

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES*Friday, May 23, 2014*

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: The Hon. Dr. Lincoln Douglas, Member of Parliament for Lopinot/Bon Air West, is currently out of the country and has asked to be excused from sittings of the House during the period May 20 to June 01, 2014; The Hon. Winston Dookeran, Member of Parliament for Tunapuna, and The Hon. Errol Mc Leod, Member of Parliament for Pointe-a-Pierre, are also out of the country and have asked to be excused from today's sitting of the House.

The following Members have also asked to be excused from today's sitting of the House: Mr. Jack Warner, Member of Parliament from Chaguanas West; Mr. NiLeung Hypolite, Member of Parliament for Laventille West; Mr. Patrick Manning, Member of Parliament for San Fernando East; Dr. Keith Rowley, Member of Parliament for Diego Martin West; Dr. Amery Browne, Member of Parliament for Diego Martin Central; Mr. Fitzgerald Jeffrey, Member of Parliament for La Brea; Mrs. Paula Gopee-Scoon, Member of Parliament for Point Fortin; Mrs. Patricia Mc Intosh, Member of Parliament for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West, and The Hon. Prakash Ramadhar, Member of Parliament for St. Augustine. The leave which the Members seek is granted.

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PAPERS LAID

1. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the Financial Statements of the Agricultural Development Bank of Trinidad and Tobago for the year ended September 30, 2011. [*The Minister of Finance and the Economy (Sen. The Hon. Larry Howai)*]
2. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the Consolidated Financial Statements of the Trinidad and Tobago Unit Trust Corporation (TTUTC) for the year ended December 31, 2013. [*Sen. The Hon. L. Howai*]

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

3. Audited Financial Statements of Palo Seco Agricultural Enterprises Limited for the financial year ended September 30, 2013. [*Sen. The Hon. L. Howai*]

To be referred to the Public Accounts [Enterprises] Committee

4. Administrative Report of the Ministry of Education for the fiscal year 2011—2012. [*The Minister of Education (Hon. Dr. Tim Gopeesingh)*]
5. Administrative Report of the Trinidad and Tobago National Commission for United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) for the fiscal year 2007—2008. [*Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh*]
6. Administrative Report of the Trinidad and Tobago National Commission for United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) for the fiscal year 2008—2009. [*Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh*]
7. Administrative Report of the Trinidad and Tobago National Commission for United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural

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- Organization (UNESCO) for the fiscal year 2009—2010. [*Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh*]
8. Administrative Report of the Trinidad and Tobago National Commission for United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) for the fiscal year 2010—2011. [*Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh*]
 9. Administrative Report of the Trinidad and Tobago National Commission for United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) for the fiscal year 2011—2012. [*Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh*]
 10. Annual Administrative Report of the National Maintenance Training & Security Company Limited for the year ended December 31, 2013. [*The Minister of Housing and Urban Development (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal)*]
 11. Administrative Report of the Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards and its subsidiary, Premier Quality Services Limited for the year ended September 30, 2012. [*Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal*]
 12. Administrative Report of the Penal/Debe Regional Corporation for the period October 01, 2010 to September 30, 2011. [*Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal*]
 13. Administrative Report of the Penal/Debe Regional Corporation for the period October 01, 2011 to September 30, 2012. [*Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal*]
 14. Administrative Report of the Penal/Debe Regional Corporation for the period October 01, 2012 to September 30, 2013. [*Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal*]

15. Audited Financial Statements of the Deposit Insurance Corporation (DIC) for the year ended September 30, 2013. [*Sen. The Hon. L. Howai*]
To be referred to the Public Accounts Committee
16. Audited Financial Statements of the Sports Company of Trinidad and Tobago for the financial year ended September 30, 2013. [*Sen. The Hon. L. Howai*]
17. Audited Financial Statements of the Export-Import Bank of Trinidad and Tobago for the year ended September 30, 2013. [*Sen. The Hon. L. Howai*]
18. Annual Financial Statements of First Citizens Bank Limited for the financial year ended September 30, 2013. [*Sen. The Hon. L. Howai*]
Papers 16 to 18 to be referred to the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee

**JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE REPORT
(Presentation)**

**Municipal Corporations and Service Commissions
San Fernando City Corporation**

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

Fourteenth Report of the Joint Select Committee appointed to inquire into and report on Municipal Corporations and Service Commissions on a review of the administration of the San Fernando City Corporation.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Public Service Separation of Staff (Details of)

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

Will the Minister state the number of persons who were separated from the Public Service in each of the fiscal years 2010-2011, 2011-2012, 2012-2013 and the reasons for their separation?

Unemployment Relief Programme (Details of)

115. **Mr. NiLeung Hypolite** (*Laventille West*) asked the hon. Minister of Works and Infrastructure:

With respect to the Unemployment Relief Programme (URP), could the Prime Minister list those persons who were relieved from duties/dismissed from the programