthy, they feel that their Minister and their Government appreciate their work.

Mr. Warner: For the first time.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: For the first time. And wherever they are, whether they are in Point Fortin, Cedros, central, north, Tobago; when they seize arms and ammunition, implicit in that is the saving of lives, and that is something we are very thankful for and the figures represent the type of work they are doing in this area.

Mr. Speaker, my friend opposite also spent a lot of time talking about development projects and governance, and as Minister with responsibility for two of our very large development agencies, namely, the Housing Development Corporation and the Urban Development Company Limited (UDeCOTT) it would be remiss of me if I do not respond to those issues raised in terms of the construction agenda.

Mr. Speaker, when we came into office the UDeCOTT had reported, and contractors were all over the newspapers, the TV and so on, complaining that they were not paid. We were owing some \$800 million to contractors upon entering office. We were able to recruit external claim consultants to consult on those claims, and Mr. Speaker, do you know those claims, from about \$700 million, were reduced to about \$275 million, just by going through a proper independent process, and we have paid.

4.00 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, in the HDC we have been able to pay several contractors with outstanding moneys. In fact, several of those contractors we met were also related to Members of the former Government. What did we do? We had to pay, because if they had outstanding claims we could not discriminate against them.

Miss Mc Donald: When you say related?

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Well, “people wife and husband and so on.” That is what I mean by related. So, Mr. Speaker—*[Interruption]*

Miss Mc Donald: I do not have a contracting firm.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: No, no, the Member for Port of Spain South is not one of those persons. *[Crosstalk]*

Mr. Roberts: That is why they did not tell you about the—*[Inaudible]*

Miss Mc Donald: You too cantankerous.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, we had to meet and treat with those matters. So, Mr. Speaker—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker: Please, please, please, Member for Port of Spain South, your language.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Language, language, you are capable of better language than that. So when our friends opposite talk about the construction agenda, the first thing we had to do upon coming into office was to deal with a billion dollars in claims for work. You cannot go and plant a post—you have a billion dollars to find for people. So one year was spent dealing with that.

By our second year in office we had to look at our construction agenda. When we came into office, the former Government had identified lands for home construction. When we went to those lands that they identified, we had a fight with the farmers, because farmers want the land. We had to negotiate that, deal with that.

Today, we are proud to announce that our units at Union Hall in San Fernando and Egypt in Chaguanas—and Egypt in Chaguanas was one of the contentious areas. They are the most beautiful housing units ever built by the public sector in Trinidad and Tobago—Egypt, Chaguanas. *[Desk thumping and crosstalk]* Today, Mr. Speaker—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Sharma: Hold on, I want some information.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Today, Mr. Speaker, the Member for Point Fortin knows, as a friend and colleague of mine, she is free to approach me. I think she qualifies by virtue of her position—she qualifies under a category called “Emergency”. *[Laughter]* The Minister of Housing does not have much power, but there is a recommendation the Minister of Housing could make—it concerns “Emergency” conditions. I think February 09 is the deadline, I do not know, but there is a deadline given by the honourable judge. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Roberts: Get your reference number fast.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: The point I am making is that we were able to construct in Egypt, Union Hall and Fairfield, Princes Town—we have started—the most beautiful homes ever built in the public sector. Mr. Speaker, I am even scared to go and make a tour there because if people start seeing the pictures there, they might have a riot in this country for HDC houses. [*Interruption*] They may go—all gone.

Mr. Speaker, we expect in Trestrail, in the East-West corridor, in D'Abadie/O'Meara—[*Desk thumping*] and Couva, we expect three more housing estates to begin in this quarter. We are doing the paperwork. You know, I want to say something and gently knock my desk: you know, there was a time in this country not too far, long ago, when you want to see controversy, bacchanal and scandal, there were two institutions you used to look for—HDC and UDeCOTT.

Mr. Warner: Where the money gone?

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Today, when you want to look for anything, “doh” look there.

Mr. Sharma: Look to the PNM.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Look to their past, because you see, Mr. Speaker, I want to tell you that these things happen every day. I do not know how we could deal with that. Mr. Speaker, do you know that we have now uncovered at UDeCOTT that the former UDeCOTT Board under the former administration, Mr. Calder Hart and Company Limited, do you know they took \$100 million of taxpayers' money—\$100 million, a “Special Purpose Company”. “Where they getting money from? They doh sell nothing, they doh raise profit and they doh get money”. One hundred million dollars went to invest in Clico.

Mr. Roberts: What!

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Imagine a “Special Purpose Company” of Government taking \$100 million of taxpayers' money and putting it in Clico, where it collapsed. So, do you know that UDeCOTT, Mr. Speaker, is now going cap in hand to the Minister of Finance and the Economy to say, what deal you have there to offer citizens, please offer us the same. UDeCOTT under the PNM put money in Clico. How would they pass that through a Board of Directors, I do not know. UDeCOTT is not an investing company; they are a construction project manager.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the speaking time of the hon. Minister of Housing, Land and Marine Affairs has expired.

Motion made: That the hon. Member's speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. [*Hon. E. McLeod*]

Question put and agreed to.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Thank you. You see, Mr. Speaker, I was developing on a point raised by my colleague, the Member for Diego Martin North/East. He said the problem with this Government is that we are not spending money and I am putting it to him, the problem with his administration is that they squandered the money. How can you explain a Special Purpose Company taking \$100 million of taxpayers' money and putting it in Clico? Now that would have been done to satisfy some other type of agenda.

Dr. Rambachan: Tobago vote for that.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: That is not an investment. That was done for some other purpose, that you take \$100 million and put it in Clico. Today, UDeCOT has to now decide whether we want to get back a little piece as per the arrangement. When I saw that, I immediately asked for a comprehensive enquiry into that.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to know from the former Board, when they took that decision, who took that decision, what was the justification for that decision and whether the Ministry of Finance approved that? Whether the Minister of Finance at the time approved that and who was the Minister of Finance?

The Minister of Finance, colleague and Minister of my friends opposite, was the one who on old year's day—and I do not want to give that whole story again, I do not think you all want to hear that.

Mr. Roberts: Yes, we want to hear it.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: You want to hear it?

Mr. Roberts: Yes please.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: On old year's day—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Khan: Do not forget the curlers and Cutex.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, they know the imagery well. On old year's morning when most people would be arranging—[*Laughter and interruption*]

Miss Mc Donald: Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Please—[*Interruption*]

Miss Mc Donald: Yes, Sir, 36(1), relevance.

Mr. Speaker: Yes, but you are anticipating—[*Laughter*—let me see where he is going.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: What is irrelevant? I have not said anything yet. On old year's day the former Minister clad in her duster, with curlers in her hair and Cutex on her toe, went down and bail out all “she” money—[*Interruption*]

Miss Mc Donald: Mr. Speaker, 36(1), relevance.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, let me get back to the UDeCOTT issue first, forget the curlers for now. The point I am making is that it may well be that the very Minister who they described that way was the Minister that approved UDeCOTT to invest \$100 million into Clico, and that Minister, who had an interest in that—

Mr. Roberts: Cash flow.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—watch, connect the dots—who would have heard of Clico's problems, got UDeCOTT, Calder Hart, to put \$100 million into Clico and then what happens after—duster and curlers. Let me move on.

Miss Mc Donald: Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, let me move on—[*Interruption*]

Miss Mc Donald: Mr. Speaker, hold on, 36(5), imputing improper motives.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: To who?

Miss Mc Donald: The duster. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Speaker: “Yeah”, well the duster is not here. A former Member of Parliament who has demitted office, a Minister or a Member can make reference to that person. So there is no objection here. When you leave or I leave you can refer to me as well. Continue.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Yes, Mr. Speaker, thank you. I want to end this matter by saying that I have asked for an enquiry into this matter at UDeCOTT.

Mr. Speaker, on the UDeCOTT projects now, I would like to say in response to my friend, the Member for Diego Martin North/East, I ask my friends opposite to picture this—I think that is how they talk. When you are at Chaguanas, you look on the left as you are driving south, you would see a COSTAATT University

Campus at Endeavour, Chaguanas; as you drive five minutes on the highway heading south, you look to your left you would see the first ever Children's Hospital built in the Caribbean; as you go further to Debe you find the University of the West Indies, South Campus; you go down to Penal you find the Non-communicable Diseases Hospital there; you go to Point Fortin you find a hospital at Point Fortin on the highway; you drive on the highway from Debe through Mon Desir, and you go to Point Fortin there is a Point Fortin Hospital there waiting; you coming back to San Fernando you look on Chancery Lane you see the Teaching Hospital. That is the vision.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: In your dreams.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: When you share vision they say you are dreaming, but when you are developing a country you must have dreams and you must translate those dreams into vision, translate vision into policy, translate policy into law and translate law into programme. [*Desk thumping*] I will give her that chain of development at some other time, but we will help her with housing first.

Mr. Speaker, that is our vision. I exclude the Oncology Centre, I exclude the eight police stations under construction now, as we speak, in Arima and a few other places—the eight police stations.

Mayaro: the Mayaro Fire Station should begin, cross our fingers, next month February/March, Fire Station in Mayaro, court in Sangre Grande. At UDeCOTT we are excited by this work. UDeCOTT has major projects in the health sector and the security sector—police station, fire station, hospitals, Oncology Centre in health.

Mr. Speaker, we have some smaller projects—the Pan Trinbago Headquarters. This Pan Trinbago Headquarters is something else you know. By 1998/99 the Panday administration, when the Member for Siparia was Attorney General, presented lands to Pan Trinbago for a pan headquarters. Those lands were presented by 1999, somewhere there. Do you know to this day there is another shell there near Trincity on the highway when you pass? A shell—14 years later I am told the pan fraternity is no closer to finding their headquarters. We are now in the process with UDeCOTT working with the Ministry of Arts and Multiculturalism and Pan Trinbago to complete the construction of the Pan Trinbago Headquarters. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of Finance and the Economy in this budget spoke about a Headquarters Administrative Centre for Ramleela, a very important Hindu festival that is a theatrical presentation, over days, depicting a sacred Hindu text. How “dat” sound, good? Right. Pundit Sharma indicated that I am correct on that. The

Minister of Finance and the Economy announced that we are now doing the paperwork to develop RFPs and so on, to get to Cabinet to approve the construction of a Ramleela centre in this country, long waited. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Roberts: Is it the contractor from Calcutta? [*Laughter*]

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, the less that is said about that—so these are some of the areas that we are looking at.

The construction, some saying what we are going to do, but what is happening now, eight police stations under construction, Chancery Lane under construction, UWI Debe under construction, now as we speak, infrastructure work at the Children’s Hospital has started. There are local contactors there. Housing: Princes Town, San Fernando, Egypt Chaguanas, in La Horquetta we are completing Greenvale, 700 units at La Horquetta. The Aquatic Centre—there is a complete sport asset—and I will come to a point—[*Interruption*—the Member for Tabaquite has just intervened with some wisdom and I will come to that now.

You know, I will tell you something, the Member for Tabaquite there, someone who has spent a generation in public service and has served this country at all levels—at the local government level, at the national level and at the international level by virtue of being Minister of Foreign Affairs—the Member for Tabaquite reminds us all the time that we are extremely happy to announce these mega projects to build hospitals, police stations and houses and so on, we are very thrilled with that. But, Mr. Speaker, the average person out there, that person will have a problem. It will be a box drain behind their house, and if for 14 years they could not get the box drain that box drain is more important than the “NAPA, SAPA, DAPA”—it is more important—and we have recently approved \$300 million plus for the Ministry of Local Government to undertake small projects in the community. [*Desk thumping*] That will include box drains, concrete works and road repairs for the smaller roads, the traces and so on.

4.15 p.m.

Mr. Sharma: Every electoral district, every constituency.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, we put that for every constituency, every electoral district. So that my friends opposite can check with the Minister of Local Government to ensure that their small projects are included.

So, Mr. Speaker, we have this money for the small projects. We have the large mega projects going on. We will communicate—the outstanding projects, there are two or three big projects again that we are looking at: the relocation of the

port, clearly, and the east bridge in Port of Spain, which is the Housing Development Corporation housing expansion in Port of Spain East. That is done in collaboration with the Ministry of Planning and Sustainable Development has responsibility for the Port of Spain East Development Company.

So, Mr. Speaker, when you see a matter like this before you with the variation of appropriation, movement of moneys in various departments and so on, it speaks to the efficiency that we would like to bear to have funds in a timely manner. As you go through the financial year, my friends opposite—many of them, but not all; in fact it may be all—have served in government at one level or another, and they would know that as you go through the financial year you have to source funds for certain projects. Sometimes you run out of funds. You have to ensure that you vire from one head to another. But you have to come to Parliament eventually to get parliamentary approval, and this is what we are doing today.

So that given the priorities of the Government during the financial year, there is a need for variation, and Ministers sign off on this. Mr. Speaker, time and time again Ministers sign off on variation; it requires parliamentary approval, and supplementation, Mr. Speaker, that you may need extra funds.

Mr. Speaker, you know, I want to make the point that since 1962 when we began the Westminster system of government, that is how it was, that if you have a variation, the Minister has authority, in some cases. As you know, the Minister of Finance and the Economy has authority to do this, but the Minister of Finance and the Economy will do that and will come to Parliament later with a Bill for approval. Mr. Speaker, that has been done since 1962, since Eric Williams became the first Prime Minister, and is done today. So my friends opposite again, to cry and groan about this, really they are being disingenuous because they understand this normal process of our government system.

And, Mr. Speaker, when they were there as well, we also came to Parliament for variation and supplementation.

Mr. Sharma: Same time frame.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: The same time frame. We always did—and we were always gracious to give support, I recall. I think I recall, correctly, that we were always gracious to give support—

Dr. Gopeesingh: And they never provided information.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Yes, understanding the imperatives of government—

Mr. Roberts: One hundred and twenty-eight unanswered questions.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, my friend opposite, I mean, he was extremely happy and he carried on and on about Tobago, although he contributed nothing, as I said.

Mr. Sharma: He is not allowed to go.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Yes. He was banned, I understand, from going, but he continued with that. But in that state he was in, he also made one or two other points which we took note of, and dealing with the construction, the crime data, the agenda of the Government and made reference, of course, to what he called the lateness or tardiness of the Government in bringing these measures. Mr. Speaker, this is January 22. The deadline for these matters is the 31st. By Government timing that really is not a last-minute matter. You still have several days.

Mr. Speaker, I want to remind my friends opposite—because, you know, they would forget—there was a time in this country when they were hosting a summit and the very President who was inaugurated yesterday had to come here. It was, I think, the first month of his office. Do you know what they called us to the Parliament to do a day? They called us hurriedly to come to Parliament because we had to amend the motor vehicles regulations so that the American licence plate could be used on the road outside—the same day. The vehicles were arriving in the evening at six or seven—vehicles to be used by the United States authorities for the impending visit of President Obama. We had to come to Parliament the same day, to be told that we have to pass this, otherwise in the night when these vehicles arrive they cannot come off the boat.

Mr. Speaker, when the World Cup cricket came—I do not know if colleagues remember—we came to the House to debate and pass something the same day.

Mr. Warner: Sunset legislation.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Sunset legislation, Mr. Speaker, to deal with matters dealing with the World Cup cricket, because they were hosting the brown—what was it?

Mr. Roberts: Brown package.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: The brown package was being hosted here.

Mr. Griffith: Brown paper bag.

Mr. Roberts: And they went Tarouba for “dat”.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Well, Mr. Speaker, the less said about the Brian Lara Tarouba Stadium—much better the less said. I do not think anything else could be added to that, Mr. Speaker. That car park is now being used. I understand that the Ministry of Transport has finally found some use for the facility there. They are using the car park. It holds 1,800 cars and the Minister of Transport has come up with a very brilliant plan to use a park-and-ride facility. So that 1,800 vehicles could be parked at the Brian Lara in Tarouba and those persons could be on buses or other transport, to get to and from Port of Spain on a park-and-ride arrangement.

Mr. Speaker, we are now completing a report on the Brian Lara Stadium to take to Cabinet to give Cabinet options as to what we can do; how we can take that project further and what type of funds will be required. So I am hoping my colleague opposite, who spoke so much about the Government not spending money, when we come to Parliament to ask for \$200 million more to complete the Brian Lara Stadium—I am hoping that he will give his support on that matter because that is a signal project of the former administration that they were unable to complete.

Mr. Speaker, on the matter of the highway, as you know there is a committee with outstanding work that is due to be completed, I think, February 04. A committee has been established to look at that. But some questions were asked concerning land acquisition and the quantum of money paid and so on. The Minister of Finance and the Economy may have some more information on this to share later in the debate, but I wanted to indicate that NIDCO has proceeded to conduct negotiations and arrive at settlements with persons who are affected by this highway, and while the numbers are small so far in terms of relocation and in terms of compensation, Nidco has been able to relocate persons from the Debe area, the La Romaine area, and the Diamond area who have accepted their settlements to be relocated, or to move, so that the highway can proceed.

Mr. Sharma: Similar to what we did at Bamboo.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Yes, Mr. Speaker, similar to what has been done in Bamboo, and what was done previously, years ago in other areas.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of relocation, I am also happy to announce that the very last person who was in occupation of a plot of land at Debe, which held back somewhat the construction of the university campus, that last person on Tuesday last week signed an arrangement—an agreement—to relocate. [*Desk thumping*]

So we are clear for the University of the West Indies south campus; we are clear for the highway; we are clear with the Chancery Lane teaching hospital; we are on the move with Penal hospital. The Point Fortin hospital, construction work

is taking place; infrastructural work at the children's hospital in Couva. Mr. Speaker, the police stations are under construction. The Minister of National Security and myself intend to tour the construction sites for the police stations in a few weeks, and in a few weeks we also go to Arima where we are now undertaking the arrangements for the construction of the Arima hospital which will begin, Mr. Speaker, as part of a government-to-government arrangement as well.

So, Mr. Speaker, I wanted to tell my colleagues opposite, fear not, there is a construction boom that is on the horizon. Fear not. Fear not, Mr. Speaker, there are houses for all, and they will eventually come to me to ask—not the Member for Point Fortin alone. [*Interruption*] The Member for St. Joseph is suggesting that the Member for Point Fortin should avail herself, but I am sure that the Member for Point Fortin will know how to secure herself because the last thing in the world we will want is to see her at the side of the road with two “pot and pan” and so on, at the side of the road, with a “grip”—“at de side ah de road wit a grip and two pot and a pan, and you know, a hair curler or something hencing up on de grip.” [*Crosstalk*]

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to say that we will do our very best to ensure that we provide housing for citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. We continue our construction boom in housing and in other areas. Mr. Speaker, in Trinidad and Tobago now, as we begin 2013, these projects—unless, you know, Mr. Speaker, something dramatic occurs—these projects we will proceed with.

The Minister of National Security, later in the debate, intends to address the specific issues of the maritime defense strategy that has been raised by the Member for Diego Martin North/East. He will do that. Mr. Speaker, as I said before, notwithstanding the boasting and the chest-beating from my friend, the Member for Diego Martin North/East, we are very confident that the citizens of Trinidad in this case, as we face a local government election later this year, will take note—

Mr. Warner: Listen “good”!

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: We are very confident that the citizens of Trinidad, as we face a local government election in a few months' time, will take note of this delivery. We have much more to do. We are confident that once the side opposite cannot import that strategy from Tobago, that all will be well.

Mr. Warner: Not here!

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: No, they cannot bring it here. Do not bring it here; do not bring it here.

Dr. Gopeesingh: They can't bring it here.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: If they bring it here "dey eh win one council here. Doh feel yuh could do dat here."

Mr. Warner: Bring it here! Bring it here!

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: I dare you, bring that Tobago strategy here. I dare you. You cannot. Mr. Speaker, but they know what they do. I mean, they are very clear on what they do. As I said, it is not the best strategy but it worked for them. *[Interruption]* "Yeah, leh dem tink dey coming here with dat."

Mr. Speaker, there are some other issues in the measure before us involving several Ministries: The Ministry of Public Utilities; the Ministry of Arts and Multiculturalism; and, significant, the Ministry of Education and colleagues on this side are eager to respond to some of these matters. Mr. Speaker, my friend, the Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara, I understand, is also interested in speaking and drawing later in the evening, so we expect to hear from him.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, let me assure colleagues that another measure is upon us. The Bill will be laid this afternoon and next week—I understand we will earmark Monday, I believe, for a discussion on the Finance Bill which seeks to deal with the taxation matters and revenue matters emerging out of the budget.

Mr. Speaker, we intend, as well—as another strategy for this year, by March or thereabout—to address some of the issues raised in the budgetary statement in terms of our delivery programme. Mr. Speaker, I want to tell you that one of our areas of concentration this year would really be to communicate with citizens directly on the delivery of some of the goods and services. I believe, Mr. Speaker that if left to colleagues opposite to interpret government work, you know, it will be very difficult. They have been doing a job at interpreting government work and government policy, but this year it is the intention of the Government to hit the road and to explain, in detail, government policy and government programmes. It will be more than the Monday night forum, I assure you. That will be one part of it. Apart from the Monday night forum, you can rest assured that we will have cottage meetings; we will have assemblies, congresses and so on, where we explain government policy.

Mr. Speaker, I dare my colleagues opposite. Why do they not embark upon some programme to explain their policies? But I want to tell you, they cannot

explain their policies. Their policies “does slip out” by mistake. When the former deputy Chief Secretary in Tobago spoke, their policy “slip out”. In fact, nothing was wrong with what he said; it was he did not know “people listening”, and they all support that, and that is why today we ask them to make sure that “you doh” bring that strategy in Trinidad to think the people here would accept that, because if that is what they are thinking, they will lose every single local government—every single local government council would be lost for them, Mr. Speaker, if they think they can import that into this jurisdiction on this side of the waters.

Mr. Speaker, the measure before us, we encourage our colleagues to support. I got no indication from the Member for Diego Martin North/East that he will not support the measure before us, notwithstanding what he said. He wanted some answers. We have provided them on crime; we have provided them on Chancery Lane; we have provided them in terms of the construction agenda; and I am sure my friend opposite who himself is somewhat of a builder—he built, I think, a stadium in Grenada and I think he is owing somebody at the Privy Council some money for that. But I am sure that, you know, with his basic knowledge of construction—

Mr. Warner: Fifty-seven million.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: He is owing \$57 million?

Mr. Warner: Thirty-seven million.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, I am sure with his very basic knowledge of construction he will be able to appreciate some of the issues that we have raised.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I have been advised that the hon. Donna Cox, Member of Parliament for Laventille East/Morvant, has asked to be excused from today’s sitting of the House, and with your leave I want to revert to “Announcements” and to indicate that the leave which the Member seeks is granted.

At this time we will suspend the sitting of the House and we shall resume at five past five.

This House is now suspended until five past five.

4.31 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

5.05 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Mr. Speaker: Before I call the next speaker, I want to revert to the item under “Announcements.” I have received further communication from the following Members: The hon. Vernella Alleyne-Toppin, Member of Parliament for Tobago East and Mrs. Patricia Mc Intosh, Member of Parliament for Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West, they have both asked to be excused from today’s sitting of the House. The leave which the Members seek is granted.

FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT

(Adoption)

Mrs. Paula Gopee-Scoon (Point Fortin): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think there is an expectation that I would first congratulate the people of Tobago on their victory at the polls—on their resounding victory at the polls. Then of course, the THA under the leadership of Mr. Orville London, and my congratulations go out to the PNM in Tobago as well and the PNM political leader, Dr. Keith Rowley, Leader of the Opposition. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, my understanding is that the people of Trinidad see it as a victory for themselves as well. But of course, most of all, I think it was a victory for the people of Tobago. It was a well-won fight for the people of Tobago by the people of Tobago. They did it on their own, all on their own.

Hon. Member: Really.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: We are very pleased that not one MP on this side sought to appear on any political platform to help the people of Tobago except the political leader in his capacity as the political leader of the PNM.

Hon. Gopeesingh: The rest were hiding.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: Certainly not like what happened on the other side where there are several of you who appeared on the platform, and I will tell you, perhaps, if that did not happen then the TOP may have had a better chance. I think the very presence of you on the platform was a turn-off. You had those who were trying to claim Tobago roots.

Mr. Speaker: Could you take your seat? I have allowed some flexibility: The Member for Diego Martin North/East began, the Member for Oropouche

responded. I think we have had enough of the campaigning. Let us deal with the Bill. There is no relevance of what you are talking about that is contained in the Bill. Could you focus on the Bill, please? Thank you.

Dr. Moonilal: You want to get put out of this House too?

Mr. Sharma: You really have nothing else to say but try. [*Laughter*]

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: Mr. Speaker, I will comply with you and move on from the congratulations which are due to the people of Tobago. I must say that I will look forward to when next the Cabinet will place themselves in Tobago to discuss the economy of Trinidad and Tobago. I look forward to that day.

Mr. Speaker, generally judging from the kind of responses that we have had on the other side from the Member for Oropouche East, they seem to be easily moved today. They seem to be laughing at trivial matters. It takes very little to make them laugh. It is a lot of house talk and so on—a lot about vacating a house. But, really and truly they are in denial. They are the ones, who were vacated with haste from Tobago, but it is all psychological, trying to hide the hurt and pain but it is expected.

So the Member for Oropouche East came here today and almost 36 months into office we are getting from him, finally, all of these dreams and plans and visions. Finally, but it is too late already, because I believe the public has really decided on the fate of this Government.

Miss Hospedales: That is correct.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: We saw a bit of that yesterday.

But, it was President Mkapa, a former President of Tanzania who had said that you cannot build an economic mansion on political sand. Mr. Speaker, I am speaking about the Bill. I am speaking to our economy, with all the dreams and plans and visions. You cannot build an economic mansion on political sand. And with the wetting and trashing which they got yesterday they have been reduced to political mud and the slide has begun. [*Desk thumping*]

So all these pie-in-the-sky dreams and so on expressed by the Member for Oropouche East and Leader of Government Business, I think it would come to naught, nil return, after 36 months into office. But, I register my concern on this Supplementation and Variation of Appropriation Bill, and the very dangerous signals that it sends on this Government's management of the Trinidad and Tobago economy.

As you would know these Bills are normal. They are quite routine. They are part of the Government's fiscal management process. What it seeks to do is to bring government expenditure over the previous period in line with the budget approved by the House. So my problem is not with the Bill itself. As I said that is routine. My issue is really with the details that were represented in the transfers and variations which we are being asked to approve today.

Mr. Speaker, these transfers and variations are suggestive of nothing more than corruption and incompetence. I am not just saying these things fleetingly. [*Desk thumping*] I am saying that I am going to support it during my arguments this afternoon. What we are seeing here is a level of corruption and incompetence that we have never seen before in this country. [*Desk thumping*]

I speak to corruption and say that it is manifested in the size, and I am not going to detail those transfers, but the corruption is manifested in the size of the transfers and it is because the Member for Diego Martin North/East had already detailed some of these large-size transfers. It is manifested there, because these transfers are without explanations. I want to say they are not there for the general welfare of the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Miss Hospedales: No.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: As I intend to show later it is there, I believe, for the welfare of a few major beneficiaries of expenditures of particular government Ministries—particular Ministries, if you look at the trend, so that we see the corruption. We are also seeing the incompetence. The incompetence that we are seeing is in the very large sums, the very vast sums that were appropriated in the budget. In the annual budgetary exercise, very large sums were appropriated. Many of these amounts have been left at the end of the year unspent. The reason they have been left unspent is because of the incompetence of those on the other side who are unable to lead—to give the kind of leadership and direction that is necessary to, in fact, get these exercises and projects completed. That is what I am speaking about when I speak to the question of incompetence. They are just not able to implement and execute and to achieve their objectives.

Miss Hospedales: And complete.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: To make matters worse, what is done is when they cannot do it in the Ministries they sometimes pass these on. They delegate them to the state enterprises and what we are coming to realize is that these sort of arrangements are just an excuse and they are absolutely nothing short of a conduit for funnelling moneys to the favourite causes of some of the Ministries. I am not

saying Ministers. I am saying Ministries. So what they cannot do for themselves they are passing it on to state agencies and it is from there—I am speaking to the corruption—that it is funnelled to the favourite causes of some of the Ministers and Ministries and so on.

The economic situation and the whole question of competence and so on is very troubling; very, very, troubling to this country. They have started to signal the discontent with the management of the economy in Trinidad and Tobago.

Recently, both the Central Bank Governor and also Moody's—you would be familiar, the public is familiar with Moody's Investors Service. *[Interruption]* I am not sure if they are, but I am sure the hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy is. But, both the Central Bank Governor and Moody's, they have already sounded warnings on the Government's inability to revive the economy.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Moody's never said that. You are wrong.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: I will quote from it. I will quote from the Moody's report, Member for Caroni East. What I am saying is they have sounded warnings on the Government's inability to revive the economy and the sort of dangers that we could expect down the road.

The difference is—there is a clear difference as to how you do business and how the previous PNM administration did business—and it is that the party that I belong to always had a vision, not mid-term like you are or three years down the road. Today you are now coming to talk about dreams and so on. It is that we always had a vision and up until May 2010, when we were in office, the country was very clear on the vision which we had for Trinidad and Tobago, which is Vision 2020. So “there was no bones about it,” everyone knew.

But, with this administration, there is no vision, there is no plan. I think that they can only see into the present. That is it. As a matter of fact, I think they see no further than the next election. That is the state of it. I can tell you that over the last month or so, all of the focus by this Government—when it should have been on things like the economy and so on—all of the focus was on the THA elections. Everybody was over there, instead of attending to the Government's business here.

Hon. Member: You were there?

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: So what I am saying is they have not been dealing with the serious issues of the nation, but that is just symptomatic of their overall performance; very slapdash, very last minute. We know only too well—the Member for Diego Martin North/East spoke about the timeliness of this very Bill,

and the very Bill that we are going to discuss next week, as well. Of course, we know about section 34 which again was a very last minute thing as well.

They again try to foist on the people of Tobago a very last minute Bill for the Constitutional (Amdt.) Bill to give Tobago internal self-government—again, very slapdash. They expected to give Tobago instant internal self-government, but of course, the people of Tobago would have none of that and they voted against that. All of these election ploys did not work.

Miss Hospedales: It did not.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: It was totally rejected.

5.20 p.m.

But, the people of Trinidad and Tobago have really woken up to their machinations, and we saw that with the results of the election, [*Desk thumping*] certainly by the Tobagonians. Of course, the people of Trinidad and Tobago have already begun to indicate that and, in fact, they have done so by virtue of the polls which we saw recently, about two weeks ago, in the Sunday papers. So the people have begun to speak out about the Government and its economic performance, and its general performance.

I do not want to be repetitive of the crime situation which the Member for Diego Martin North/East spoke to and which the Member for Oropouche East responded. It seems like the Member who is in charge of criminal matters and crime, national security, is voiceless today—the Member for Chaguanas West—and I wonder why. [*Desk thumping*] Voiceless today and I wonder why.

What I am speaking about that is bringing us back to the Bill is the crime situation, and the fact that I do recall very recently, the Member for Chaguanas West, the Ministry of National Security and the Commissioner of Police were both calling for more resources, more policemen, more equipment and so on, to attempt to keep the crime situation under control because they have been not able to do this with much success. But here we are today, being asked to approve for the Ministry of National Security \$141 million to satisfy the debt for the four helicopters. I do not need to go into the account about the four helicopters because the Member did that, but my concern is that this \$141 million could actually have been spent on crime fighting and perhaps on more policemen, more equipment and so on, when in fact they used it to help pay for these four Augusta helicopters.

My colleague spoke at length, as I said, about the uses to which these helicopters are being put, and I know that—even the Minister of National Security had confirmed in a statement recently that he had used a national security

helicopter to attend a party rally in Tobago. I think he also took along the leader of the TOP, as well, to ensure that he reached to the rally on time. So these are the kinds of reasons—[*Interruption*]

Miss Hospedales: Abuses.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon:—abuses that we have seen on the other side, when in fact that \$141 million requested could have been put to good use. You may very well say that we were the ones, I believe, who ordered the helicopters, but, of course, they were ordered for a particular reason, for particular purposes and so on, and to be used in conjunction with the OPVs.

So if you feel that you no longer needed the OPVs for your crime fighting purposes, then I would think that you would scrap that just like all the other things that you have scrapped—the OPVs, contracts, et cetera—for which you have no regard, but you did not do so because you felt that these helicopters would be put to use for political purposes and as air taxis. So I do have a problem with the ferrying of persons to political rallies and to fetes. I know that there were performers and promoters as well who were ferried to fetes, and that is what the helicopters are being used for.

At this time, even in the responses by the hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy, he has not been able to disclose what use these helicopters are being put to. So you are saying that the public must pay, but the public must not know. That cannot be right, Mr. Speaker. It is entirely wrong. [*Desk thumping*] That money really should have been used for fighting crime. Scrap the helicopters, because I do not think you really have any use for it. You have not been able to say what use you are putting it to and, of course, it has been diverted for use by the PP campaign for the Tobago House of Assembly election.

So I think it is for these types of reasons that we are in trouble, I would say, economically. Another reason is that, definitely, there is an absence of confidence in this Government, and it is for these very types of reasons—[*Interruption*]

Miss Hospedales: They were voted out.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: Yes, they were voted out for the absence of confidence, Mr. Speaker. As I was speaking about execution and so on, very, very simple things which this Government was required to do, they did not do. Even a matter of a simple project, like the appointment of Commissioners of the Fair Trading Commission was not done. I am talking here about a variation of \$1.64 million, not done simply because of incompetence.

I see as well the movement of another million dollars which had been committed to the Haiti rebuilding fund. A million dollars! I do not know why this Government has seen it fit to renege on a promise to poverty-stricken Haiti—a million dollars. Yet still, they have diverted it for all sorts of other reasons. So, generally as I am saying, and this Bill prompts me to say and supports me, is that there are concerns generally for the management or mismanagement of the economy by this Government. Of course, Moody's and their report supports this. That report is dated Wednesday, January 16, 2013 and it is available on their website so that the public can go to it.

I have to say that within that report Moody's also said that it is due to the prudent management and sound investment of the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund. I want to remind this House that that fund was in fact set up and beefed up by previous PNM administrations—[*Desk thumping*—and because also of the consistently strong foreign exchange balances where, I believe, the import cover is now about 13 months—the Minister of Finance and the Economy can correct me. I think it is about 13 months now. But again, that is really only because of the track record of the PNM [*Desk thumping*] that this Government was able to maintain the country's sovereign debt rating which is described as stable.

So, they may want to take that credit, but it is credit that is entirely due to the PNM and the kinds of decisions that we took and up kept as well. We acted with prudence and with discipline. In that same vein, Moody's, as I said, has sounded a warning on the Government's inability to treat with the economic downturn and, Mr. Speaker, I would want to quote from that report of January 13 [sic] of this year. It says:

“The government responded to the economic downturn with an aggressive fiscal stimulus program. In this context, the execution of public sector capital projects has been weak...”

Let me repeat this.

“The government responded to the economic downturn with an aggressive fiscal stimulus program. In this context, the execution of public sector capital projects has been weak while current expenditure has increased, driven by wages and transfers to public enterprises. As a result, government debt increased to 46.9% of GDP in 2012 from 23.4% in 2008.”

Mr. Jeffrey: Wow!

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: Those are the facts. [*Desk thumping*]

Miss Hospedales: Read it again.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: Forty-six point nine per cent of GDP in 2012 from 23.4 per cent in 2008 under a PNM administration.

Miss Hospedales: Wow! Shame on them!

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: They have already told us that the public can expect to get budget deficits, until when? 2016! Which is when they know that they will definitely be out of office, judging from the trend which has started only yesterday, and which definitely will continue, as we would see, when the local government election is called. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Jeffrey: “Tell them, man! Tell them!”

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: You said that you will always call your elections when constitutionally due, so bring it on. We are ready! But what they proposed to do is to leave these deficits in place and when they are no longer there, it is the PNM “to catch” when the PNM returns to office in 2015 or before. That is what it is. [*Desk thumping*] Of course, they like to put the blame to the CL fiasco, Mr. Speaker. I do not know why they continually do that, because then they are speaking very badly of the Member for Tunapuna who likes to take the credit of solving it, but at the same time all of this started under his watch while he was Governor of the Central Bank. We must not forget that.

Mr. Speaker, I was speaking on the matter of confidence, confidence in the Government’s ability to manage the economy and, permit me, therefore, to quote, again, from the *Express Newspaper* of January 15, 2013, in which it was reported that the Central Bank Governor in delivering his financial stability report stated the importance of confidence in restoring our economy. So let me quote from the Central Bank Governor in the *Express* of January 15 as he addressed the matter of importance of confidence in restoring our economy. I quote:

“Weak growth domestic-wise—and in the Caribbean and internationally—has psychologically fed into the minds, I believe, of individuals and their private sector where the low confidence continues to resonate.”

So he is actually admitting that there is low confidence in the Government’s management of the economy. I go on, Mr. Speaker:

“How do we build back and regain confidence? Sometimes it is similar to ice melting—all it takes is really one step.”

I want to agree with the Central Bank Governor that all it really takes is one step, and I believe that the people of Tobago and Trinidad and Tobago took that

one step yesterday with the resounding victory, [*Desk thumping*] which would send the signal that Trinidad and Tobago's economy would soon be in the caring and competent hands of the PNM Government. [*Desk thumping*]

Nothing in that variation Bill that came here today—nothing, absolutely nothing—spoke to any matter that has anything to do with diversifying the economy, about putting life into the economy. Absolutely nothing! Nothing in that Bill spoke to that as well. So, there is nothing to look forward to, nothing to become overly confident of, or so. There is no inclination of steps to prosperity in the future under this Government. Nothing like that came forward in this Bill which is before us today, Mr. Speaker, and it is because they do not know how, they do not know where to begin as well. That is the situation that we are in, and it is very clear to me that this Government is only concerned about elections, the next election and so on, rather than—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Jeffrey: Which they will lose.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: Which they will lose as well—the local government. You will lose. Point Fortin, in fact, where we lost one division, I could tell you we would be gaining it back and we will be gaining—[*Desk thumping*] It will be a full Point Fortin win in the local government election. So you wait! What I am saying to you is that you are only dealing with the here and now and the election issues and so on, but you are not thinking about positioning Trinidad and Tobago for the future, and this Bill is evidence of that. So I am saying that I am concerned about these transfers and variations, and the implications for the economy, Mr. Speaker, I am concerned about that.

5.35 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, another matter: there was in the *Public Sector Investment Programme* in the budgetary allocations for 2012 which were approved in this House to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the country's independence. There was a budgetary allocation of \$50 million that was there, and that allocation was given to the Minister of Planning and Sustainable Development which was supposed to be the lead Ministry for the celebrations—\$50 million given to the Ministry of Planning and Sustainable Development for the independence celebrations.

Only last month, the Minister of Planning and Sustainable Development, in fact, who is responsible for the celebration, gave an account of the expenditure for those celebrations which took place. I want to quote from the *Hansard* of

December 19 and this is the Minister of Planning and Sustainable Development speaking on the expenditure for the country's independence:

“The sum of TT \$41,836,417.64 was incurred as expenditure as at September 30, 2012. Additional and committed expenditure up to December 11, 2012...\$1,027,100”—so that—“The total therefore committed out of the \$50 million”—for the independence celebration was—“\$42,863,517.64.”

That was the amount quoted by the Minister with lead responsibility for the independence celebrations; that was the expenditure. So that they had another \$7 million to spend, but that is if we could believe in the accounting given by the Minister.

So that I am asking then: why are we here and being asked to transfer sums from other Ministries for this event when in fact, there was a sizeable sum of \$50 million which had been allocated and there were sums that were unspent? Why are we today being asked to transfer sums of money for the independence celebrations as well? Mr. Speaker, we are being asked to transfer \$9 million from the Office of the Prime Minister which was used for a special cultural presentation. Nine million dollars and that only covered one-third, if you look at the Explanatory Notes. That \$9 million only covered one-third of the cost of that event. So, in fact, Government spent \$27 million on a three-hour show for independence.

Hon. Members: Wow!

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: Right. Twenty-seven million dollars which could have gone for more hospital beds that they are always talking about and more policemen, et cetera and so on, or to ease the burden of high food prices.

Dr. Moonilal: “Yuh could buy ah house with it.”

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: “I doh need ah house”, Member for Oropouche East. “I doh need ah house, I came in with ah house, I came with ah car of the standard that I drive now.” I am very sorry; you should speak to someone else on that kind of matter.

Dr. Moonilal: “Why is Justice Kokaram puhing yuh out?”

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: As a matter of fact, that is a matter which is sub judice and you have no business discussing it within the House and you know better than that; you are an attorney. Right?

But, Mr. Speaker, to get back to the point, \$27 million on a three-hour show. I did not attend. I would not attend at all even if I am invited. I do not go to these wasteful events. I am told that it was the same presentation that was done for the

Fifth Summit of the Americas. The very same costumes, et cetera, were used in that \$27-million show. I can tell you that when we did the show for the Fifth Summit of the Americas, it was to the world at large; this was just to a very small audience, and they spent \$27 million for a three-hour show.

Hon. Members: Wastage!

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: So that is wastage and extravagance, Mr. Speaker. That is what is called wastage and extravagance. But the absurdity does not end there, you know! The absurdity does not end there at all. In addition to the \$9 million spent by the Office of the Prime Minister, another \$4 million was spent for a connected advertising campaign. So there you have \$13 million additionally spent by the Office of the Prime Minister for these independence celebrations. This is ridiculous! This is ludicrous! That is what we are here today to approve. It is unheard of.

Mr. Speaker, that is not all. The Minister of Housing, Land and Marine Affairs who got up and spoke already, spent another \$9 million. Unless you could get up and disprove me but another \$9 million came from your Ministry—Ministry of Housing, Land and Marine Affairs. That is \$9 million which could have built 36 houses for low income families. That is what that \$9 million could have done. [*Desk thumping*]

In my capacity as Member of Parliament, I have had two recent incidents of fires in Point Fortin, and I have been asking, begging and pleading with that Minister of Housing, Land and Marine Affairs for houses for them. Another person recently in another constituency got one within three days. In my case, not so at all! They allow the people up there to languish, right, no help for the people from Point Fortin. But I am talking about, anyway, the houses that could have been done. Mr. Speaker, \$9 million, but people are benefiting otherwise, getting houses. The leader of the TOP—I do not know if he still is the leader—was able to get a house. “Ah doh know if he build the house” or whether the house was built for him or whatever it is, but all that kind of—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Moonilal: “You really talking about the house.”

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: Yes, I am speaking about house; I like house talk so you could carry on with it. [*Laughter*] Mr. Speaker, the leader of the Tobago Organization of the People, even the cost of building that house could have gone towards building houses for needy families. But let me go back to the Member for Oropouche East. It is absolutely appalling that your Ministry of Housing, Land and Marine Affairs would spend an additional \$9 million on Independence Day

celebrations. I do not know what you could say about that, what you have to show for it.

Dr. Moonilal: Have some pride in your country.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: So here we are, \$72 million; that is what I have spoken to so far and I am only talking about three Ministries. We are not even talking about what the state agencies spent as well. Mr. Speaker, \$72 million, three Ministries, to only buy a set of cups and cups and cups. You know about the amount of cups that was distributed in this country. Cups and hiccups more than ever by them. Not even a programme informing the population, for posterity sake, on how we achieved our independence; nothing educational or so. The money was not spent on that. Right? We know that there was a big fete, but \$72 million, unheard of. You know, they did not even have the courtesy to invite the children of the father of the nation or to thank them or anything like that. Nothing like that! Mr. Speaker, as I said, the \$72 million did not even include the money spent by the state enterprises, so it is really a lot of waste and extravagance.

You know, Mr. Speaker, there are some very disturbing elements to the waste and extravagance, not just the expenditure, but there is a disturbing side to it. I have been told—and certainly the Minister of Housing, Land and Marine Affairs or the Prime Minister can correct me if I am wrong—that the very advertising agency which handled HDC and handled the advertisements coming out of the Office of the Prime Minister and out of the Ministry of Housing, Land and Marine Affairs, funny enough, it is all the same agency—Ross Advertising, I believe it is called. “I doh know, russ or muss” or something like that, I am not sure, but it is the very Ministry which you also used—you, the People’s Partnership, also used for your elections as well. So it is just quite uncanny that most of this money is being used and funnelled through this particular advertising agency.

It is the very same thing, you know, the very same designer who did the \$27-million show, and that is the very same designer who the People’s Partnership used, with all their design elements, for the elections as well. So what I am saying is that a lot of this money, this \$72 million, I am trying to show you, that it is funnelled through; it is not being spread around. It is funnelled through for the benefit of particular persons, companies and so on. That is the point that I am trying to make. I mean, I am not even talking about the \$5 million which was spent for Machel’s “Going for Gold” CD or album, but he, too, has been a feature of the campaign.

Hon. Members: Yes.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: I am just simply asking questions, I am not casting aspersions, Mr. Speaker; I would not do that. I am just asking questions but I am asking myself: Is the money that we are approving here for these transfers and variations, is it that we are approving moneys for an election war chest or something with the PP Government? That is what I have to ask myself because I am seeing no real value, economic value in what we are being asked to do here today. I really am concerned as to whether or not we are helping with the funding of a war chest—an election war chest, Mr. Speaker.

As I said, I am very concerned. Member for Chaguanas West, while you did not have a voice, I have a voice. I am speaking!

Hon. Members: Oooooooh!

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: So as I said, I am concerned, the Central Bank Governor is concerned, Moody's is concerned, the people are concerned and they have registered their concern. Mr. Speaker, then, of course, they are probably speaking about the little bit of negligible growth that they have had in the last quarter. But, I can tell you, the people have not seen it, business people are complaining. It is very few people who have seen or benefited at all from this very, very negligible economic growth.

Mr. Speaker, I have to speak a little bit about this funding that we are being asked to approve today. The \$1 billion—is it \$1 billion? Yes, a thousand million dollars for the supplemental funding to fund the highway to Point Fortin. Let me say up front that the PNM Government supports the Point Fortin highway without a doubt. [*Desk thumping*] We think—it is our project from conception.

Dr. Moonilal: What project?

Mr. Jeffrey: Ours!

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: It is a PNM project—the highway to Point Fortin. You met it fully conceptualized, fully ready for execution, and you took it up from there. [*Desk thumping*] It is a PNM project so I am saying that we support the highway. It is a highway that—[*Interruption*—no, before we left office, it was one of six highways that were approved in a national grid of highways for Trinidad and Tobago recognizing the need for development all over Trinidad and Tobago reaching out to all the rural areas and so on. So again, we register our support for the highway.

There are many of you, and perhaps, the person who speaks after me would say “but why did you not build it before?” But I think you are all very, very much aware—and if you think clearly about our history and our economic

circumstances—that in the “80s and “90s, the country went through a very difficult time in terms of the economy. Because of the prices of oil and gas and so on, we were subjected to standby arrangements with the IMF.

So, Mr. Speaker, therefore, it would have been wrong and imprudent of us to begin a project of that mammoth size and amount at a time when the country could not afford it, and we sought instead to make sure that the economy was right-sized—if I could use that simple word—to ensure that Trinidad and Tobago was not caught in the situation that so many other countries are caught in today. So it has paid rich dividends and they have certainly benefited. They have come into it—an economy that has been cushioned and well-prepared for them. It is just that they have not been able to do anything with it.

So, I am saying yes, we support the highway for the further development of the peninsula for all the people extended from Penal to Erin, to Cedros, Icacos, La Brea, Rousillac. We do support it, but really, I am concerned about the improper financing arrangements. The Minister of Finance and the Economy, we put the question to him during the committee meeting this morning about the financing arrangements—what is happening? It is impossible that a highway of this magnitude, \$7 billion, is actually being financed from the current account and not from proper bank financing, and we know why this is so. There is a reason for that and it is because the Government does not want to subject itself to conditionalities.

5.50 p.m.

You know that the fundamentals were right. The economic fundamentals were right. The macroeconomic framework and that any lending agency—certainly the World Bank, the IDB—anybody would have been prepared, all of the local banks to assist, but the approach was never made because we know what their ulterior motives were. So, the Minister is pretending as though there is something in train in terms of seeking finance and he must come to us and tell us, well, what is the process. We do not know—the country seems to be totally oblivious of it. What is the process for the financing? Who have they reached out too? Who has responded? When is it likely to happen? I feel sure that it is not going to happen at all because they know that they do not want to be exposed. They do not want to have to give details. They do not want to answer to anyone and this is the reason the project lacks for oversight.

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. [*Mr. N. Hypolite*]

Question put and agreed to.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What I was saying is that the—I was speaking to the whole question of the improper financing arrangements and that the project as well lacks for proper oversight. It is a question of \$7 billion being spent by a Government in a couple of Ministries, and they are accounting to no one but themselves and this is an impossible arrangement. I asked this morning during the committee meeting and the Minister has chosen not to provide details: how much is being spent on the Point Fortin to Golconda leg as against the Mon Desir to Golconda leg? I want to know how much is being allocated to the different legs? What is the cost in terms of the various pieces of the highway?

We know that there were several delays. They have said that this project is totally off scope. We know why. There were concerns raised by the Mon Desir protesters. We know that there was no NIDCO Board as well at one time, but the Minister has said that there are no cost overruns, but I feel differently.

I think the public is owed actual figures on—in fact, very detailed figures on moneys expended thus far. What is the new budgeted cost? How much we have spent and so on? Really and truly, my sense is that this highway is going to amount to nothing more than an election ploy again. When it was first done, it was to—I think it must have been to cover up the Resmi affair. The sod was turned. We were promised that this thing would start immediately. It took a whole year before it got off to any start at all and the next thing is, we know all of the delays.

I do not think this project is going to be finished until after the election, but what they are trying to do, I know, is to start it in several places—big gimmick again, usual their style. Big gimmick, start it in several places in La Brea and Point Fortin. I expect they would be down pretty soon expounding and so on about the highway which the PNM could not build and which they are doing. If you invite me, I will certainly be there. I am very proud of this project which we got ready and put on the table for you. [*Crosstalk*] So, that my sense—and I will be there.

My sense is that you would be starting from multiple positions, but again, it is an election gimmick—that is, a local government election gimmick—that is what I see, but really I am not satisfied about the highway in terms of progress. I do not know that there is a final route for Point Fortin. There is no final route given to us as yet. The persons who are going to be affected, we do not have a proper list

because we know that it is going to shift a bit so that—there is no list of persons who are going to be finally affected.

You have to understand, if they care at all about those persons, that they are giving up—they have a right to take the properties. They are giving up their lives, their lives are on hold. It is going to affect their families in significant ways; some of them have invested very heavily in agriculture; they are giving up all of that, and this Government has not been caring enough to give enough time and notice. Again, let us have the final list of persons who are going to be affected. We do not even have that as yet, the final list.

So, a lot of these persons have no income, those persons who benefit from agriculture have no income as it is, the McGuires, the Noels and so on. The Noels are on five acres of land, they do not know what to do. Should they plant corn? Should they plant anything? Because you have not been forthcoming with exact details as I said, Mr. Speaker.

No compensation has been arrived at for these persons. They are not sure. They are giving up everything that they have and have been aware that large amounts of compensation were, in fact, given out in other areas. We understand that somebody in Penal I think got an amount of \$4.5 million. But really for the people of Point Fortin and La Brea—the people who are to be affected—they do not know who they are in La Brea at this point. They do not yet know who they are. There are no specific resettlement plans at all for these persons.

Anyway, you are the Government, so you will move on. I am concerned as you move on that—*[Interruption]*—I am hearing a little voice; they are concerned about my future, I would advise you not to be. My future is fixed. I came in fixed and I remain fixed.

Dr. Moonilal: You will leave fixed.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Right—concerned about the jobs, Mr. Speaker—that it is people of the peninsula, the people of Point Fortin, the people of La Brea who would, in fact, benefit from jobs with regard to the highway. I am looking forward—I am concerned about the process of distribution as well, the quantum of jobs and the process of distribution. *[Desk thumping]* I am also concerned for the subcontractors, small and medium sized subcontractors. We want the list. We want the names. We want to know that they are from the areas that would be affected, La Brea, Point, Rousillac, et cetera. *[Desk thumping]* We must have these assurances.

Again, you talked today about plans and dreams, et cetera, and you said you are doing the highway. I do not know if it would ever fully materialize, but the

point about it is if you are doing the highway and you are saying that this is to benefit growth—the south-western growth pole, there are other things that you are supposed to be doing alongside if it is that you are truly interested in the development agenda that would benefit the people of the south-western peninsula. There are a number of things that you should be doing alongside and you have not been doing that.

For instance, you have taken away the lands which were dedicated for the small and medium-sized business in Point Fortin, the e TecK lands, you have taken that away because you decided you want to put the hospital there, well, I do not know if that is ever going to be done. You removed the opportunity for the small and medium-sized businesses. You have displaced them so, therefore, what is the point of a highway if you are not doing a number of things in conjunction with the highway? I am saying you got to be moving apace as well with your systems for development of small and medium-sized businesses. There must be a number of parallel moves being made if you are truly interested in developing the south-west peninsula.

I am saying it comes down to even very finite things even—as a matter of fact with the Member for Caroni East, I had said to him I have concerns about the secondary schools in Point Fortin; how they are performing. We need to look at whether we need to change the curriculum. The point is we need to get even the young children ready for the growth and development when it may come. So, therefore, we have to—it comes down to even matters that you would properly overlook, like the right curriculum. I am not seeing that these things are being done in tandem with the highway.

Minister of Tertiary Education and Skills Training as well, I gave him a very long list for all of the villages, all of the areas from Point Fortin down to Icacos about preparing these people, adults and so on, adults and young people for development. All of the courses that need to be introduced so that everybody is ready and is skilled to benefit from this entire development agenda. If you are talking vision, if you are talking true dreams and plans, that is the kind of approach that I would expect from you.

I mean the UTT campus again, I have been talking to the Minister of Tertiary Education and Skills Training. The UTT campus for Point, I do not think that is ever going to come, because I believe there is no true development agenda for the peninsula under the UNC.

These are my concerns with regard to the Bill. I have spoken directly to the Bill and the effect, rather the non-effect of all of these transfers and variations, a

significant amount, \$2 billion. No benefit envisaged for the business people, for the people of Trinidad and Tobago. What this says is, there is really I would say improper planning, poor leadership with regard to this Government in terms of managing the country, managing the economy. There was one other point I wanted to make, you know—that is what I have to say on the Bill.

The Member for Oropouche East, he spoke about the fact when we were talking about the helicopters being used for political purposes. He sought to draw reference to the President of the United States, and he said that the President uses Air Force One for campaigning and so on, and that it is at the disposal of the President. I just want to let you know that there is a definite difference, Mr. Speaker, because the helicopters were bought for the specific purpose of fighting crime. Air Force One is there at the disposal of the President of the United States. *[Desk thumping and crosstalk]* There is a very stark difference and I also want to let you know that it is a fact that the Obama campaign actually has to repay the U.S. Government for use of any resources during their political campaigning. *[Desk thumping]* They have to pay for it including the use of Air Force One for campaigning. This is what is—unlike what is happening in Trinidad and Tobago. You would have a big hefty bill—*[Interruption]*

Hon. Member: “Yuh hah to repay.”

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon:—for the amount of use that these helicopters are being put to other than crime. That is my small contribution on this Bill.

I want to thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Member: Yes, return some sanity to this meeting.

The Minister of National Security (Hon. Jack Warner): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It does really amaze me how time and time again you come here, you sit down for well over an hour, listen to a speaker on the other side and then you ask yourself, now, after one hour, what has the speaker said?

Hon. Member: “Nutten”.

Hon. J. Warner: And the same question I ask myself now. After one hour, what has the speaker said? The speaker began talking about Tobago, and thanks for your gentle rebuke, you tried to ask the last speaker to leave Tobago alone, because apparently if Tobago had no election, the Member for Point Fortin would have had nothing to say. What is even worse, is that the Member for Point Fortin, based on Tobago strategy, could not even “go Tobago”. *[Laughter]*—based on Tobago strategy, and you talk about Tobago time and time again.

Dr. Moonilal: “Which dey cyar bring here.”

Hon. J. Warner: “No, dey cyar bring dat here.”

Hon. Member: “Yuh mad!”

Hon. J. Warner: No way! Six months from now you will see.

Dr. Moonilal: “Yuh cyar bring dat here.”

Hon. J. Warner: I want to correct you, Member for Point Fortin, you know. Let me correct a misconception you and many others seem to have.

Dr. Moonilal: “All yuh coming—[*Inaudible*] vote UNC, we go buy out de land?” [*Inaudible*]

Hon. J. Warner: Let me make it quite clear, the TOP never had the THA. They never had it. “So, yuh cyar lose whey yuh never had.”

Dr. Moonilal: Good point. [*Desk thumping, laughter and crosstalk*]

Hon. J. Warner: Right? The THA was held by the PNM and the PNM has retained the THA.

Dr. Moonilal: “Dat is de point.”

Hon. J. Warner: “So, what is de big ting?” The TOP aspired to hold the THA. [*Mrs. Gopee-Scoon stands*] No. No. No.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: May I?

Hon. J. Warner: No. No.

Hon. Member: Sit down.

Hon. J. Warner: In fact, yes, go ahead.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: The big thing I just want to ask you— the big thing, is that you spent \$35 million and I hope that you would be able to account to the population—that is the figure—that is the big thing. The amount of expense you incurred for this election and you have not accounted to the people of Trinidad and Tobago for it. [*Crosstalk and interruption*]

6.05 p.m.

Hon. J. Warner: If I had known that you would have wasted so much time again, I never would have given way.

Mr. Roberts: “What ah tell yuh? Yuh too harden.”

Hon. J. Warner: No. “Ah harden; ah harden.” You take two minutes of my time to tell this House and this country that we spent \$35 million. You see, I can understand, you know Mr. Speaker, the *Express* monitor when they began to ask about the different Members of Parliament, in your particular case, Member for Point Fortin, your constituents said they thought you were a man. Remember? They did not know you. They thought you were a man.

Dr. Moonilal: We did too.

Hon. J. Warner: And you know something? I, too, “eh”.

But the point is I was surprised and you come here today to talk about Tobago and about the elections and what it did and what it did not do. Furthermore, you made the point that we shall not be in office in 2016. We on this side are more certain to be in office in 2016 than even you on that side. [*Desk thumping*] The fact is one thing you are sure about, you will not be put up again by your political leader. Never! You have seen your last days in this Parliament and what is even worse, the fact is that now that you have no place of abode in Point Fortin, you, of course, will not be able to serve your constituents.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, this matter is 36(2); this is a matter which is before the courts of Trinidad and Tobago. It is unfinished business. It is sub judice and, therefore, should not be discussed in the House.

Mr. Speaker: I would want to be guided at this time. I will enquire into that matter myself, but if the Member is saying that the matter is before the courts and it is sub judice, I would ask the hon. Minister of National Security to stay clear. I will do my own enquiries. Stay clear of that matter of the courts and the House.

Hon. J. Warner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would not even pursue the matter any further. I am guided by your advice, except to say that a judgment has been handed down and I thought that was the judgment I was speaking about.

Mr. Speaker, I go further. The Member for Point Fortin, again, told us about the highway and the money being spent and said it was a PNM idea and the PNM could not build the highway because of economic circumstance—they had no money. But they built Tarouba Stadium; they bought a ship called *mv Su* that never sailed one day, for \$52 million; Tarouba Stadium for \$1.2 billion; all over Port of Spain, unfinished buildings—NAPA and SAPA and MAPA they built and so on. They could not build a highway, a highway which they began on paper since 1956. It took them 56 years to find the money and they could not find it still, and they are coming here today to tell this House they could not build the highway because of economic circumstance.

I wish I had the time to go on and on, but when I look to see what did you say, really, that I could rebut, there is nothing. My paper has a big zero on it. Nothing! At the end of the day, when you come here, you must help to educate us and the country. You said nothing for 60 minutes. I am sitting here and saying to myself: My God, what have I done to deserve this?

The fact, as in previous contributions—

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: You talking about yesterday?

Hon. J. Warner: Yesterday was yesterday for us, but tomorrow would not be tomorrow for you.

As in previous contributions—I could have gone to Tobago yesterday, you know; I want to say again, you could not go.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: I have a house, you know. I am resident there.

Hon. J. Warner: Member for Point Fortin, Pamela Gopee-Scoon could not go. Jack Warner could have gone. You do not understand what I am saying yet, but it is all right.

In previous contributions I had said that the supplementation of a budget is nothing new; nor is it new too about deficit spending. Deficit spending became a regular phenomenon under the PNM. In fact, the Member for San Fernando East, who, of course, is the neighbour to the Member for Point Fortin, and leader, he said that deficit budgets were nothing new. He said the sky would not fall out and so on. So we come today to talk about the supplementation and that is nothing new.

Over the years, the PNM has also sought increases in their budgets. In 2006, they came for \$7.46 billion and took the budget from \$30.64 billion to \$38.046 billion. In 2007, the PNM came to this House for \$1.125 billion, taking the budget from \$31.493 billion to \$32.618 billion. I would educate you. In 2008, the PNM came for two supplementations totalling \$8.067 billion and the budget then went from \$36.4 billion to \$44.5 billion. In 2009, you hear me—2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, almost the same number of years that Tobago has not given any account of its financial stewardship. In 2009, \$1.074 billion they came for in 2009; and in 2009, the budget was moved from \$44.206 billion to \$45.28 billion. In 2010, they were not there. [*Makes a blowing sound*] So the fact, therefore, is that year after year you had deficit budgeting. What is the big thing today? You “comin’” to talk here as if it is something new that you have just discovered from Point Fortin.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, we are here today to seek approval for about \$1.568 billion in supplementary expenditure, and I am saying that is not new, or that is

not sinister in any way. There are some interesting facts which, of course, do not become very clear on the surface and I want to make the point that we have to make sure that we explain to the country and to the people what the facts are because, at the end of the day, if we do not nobody else will.

So let me begin by first commending the former Minister of Finance for his prudent management of the nation's financial situation. In fact, in a real sense, what we are talking about here is an account of his stewardship because most of the fiscal period, 2011/2012, was under his stewardship, the Member for Tunapuna.

So what can we say? For 2012, the deficit is actually \$3.1135 billion and not \$7.642 billion, which had been initially anticipated. We, of course—I am saying again our deficit was \$3.1135 billion as against \$7.642 billion and therefore in October 2012 what we read, we spent less.

Mr. Speaker, the same applies to 2012/2013. You will see. In fact, in that period just referred to, we were to benefit from higher gas and oil prices and our revenues increased by \$1.2448 billion. We also collected more from taxes and had money from taxes, from the arrears which we received for the years 1996, 2001, 2006, 2008, 2010 and 2011 because of the audits which were done at this time.

The point is the Minister of Finance at the time got up, got the job done, got the audits completed so that taxes could have been collected. “Yuh learning something, eh?” Taxes could have been collected. If the previous Minister of Finance, the one who my colleague, the Member for Oropouche East, spoke about, the one with the curlers who went to the bank on old year's night in her duster to take out her money from Clico. *[Interruption]* Yes, her duster and curlers and Cutex. *[Laughter]* “Yuh see you. Yuh see you, girl. Port of Spain South, why yuh so?”

If the last Minister of Finance had gone and looked after the people's business instead of looking after her business in Clico, maybe the PNM would have been able to collect for the Treasury the money which our Minister of Finance and the Economy had collected. It is a good thing they did not do it because if they had done that and put their hand on that \$1.7 billion in taxes which we had collected, “dat” gone also.

So generally, Mr. Speaker, in 2011, when the Minister of Finance and the Economy made his projections, he had said that he was optimistic that he could raise revenue by collecting outstanding taxes. When he said so, they jeered him on this side. “Where yuh getting the money from?” He said: “By collecting taxes,

by prudent management.” He had no control over the increase in gas and oil prices, just as the global economy, but he had prudent management. He was resourceful and as such we were able to collect \$1.7 billion.

I am saying, therefore, that made a difference between us on this side and them on that side. We have management skills. They lack it. Their style is to sit back and see what happens and when it happens, then they act accordingly. So they rock back hoping that somehow, sometime, money will come, from heaven possibly.

What we showed is that we understood how the financial system works. We, of course, showed the country and the other side that we know how to spend money, not how to raise money, but we know, of course, how to raise money, spend money and manage money. We know how to do that—raise money, manage money by spending money. We can do that and that is the difference on this side.

Therefore, you would never see us on this side building a stadium and after seven years and \$1.2 billion it is now a carpark for the Ministry of Transport. The most expensive carpark in the world is the one in Tarouba—\$1.2 billion and they are parking some old Cortinas and some old Hillmans; not even some good Mercedes Benz. You all just laugh, but the day of reckoning is coming you know. You all will have to tell this country and your children why you frittered away this country’s money.

So, what the Bill seeks to do, as far as I am concerned: for my Ministry, the Bill seeks to bring onto the books an additional \$23.8 million, which we spent on the helicopters. I heard all kinds of things about the helicopters. In fact, the Member for Diego Martin North/East, who always speaks and runs, talked all kinds of things about the helicopters and he behaved as though he was a pilot; he could work CAL after he was finished. It was for the interceptors and they could land here and they would fly here and there. I am sitting here and saying: Hear Captain Diego Martin North/East—does not understand a thing; never asked anybody. He is the Minister who knows everybody’s business whether it is finance, whether it is health, whether it is security. He has all the answers and, therefore, he tells this House about helicopters. But today I will tell you about helicopters, Mr. Speaker.

What has been happening is that the Ministry of National Security has been funding the payments for these helicopters within its allocations. These helicopters were brought into this country on a deal signed by the PNM and we had to find the funds in the Ministry to pay for the helicopters.

6.20 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, \$141 million in funds that were allocated to other projects and programmes, which for a reason were not spent, that was transferred to service the cost of acquiring the helicopters—that was transferred to service the cost of acquiring helicopters. “Allyuh ordered it and eh pay for it.” After the money was transferred—\$141 million—it became necessary to have additional funds to cover the main cost for the fiscal period.

What can I say about the helicopters? The air assets of this country, which of course belong to the Trinidad and Tobago Air Guard are: two fixed-wing turboprop aircraft and four AugustaWestland twin turbine helicopters, rotary wing—fixed wing, rotary wing. The helicopters take part in full day and night capability. They assist in counter-narcotics, counter-piracy, law enforcement, service surveillance, trooping—that is to say, rope and so on—disaster relief, load lifting and firefighting.

In fact, just a month ago, I sat with the Minister of the Environment and Water Resources, the fire chief and the air guard to discuss using the helicopters to even out forest fires, because the helicopters have the capacity to even take water and out forest fires as well. These helicopters therefore assist in maritime surveillance, reconnaissance and interdiction operations. They assist fisheries, customs, drug and immigration surveillance and reconnaissance patrols. So when we are told that these helicopters have no use, it is because they do not understand. They bought them. How could they come here and say they are of no use, when they bought them? Because they bought them for the interceptors does not mean that they have no other uses. To go further, they also assist in special forces support operations, and the list goes on and on. Therefore that is the role of these helicopters. We are now current with our payments as far as they are concerned.

I should say that some of the money that was transferred to the Ministry of National Security was also used to settle the arrears of increments to fire officers. A total of \$43.5 million had been put aside to settle negotiations with the fire services for 2008/2010. At that time, the prison service, which was also under the Ministry of National Security, also had \$8.5 million put aside to settle the arrears. The negotiations were concluded in 2012, two years after the bargaining period—two years after. In 2010 they finished bargaining—for two years no payment; two years no payment to the fire officers, none to the prison officers, their allowances and so on. Therefore some funds were transferred to pay them.

Mr. Speaker, do you know what for me is unforgiveable? It is that when this Government came into office, the last Government had over 40 outstanding wage

negotiations to settle, some from as far as back as 2008. They settled none. My colleague from Point Fortin battled—

Mr. McLeod: Pointe-a-Pierre.

Hon. J. Warner: Pointe-a-Pierre—battled day and night, tooth and nail to bring these things to an end. Under him in 30 months this Government settled 40 negotiations—40 negotiations in 30 months. [*Desk thumping*] “Look him here.” Therefore we had to use the money to pay some of those people who were working.

In fact, you would recall just December last year, the CPO and TTUTA settled negotiations for 2008/2010. You recall that the PTSC settled for \$90 million, and for the first time in 45 years their salaries came in line with other statutory authorities. Again, last year, we were able to settle at the end of the year with the police service, and we are now on the threshold of settling with the defence force personnel. That too has to be paid.

You saw in the Bill, moneys put aside for the Special Reserve Police Officers, because while we agree that we pay them the \$1,000, we have to find the money and put it here as well. Therefore, all these things had to take place because, as the Prime Minister has said, our role has been to serve the people.

As far as the Ministry is concerned, what did we do with the money? We were able to create more effective law enforcement. We were able to reduce crime against property and the person. You heard the Member for Oropouche East giving a list of stats about crime reduction in 2010 vis-à-vis 2012.

Over the past 30 months, we have tried to contribute in having an effective and efficient judicial system. Moreover too, we have been boosting the numbers, the resources in the Ministry for the law enforcement agencies, making them more competent in the fight against crime.

We have used the money to train cadets. In the last year, over 2,000 cadets have been trained, from 12 to 18 years, that age period, from 41 secondary schools. I want to thank the Minister of Education who when I asked him, he did not bat an eye; he said, “Go right ahead. Go in the schools and train young people.” Thank you, Minister. [*Desk thumping*] That is what we did. While we did this you all were making confusion. We were building, you all were destroying. That is what we did.

The defence force, in the coast guard, 1,378 persons have done courses in ship and port security management. In the regiment, 572 persons have done training in

firearm destruction, stockpile management, cyber-security and ammunition specialist training—572 persons.

In the air guard, 108 persons were sent on courses geared towards improving their capacity in airfield management. Eight members of staff were trained specifically in how to handle the AugustaWestland helicopters.

In the police service, Mr. Speaker, 345 officers did courses in investigative management, precursor chemicals, intelligence gathering and financial investigations. The fact is, they could say what they want about the police and crime as they tried to say today. The police today are more efficient than it had been under the past administration. The police performance today is much better than it had been under the past administration.

Just yesterday I was reading where a jewellery robbery took place in Port of Spain. Within an hour they were able to hold one of the culprits and recover part of the loot. That could not happen two years ago.

Dr. Moonilal: PNM was taking it.

Hon. J. Warner: Oh my God, Oh Lord—well I do not know, but it could not happen. Therefore, I am saying they may not have reached the level that you all desire, but they are getting there. We are so quick to pull them down, but when time to praise them, we are very stingy with the praise. Well, we on this side, we not want no part of that.

Mr. Speaker, even as far as the Immigration Division is concerned, 340 officers have also been trained as well in the division, because if you train them they become better. In fact, just today I signed a Cabinet Note for the Cabinet on Thursday which will expose 200 officers to distance learning from Cambridge University, to do evidence-led training—200 officers, unheard of, unprecedented, from Cambridge University. We shall reap all the rewards of this based on the kind of money the Minister of Finance and the Economy has put at us.

And we come here to hear about Tobago election, and about, “Allyuh cyar go back” and all kind of trivia. “Serious business we come here for.” When people leave here, both in the gallery and outside, they must learn something, and they must leave here intellectually refreshed. I sit here week after week, and say, “Father, what have I done to deserve this?”, when I listen to them. Look at them. “The way it looking, yuh would feel they lose in Tobago.” *[Laughter]* You would never think they won in Tobago.

As far as the police are concerned, I am advised that we have provided them with over 200 new vehicles with GPS technology. Today, as I speak, 75 charge rooms have been computerized. Remember that we had no money like they had long time. As we heard from the Member for Oropouche East, eight police stations are now under construction for Moruga, La Brea, Oropouche, Piarco, Maloney, Arima, Carapo, name them, Brasso. They are all being built at the same time and are in an advanced stage of completion, to be completed within a year's time. In fact, in a month's time, the Commissioner of Police, the Minister and I are going on a tour to see for ourselves. All this is being done. We walk the walk and talk the talk. That is what we do.

Mr. Speaker, measures are on the way to acquire new firearms for the police officers and also to upgrade their stock of bulletproof vests. You would have read that one police officer's life was saved because he was wearing a bulletproof vest. If not, it was "curtains" for him. [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. Moonilal: "Yeah, under de PNM"—

Hon. J. Warner: "Under de PNM he dead", but under us he is alive, because we give them up-to-date bulletproof vests, and we are buying some more—2,500 more.

We have created surveillance bays along the highway. Travel down the Solomon Hochoy Highway and see for yourself, surveillance bays manned by police vehicles, Uriah Butler Highway. And you shall see more and more of this over time. Of course, we said before and we say again that we are going to recruit 5,000 police officers. During the three-month period when the campus at St. Augustine is closed—students go home for holidays and so on—that is the time we put all of them down on the campus, in St. Augustine, 5,000 of them, to train them all at once, instead of this "chirrip-chirrip, chirrip-chirrip ting". So you have them there for three months living, fully residential and they are being trained, 5,000 of them.

We are concerned also to have auxiliaries in the defence force, coast guard and even in the fire service—additional men. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, what is the bottom line? The bottom line is that we are building and improving our resources by leaps and bounds.

Mr. Speaker, you saw reports, the figures given to you just now by the Member for Oropouche East. I will give you a few. Take narcotics: October 2010—September 2011, the police seized 2,595 kilos of marijuana, and for the same period 2011—2012, 2,253. In the last four months, they seized 1,100 kilos. They seized in the last four months almost 50 per cent of what they seized before, and the same thing in cocaine and heroin. It is here.

6.35 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, you know this can go on and on, right, can go on and on, but the point is we have shown figures today where the crime rate is dropping, and the Minister, he was at pains to say, though it is dropping we are not happy yet, where it is, but it is dropping. For them that is bad news.

Hon. Member: Bad.

Hon. J. Warner: That is bad news for them, you see. What else are we doing? What further measures are we doing? We are recruiting—[*Interruption*]

Miss Mc Donald: Mr. Speaker, please. I rise on 36(1) because we are here to deal with supplementation, variation and transfer, and whatever—[*Crosstalk*] could you allow me to have a word with the Speaker? What I saying is that whatever is done must be tied back to the Bill before us. Whilst I appreciate the exposé from the Ministry of National Security, I would like to see it tied back, Sir, to the provisions under this Bill. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Minister, continue. I do not sustain that point. You are relevant. Go on.

Hon. J. Warner: I would never do you that. But it is all right. You stopped me in full flight. You stopped me in full flight. I would never do you that, but I would not forget. “Is awright.” [Crosstalk]

Mr. Sharma: “Put a red light on yuh and stop yuh.”

Hon. J. Warner: So I am saying therefore—thank you, Mr. Speaker—that the money which was given to us by the Minister of Finance and the Economy has been the money used that gave us all these resources that help us to put these plans in order. Therefore, it is on that basis that this, of course, supplementary Bill is before us.

I was making the point that in the period under review, fiscal period, we of course, recruited 3,000 young persons from 54 schools into police youth clubs, and two weeks from now we are having police youth clubs down in Brasso, in Flanagin Town and Caparo. [*Inaudible*] All over the country we are having police youth clubs, and the Commissioner of Police has agreed that these young people be given IDs, police IDs which they can walk with pride as a police youth club member. [*Desk thumping*] We have already agreed—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: You have one more minute.

Hon. J. Warner:—with the money given to us to expand CCTV cameras. [Crosstalk]

Hon. Member: Police ID for you.

Hon. J. Warner: We have covered Tobago already, [*Crosstalk*] and we now in Port of Spain, and then San Fernando, then Chaguanas and the whole country; this is what we are going to be doing.

The police caravan has been launched in various districts, again, to bring police and the public together. We have launched last week, last Friday, the Private Security Service Network Commission, and of course, Hoop of Life is already there. We held meetings in Mango Rose, St. Paul Street and so on over the period. We had our committee at town meetings and we also launched a joint committee service centre as well.

We expanded our National Mentorship Programme by bringing in some new mentors, and we also had a national drug council which, of course, helped us in launching, most recently, a drug court. So you have now in the country a drug court.

Mr. Speaker, the area that is giving me serious concern is the area where we said they are going to precept a minimum of 1,000 soldiers and they will have the powers of arrest just as police officers. I could not believe, colleagues, the hullabaloo over that. You would believe that you were doing something that nobody else ever did, and when you look at the fact that you have over six, seven thousand soldiers in camp, and while that is happening Rome is burning, Trinidad and Tobago is swimming in crime and you must not use them; something has to be wrong.

In this country, as I have said before, “if you do, you dammed; if you do not, you dammed”, well I do and be dammed. Therefore, to make the point, you believe, I say again, that we are the first, but the point is we are not the first. In India they have done the same thing. They are even more stringent than us.

Mr. Sharma: Which city, Calcutta?

Hon. J. Warner: Not Calcutta. Calcutta might be one, Assam, Manipur and so on; Calcutta. The fact is we “doh” have to copy all that they have; we could extract from them what things are relevant for us. In India, the army could arrest without warrant, “we doh want that here”, and there are things in India Act which we would never have here, but what they realize—I would read the first line for “yuh”—“Violence became the way of life in north-eastern States of India.” As such the administration became incapable of maintaining its internal disturbance. That is what it said. India did it. Australia did it. New Zealand did it. Honduras has done it. Chile has done it.

You have other countries, like Israel. Ecuador is a bad country? I read some things in the newspapers, I tell you it is amazing, and these people profess to be, of course, intellectuals. But until they “doh” feel the pain directly, they could sit in their armchair and be okay, but who in the kitchen feels the heat.

Hon. Member: That is right.

Hon. J. Warner: This country has to be saved, has to be made secure, and I do not understand how anybody could tell me that using the defence force—based on legislation, which gives them a legal right with such things, of course, as specific duties and so on—how that could be wrong? But thank God there is always some saviour sometimes.

I read in an article in *Newsday*, Sunday, January 20, page 9, written by one Corey Connelly. He says:

“Sociologist supports use of soldiers in crime fight.”

I say, Lord, thank you. Thank you, thank you Lord! Right. [*Crosstalk*]

“Sociologist Dr. Ronald Marshall has given a thumbs up to National Security Minister Jack Warner’s proposed plan to give some 1,000 precepted soldiers powers of arrest...” as the police officers.

He gives reasons, and he gives the countries where of course, this is relevant. He says furthermore, I quote from him now:

“The sociologist said the upsurge in murders required the presence of soldiers.”

I had a former Minister of National Security who worked in the Ministry, who understood the problem, who called an unsolicited press conference to say we should not do that. He did not have the decency to pick up the phone to say “Jack, boy wha going on? Talk to meh.” No, he called a press conference. You cannot be playing cheap politics with people’s life so. Right?

Hear what he says. I read, of course, Dr. Ronald Marshall, UWI sociologist, he says—and this Sunday, *Newsday*, page 9. He says:

“...the upsurge in murders required the presence of soldiers. ‘Because we have to remember’”—hear what he is saying—“that if the social terrain is changing all the time with the same template, then the same template or the traditional template is not working. It has gone, he said. ‘The problems or solutions have gone out of the ability of the traditional template to bring any positive result...”

We have so much crime in Trinidad that is not reported and is not solved and the criminals know that.”

This is the fella from UWI. He says that crimes in this country are not reported and the criminals know that. So, something has to be done, he says.

“something is going on where, somebody knows...”—what is happening and we have to act.

“Marshall said the measure should be implemented for at least a period of six months in the interim.”

And he goes on.

He understands, and I am telling you today that there are naysayers, we shall bring the Bill. I have read where even the police association never asked a question. Never asked to meet with me to see what is going on. I read in the papers they say if they arrest people, they would not take them to the station. I “doh think that right,” that rule, but we will deal with that.

The point is you could decide right now, Mr. Speaker, either you take soldiers who are precepted as police officers based on legislation to guard and patrol and so on the streets and save lives, or stay in your shoes and wonder, and then say the Government could not solve crime, that good! [*Inaudible*] The whole objective is to say the Government cannot solve crime. “Well, all yuh would not get that chance. We go solve crime.” [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Sharma: That is right. Marlene, we would save you.

Miss Mc Donald: Save yourself first.

Hon. J. Warner: He says:

“If implemented, Marshall said the initiative should be compared with arrests and convictions... ‘So, clearly it would be’—a help—to the Police Service rather than taking fresh officers which is more time-consuming.”

Marshall says so. He cannot be the only wise person in the country.

As such therefore, Mr. Speaker, I want to say today that I could say much more, but there is much more I would not say, of course, owing to national security, among other things, but the point is clear that we at the Ministry have been working overnight, and the results are beginning to take root, and what we shall do is to intensify our efforts.

As such therefore, the appropriation, the allocation made to the Ministry of \$23.8 million to bring to account the sum to cover the loan for the helicopters; I think it is well spent, well allocated. I want to thank the Minister of Finance and the Economy for his assistance, and I hope to see the success of this effort in the weeks and months ahead. I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Miss Marlene Mc Donald (*Port of Spain South*): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to join in this debate on the—what is the name of this Bill? [*Interruption*] No, I am going to be very brief, I am making a very brief intervention—the Finance (Supplementation and Variation of Appropriation) (Financial Year 2012) Bill, 2013.

Just to answer something that the Member for Oropouche East said in his contribution about “feeling so relaxed now in this country, people are more confident and people are safer.” Mr. Speaker, Market Facts and Opinions in their survey which was published in January, this month, just two weeks ago, they asked the question, what was the most serious problem that the country is experiencing? Sixty-two per cent of the persons surveyed said crime.

Next question; how confident are you that Government has a workable plan? Forty-four per cent said they are not confident and 22 per cent said that they are not sure, which means that there is a negative of 66 per cent. I think it would be well worth the while for Member for Oropouche East and the Member for Chaguanas West to know that.

But, Mr. Speaker, I want to state that we are here, we are seeking approval for the variation, the supplementation, and also for transfer of funds at the various Ministries. We are seeking a supplementation of \$1.5 billion, a variation of \$2 billion and a transfer of funds—so, \$698,715,000.

This is not—and I understand it is not any new moneys that the Government would be seeking here at all—rather what we are doing, we are rubber-stamping what the Government has done since, as a matter of fact closing off the 2012 year.

Mr. Speaker, I am also aware that this is the practice, not only by this Government, but by former governments—that you come to this House once or twice for the year asking for a variation, supplementation and transfer; we understand that. But the more I read the document before me is the more I am of the opinion that at some point in time some sort of corrective measure has to be taken here. I will tell you on what grounds I am basing this on.

A government comes here, they outline all the measures they are going to use to collect—or I should say, to raise revenue—and to spend. We sit here for days and we debate it and we agree to it in some instances. So, in other words then, there is parliamentary approval for the use of these funds. These funds are approved before the Ministries can now spend on goods and services.

6.50 p.m.

Now, despite this approval, the Government, the Ministries, can go off on their own—their PSs, their Ministers, whoever—and they can now vary, they can now supplement, they could transfer without the intervention, without the oversight, without the approval of the Parliament. I got to thinking about that and, having some discussion with a couple people, I was advised that in mature Parliaments there is an oversight committee, in some countries, where this committee is established with the objective of overseeing all variations, supplementations and transfers. The Government must bring the different Ministries, must bring all their documents to the particular committee and that committee will go through, and there is supposed to be parliamentary approval.

This is just an aside, because, Mr. Speaker, I am making this recommendation because when I examine it, I am quite sure that something is wrong with our budgeting procedures. Something is wrong, because I could not understand how the Government between October 01, 2011 and September 30, 2012 did not know—when they sat down to do their budgeting—that four Ministries would have been created in the middle of the financial year. When you create something like, I think, four new Ministries, you are creating a lot of headache. Not only in terms of the new persons you are going to put there, but in terms of the structure of the Ministries; you have to have your PS; you have to have staff; you have to have accommodation, et cetera. It is a whole job by itself, and of course, expenditure, and I think the Minister said it in his notes, that this is probably one of the problems during the course that caused these variations—because of the establishment of these four new Ministries.

Mr. Speaker, I am just saying that to say that the Government, as far as I am concerned, is not getting their budget arithmetic correct at all. It seems as if they are not prioritizing what they are supposed to be doing during the course of a financial year, and at the end of the day you realize, or during the course you realize something was left out and now we have to come back here to Parliament to get it corrected, et cetera, but the thing about it, this is after they have done it. So, we are just sitting here, we are just rubber-stamping and, of course, the Government has the majority; they could use their inbuilt majority and have this approved.

Now, I am dealing with the fourth item, the transfer of funds—because I think that is what concerns me a lot—within the Ministries themselves. We are looking at a sum of \$698,715,894 between subheads under the same Head of Expenditure in the various Ministries. Mr. Speaker, one of the areas is this thing called vacant

post salaries and COLA without incumbents, and I keep seeing that, also the whole issue of contract employment.

Mr. Speaker, in the statement of transfers in Appendix I of our document, the following Ministries show that there were major transfers from allocations to vacant post salaries and contract employment: registration, recognition and the audit board, a sum of \$374,200. It says that relates to contract employment; Office of the Prime Minister \$2.9 million, and that is vacant post salaries and COLA without incumbents, so nobody employed in those particular positions. Now, I deliberately left out of this mix here employment where there are still negotiations going on. I left those out. So, I am strictly looking at positions that are vacant and contract employment.

National security, \$3.5 million; Ministry of Transport, \$1.6 million; Ministry of Local Government, \$2 million; Ministry of Trade and Industry, \$266,800; Ministry of Tobago Development, \$510,000,888; Ministry of Housing, \$600,000; Ministry of Community Development, \$390,000; Ministry of Arts and Multiculturalism, \$725,000; Ministry of Sport, \$200,000; Ministry of Works, \$10.5 million; total \$23.6 million.

Mr. Speaker, this is telling me that—especially given our unemployment level of 8 per cent—we have a lot of vacant positions. We have a lot of contract employment outside there, positions that can be filled—and especially where I am going to constituency tomorrow, and you would not believe, there are a number of young persons who will be coming and asking for jobs, et cetera, and I think that a situation like this, this should not happen. This, as far as I am concerned, shows that we are not doing what we are supposed to be doing in the various Ministries. What is the reason given for all of this? Basically, what they are saying is that the various Ministries have not completed or not finalized their positions, their vacant positions and their contract employment during the fiscal 2012.

So, you had a whole year to fill these positions. At the end of the year what do you do? You transfer the funds because you are not putting mechanisms in place, and you have a lot of young persons outside there looking for jobs. Why not put this as a priority? In the Minister's notes at page 20 he said:

“...that these transfers...reflect changed circumstances in Ministries and departments, and are consequential reordering of priorities.”

Is employment not one of your priorities? That is what I want the Minister to answer.

Mr. Sharma: Yes, mummy. [*Laughter*]

Miss M. Mc Donald: We go to training and development—I forgive you Member for Fyzabad. *[Interruption]* Member for Chaguanas West, protect “meh”. *[Laughter]*

Mr. Warner: Clearly, you are protected.

Miss M. Mc Donald: Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education: Mr. Speaker, I am very concerned that the sums of money allocated for training our youth as well as the development of our national instrument have been transferred to other subheads.

I looked at this, and I know I spoke to the Minister, but I did not raise it with him because I am still trying to figure out what transpired here under the Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education. An allocation was made for \$300,000 for the multi-sector skill training programme—\$300,000. You know what happened, Mr. Speaker? This sum was transferred; this is again for training the youth in our country. This sum was transferred to—what did they spend it on? Mr. Speaker, it was transferred to official overseas travel. So, you all prefer—you all prioritize this. It is supposed to reflect the prioritization in the Ministry.

So, you are going to transfer from the multi-sector skill training programme the sum that has been allocated for the year, for that financial year, and transfer it over for official overseas travel? Where are the priorities here? I am dealing with priorities here. That is why I am saying I am looking at the transfers. The transfers are important to me.

The next one: there is a sum of \$6.4 million that was allocated for steel pan research laboratory. Mr. Speaker, this was transferred. The whole sum was transferred to the National Institute of Higher Education for Research, Science and Technology. Are we saying—Mr. Speaker, is the Minister, the particular Minister, the line Minister or the Minister of Finance and the Economy saying that all this development work and research have been stopped? In other words, the moneys allocated by this Parliament are not a priority for us for the steel pan which is our national instrument? That is the question I want answered.

Mr. Speaker, the next one is the Ministry of National Security—

Mr. Warner: Me again?

Miss M. Mc Donald: “Yeah”—and I am looking at certain things which were transferred. You see I am keeping my debate to the Bill under review, Mr. Speaker.

Dr. Moonilal: As we all did.

Miss M. Mc Donald: Mr. Speaker, I note with concern the Civilian Conservation, yes, Corps—

Mr. Warner: Corps; corps.

Miss M. Mc Donald: Corps, okay—\$1.5 million transferred out. The MILAT Programme, that is the Military-led Academic Training, \$1 million transferred; the Military-led Youth Programme of Apprentice and Reorientation Training, the MYPART Programme, \$1.5 million; the mentoring programme for youth at risk, \$1.5 million; and one that really got to me also is the Office of Disaster Preparedness, \$1 million.

Mr. Speaker, again the CCC, the MILAT, the MYPART, the mentoring programme are all programmes established to assist the vulnerable and youth at risk. That is the whole purpose of it, and we are seeing that during the course of the year these moneys were transferred out. Why? I ask that. Office of Disaster Preparedness, we need that. We need to bolster that office. Look at what happened in the west last year. We need to put things in place, mechanisms in place, and it is sad, “eh”, because what is going on in the Ministry that you cannot get some of these things done? So, halfway through the year we are not using it, let us move it out. The Minister will need to explain that.

All I am doing is just asking questions and the Minister will—I go to the Ministry of Tobago Development; I thought that this one was a little disingenuous. I would tell you from what point I am saying this, Mr. Speaker. The Ministry of Tobago Development—Mr. Speaker, you would have seen, with great fanfare, that the Tobago Constitutional (Amdt) Bill came to this Parliament; it was laid on January 07 and subsequently debated on January 16, and I must state that, perhaps the haste within which it came, the Government forgot that there was supposed to be an accompanying Bill. We never received that Bill—that is the THA—you must have done amendments to the THA, that is the Tobago House of Assembly Act of 1996.

You see, we see the THA Act and this Constitutional Bill that came here as complementary goods. In other words then, to give effect and to give teeth to the Constitutional Bill, you need to have the amendments done to the THA.

So you laid one and did not deal with the other one, but I would tell you why they did not deal with the other one. Mr. Speaker, if you look at page 36 of this document here, you would see there is a heading called Project No. 007—it is drafting an amendment to law regarding the THA Act, and a sum of \$300,000 was allocated for that purpose. So that was done for 2012—that was between October 01, 2011 to the end of September 2012. And that sum was allocated for the

Ministry to deal with the drafting and the amendments to the THA Act, which would have gone in line and in sync if the Government was prioritizing, if the Government was just planning.

This is supposed to work hand in hand with the Constitutional Bill, but you know what they did, Mr. Speaker? No, they did not, they moved it out, and you know what they spent that \$300,000 on? Promotions, publicity and printing, and they still get licks in Tobago. They took the \$300,000 which was here in the accounts.

7.05 p.m.

They took it. It was supposed to be—it was allocated for the drafting and the amendments to the Tobago House of Assembly Act of 1996, and they transferred it, and put it towards promotions, publicity and printing. Look what has happened.

Now, you see, this Government probably thinks that we do not read. But, Mr. Speaker, I take my work in this Parliament very serious. When I get a Bill, I sit and I read, first reading, and then I read second with a critical eye, especially since—I do not want to repeat it—section 34, I am even more careful. I am even more careful, Mr. Speaker, and look what has happened here. So it is very disingenuous then to have brought that Bill here and then make it look as if the Opposition does not support internal self-government. It is wrong. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Sharma: You said you were not supporting it.

Miss M. Mc Donald: Oh, please! I know the Speaker will protect me, so let me not get into any fight with you. But the point about it, Mr. Speaker, the Minister will explain that one.

I turn to the Ministry of Local Government now. Under local government, there is a sum there under Regional Corporation—for the local government bodies under Regional Corporation, of \$300,000. Mr. Speaker, they transferred it out. We had “a setta flood” in Diego Martin North/East, Diego Martin Central, Diego Martin West—trouble down there last year and there was a sum there for \$300,000. It could have gone to the regional bodies to assist in their disaster in those three areas. What did they do with that money? They transferred it out—and you know what they did with it?—hosting of conferences, seminars and other functions. They took that money and transferred it to hosting of conferences, seminars and other functions.

What did the Minister have to say—what was his explanation? He said here that there was—what page is it?—something about water, something about there

was less rainfall and therefore—no, there was more rainfall and therefore they did not have to pay for transporting water. That is not what you said, Sir?

Mr. Sharma: You see we save money.

Miss M. Mc Donald: And I laugh. So you take that money and send that money over to hosting of conferences, seminars and other functions. No, we have to prioritize. You see, this thing is about prioritization. How do you prioritize? If it is you are going to move from one Head to the next, which is important, hosting a function?—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Warner: Yes.

Miss M. Mc Donald:—or going to see—Member for Chaguanas West you know you cannot mean that—or seeing about the floods in Diego Martin West, Central and North/East? Mr. Speaker, I said I would be brief. I just have one more, Ministry of Community Development.

Hon. Member: You are a woman to your word.

Miss M. Mc Donald: I am always a woman to my word and a woman who stands on principle and ceremony also. *[Desk thumping]*

Mr. Sharma: You look nice in red.

Miss M. Mc Donald: With respect to the Ministry of Community Development, there is under the Mediation Centres—and Mr. Speaker, you know the mediation centres, they promote—up to this morning I was listening to an attorney on one of those stations talking about her work “and ting” at the mediation centres. They do very good work there. What they do, they set up in depressed communities where the participants can go, where they could discuss with counsellors. Rather than try to fight and shoot out their issues, they can sit and they can talk it out.

There is contract employment there for the mediation centres to employ people to work in the mediation centres for \$390,000—that was allocated for employment in the mediation centres. You know what they did? They transferred that \$390,000 where you could employ people—and “ah” getting the impression as if this Government is not too much about employing people. They moved that \$390,000 from there, and you know what they did? They bought vehicles to be used, of course, they say, under the mediation centres. Now, which is more important? We have to prioritize; this is what we are saying, prioritize, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Warner: Who determines that?

Miss M. Mc Donald: Pardon me.

Mr. Warner: Who determines “prioritize”? Who is that?

Miss M. Mc Donald: Well, actually it is supposed to be—if there is a line Minister and it has to be. As far as I am concerned, we could not have done something like—it must be in sync with—there has to be a Cabinet. There has to be some head, I do not know how it works.

Mr. Sharma: The \$42 million scholarships, where you get that?

Miss M. Mc Donald: So, Mr. Speaker, I will not “even self bother” to answer you with that, because you have nothing important to say here, nothing, nothing that is constructive. Mr. Speaker, as I said, I am going to be very brief and I would like the Minister to address some of these issues before me and of course if my recommendation could be taken on board, I am sure you could identify with that particular recommendation about the oversight committee when a budget comes here and we have to approve the budget and then the Government can go out there and vary, supplement and transfer without an oversight committee in the Parliament.

Mr. Sharma: Well done.

Miss M. Mc Donald: Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

The Minister of Finance and the Economy (Sen. The Hon. Larry Howai): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to bring the discussions and deliberations of this honourable House to a close. I thank all Members for the contributions made. Of course, various contributions were spiced with, perhaps I should say some degree of stretching of what the actual facts are, and I think perhaps it would be important for me in closing off the debate, certainly, to seek to bring some measure of balance to some of the issues that had been raised.

Certainly, I would want to say that, of course, these accounts have been closed off so it is not a question of more money that we are asking for here. It is simply approval of some of the variations, transfers and supplemental appropriations that had taken place. In fact, as I had indicated, the deficit is actually \$3 billion, which is actually \$3.6 billion less than had been forecast at the time that the budget was read last year. Just for purposes of the record, again we state that this debate is in respect of the accounts for the year ended last September.

There were a few issues raised which, as I said I need to address, one of which of course relates to some of the amounts quoted in the schedule which was circulated to Members earlier today relating to supplementation variation of

estimates for 2012. The numbers which were stated here of course, a question had been raised of the amount that, in fact, the allocation which had been made to the University of the West Indies had actually been reduced. Nothing could be further from the truth.

In fact, what really happened is that the balances which were remaining in the accounts for the Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education, actually those remaining balances were transferred out. So the amounts which were transferred were less than the full amount approved for the year, simply because the transfers occurred in June and some of the funds would have already been spent in the six preceding—nine preceding months before then. So what was being transferred was really the remainder of the balance that had been approved and, not yet expended, which was transferred over to the Ministry of Science and Technology, as well as the difference going to the Ministry of Tertiary Education and Skills Training.

So, while the transfers seem to be less, as if we were reducing the budget, it is not a question of the budget being reduced, it was simply a matter of the remaining balance which had not yet been expended because nine months of the fiscal year had gone, whatever was remaining for the remaining three months is what was actually now being transferred. So, there was no question in this document that actually we were seeking to reduce the allocations to any particular Ministry. In fact, the figures balance exactly between what were the increases and the decreases between Ministries—would have balanced to the cent. So there were no additional changes in terms of the funding that was being either asked for or being transferred.

There were some questions raised with respect to the Point Fortin Highway. I would try to answer those questions. The project, the overall start date was March 2011 and the projected end date of the project is April 2015. The amount which had been allocated in 2011 to the project was \$1.5 billion. For 2012, we made an additional appropriation of \$1 billion from Treasury deposits, so in total, approximately \$2.5 billion has been allocated to the project. Mr. Speaker, as you know, the total budget for that project is \$7.5 billion.

We have been able to fund it out of general revenue so far, while we consider what would be the most cost effective manner for raising those funds and exactly how much of it we would seek to raise from the international as well as the local market. At this time, there is no immediate pressure on us to go back into the market to raise any additional funds. We continue to fund it out of our current budgetary allocations, out of general revenue.

So far, of that \$2.5 billion, approximately \$1.6 billion has been spent. Nidco has paid approximately 50 persons to date. The total cost incurred is \$101,913,417.19. The overall budget for land acquisition for the highway has been estimated at \$700 million. We have established a number of community outreach projects, in fact 14 of them have been already listed and all of which affect the areas, the families as well as constituencies in those particular areas.

The hon. Member for Port of Spain South had raised a few questions with respect to a number of the payments made to MYPART, MILAT and a number of the other projects which—sorry, the mentoring programme for youth at risk and the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Management. Basically, what had happened is what we were seeking to do there was to settle outstanding bills with that transfer, simply because bills for those particular institutional arrangements had not yet come in. So what we were seeking to do was to use the funds which we knew would not be utilized in that fiscal year to do other things. We know that the bills for those expenses incurred would come in and on the basis of that, we would have funded that from current expenses in this year.

With respect to the Tobago Bill, of course that Tobago Bill has been drafted and I expect that it would be laid in this honourable House shortly. So there is not an issue of the funds not being used—the \$300,000 was used otherwise, but separate funding had been allocated—sorry, I should say, separate arrangements had been made to ensure that the Bill was properly drafted and that we were able to pay for the drafting of those Bills.

7.20 p.m.

So what I just want to say, Mr. Speaker: one, there are no further increases in expenditure in respect of either 2012 or 2013 as far as what we have in front of us are concerned. It simply deals with transfers between Ministries; it deals with the separate variation of appropriations which we need to have approved, and it is not, in any way, dealing with increased costs.

Mr. Speaker, I think, perhaps, in winding up, I would want to say that the economy remains strong as we close the accounts. While we had originally projected a budget deficit of well over 4 per cent, the budget deficit came in at 2 per cent. I expect that 2012 would show at least a 1 per cent growth based on improvements in the performance of the non-energy sector.

In this year, we expect that the economy will expand in excess of 2 per cent. In fact, all of the major rating agencies have indicated to us, including the IMF, which is not a rating agency—but the IMF, Moody's, Standard & Poor's all concur that based on the initiatives that they are seeing, based on the very

aggressive fiscal stimulus which we have put in place that, in fact, this year we expect the economy to grow by more than 2 per cent. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, in spite of the our aggressive fiscal stimulus, the country's fiscal savings continue to provide a financial safety net with the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund recording approximately US \$4.7 billion at the end of fiscal 2012. So, notwithstanding the fact that we continue to operate with a deficit, the fact is that we have continued to make transfers to the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund and I expect that by the end of this year, that Fund will be well in excess of US \$5 billion. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I intend, within the next two months, to bring a further report to this House with further recommendations regarding how we should treat with the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund.

The hon. Member for Point Fortin had made reference to the Moody's Investors Service Report. I want to say that I am, indeed, very pleased with the fact that Moody's has continued to provide the country with a—to maintain its ratings for the country and it goes so far as to say that the rating is stable. I would want to quote from Moody's Investors Service, global credit research report as at January 16, 2013, which would have been less than a week ago. Moody's says:

“Trinidad and Tobago's Baa1 sovereign rating continues to be supported by (i) the government's robust balance sheet, fiscal savings, and a strong external liquidity position that mitigate susceptibility to event risk; (ii) a solid institutional framework with a high degree of policy coherence and continuity; and (iii) relatively high income per capita.”

They went on to say that:

“The rating is constrained by the small size of the economy,”—which continues to grow and which we continue to work on to grow—“a limited degree of diversification”—which has now become a major focus of the Government, or which is a major focus of the Government—“concerns about medium-term growth prospects...”

And these derive mainly from the fact that the Caribbean region is seen as being an area of slow growth, so many of our exports going into the region are expected to be affected and it is expected that the growth in exports in the region is likely to be affected, not so much by Trinidad and Tobago, as much as it is being affected by what is happening in the rest of the Caribbean.

“...and the relative deterioration of fiscal and debt metrics.”

Which they mentioned, which, as the hon. Member mentioned, our debt to GDP ratio has increased to 46 per cent.

Basically, this is an inheritance from what has happened with respect to the Clico debacle and the collapse of Clico. In fact, half of the deterioration has really been as a result of the fact that Clico itself—the meltdown of Clico, and that has significantly affected our debt metrics. In fact, all of the increase in our debt to GDP in the last year has been as a result of the fact that I have brought to account the borrowings that we have had to undertake in order to deal with the Clico situation.

So, Mr. Speaker, in closing, I want to thank Members of the honourable House for their contributions, to say that the Trinidad and Tobago economy remains strong, to emphasize that the measures in this Appropriation Bill are in respect of the last fiscal year and it represents no increase in expenditure in this year and no further increases on last year and, in fact, that as the end of the year our overall deficit was much lower than had originally been projected, ending the year at approximately 2 per cent of GDP.

So, Mr. Speaker, I beg to move. [*Desk thumping*]

Question put and agreed to.

Report adopted

**FINANCE (SUPPLEMENTATION AND VARIATION OF
APPROPRIATION)(FINANCIAL YEAR 2012) BILL, 2013**

The Minister of Finance and the Economy (Sen. The Hon. Larry Howai):

I beg to move.

Mr. Speaker: No, you have to read the entire thing.

Sen. The Hon. L. Howai: Sorry? Oh, what you gave me just now?

Mr. Speaker: Yes.

Sen. The Hon. L. Howai: Hold on a second. My apologies, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Yes, yes, no problem.

Sen. The Hon. L. Howai: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the next stage of the Finance Bill, 2013 be taken on Monday, January 28—

Mr. Speaker: No. [*Interruption*]

Sen. The Hon. L. Howai: Sorry, my apologies, Mr. Speaker. Hold on, hold on, let me—[*Pause*]

Sorry, my apologies, Mr. Speaker. In accordance with Standing Order 70(1), I now beg to move that the Bill be now read a third time and passed.

Mr. Speaker: No. You are moving too fast. You have to go from the start. There is a process. You have to move the Bill, first of all—the second reading.

Sen. The Hon. L. Howai: Oh, I see. Okay, my apologies again. Hon. Members, the Finance (Supplementation and Variation of Appropriation) (Financial Year 2012) Bill, 2013, I beg to move. [*Short pause*]

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move:

That a Bill entitled an Act to supplement and vary the appropriation of the sum the issue of which was authorized by the Appropriation (Financial Year 2012) Act, 2011, be now read a second time.

Mr. Speaker: Yes. Continue.

Sen. The Hon. L. Howai: I beg to move.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you.

Question proposed.

Mr. Speaker: If there are no speakers on the Opposition Benches, I shall now call on the hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy. You simply rise and you beg to move.

Sen. The Hon. L. Howai: I beg to move.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a second time.

Question put and agreed to: That the Bill be read the third time.

Bill accordingly read the third time and passed.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I will now like to revert to the item “Introduction of Bills”.

FINANCE BILL, 2013

Bill to provide for the variation of certain duties and taxes and to introduce provisions of a fiscal nature and for related matters [*The Minister of Finance and the Economy*]; read the first time.

Motion made: That the next stage of the Bill be taken on Monday, January 28, 2013. [*Hon. L. Howai*]

Question put and agreed to.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, before I call on the Leader of the House for the adjournment, may I inform you that I have received further communication

from the hon. Dr. Keith Rowley, Member of Parliament for Diego Martin West, Leader of the Opposition. He has asked to be excused from today's sitting of the House. The leave which the Member seeks is granted.

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Housing, Land and Marine Affairs (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move, that this House do now adjourn to Monday, January 28, 2013 at 1.30 p.m. On that day, as indicated before, we will debate through all its stages, the Finance Bill, 2013.

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 7.33 p.m.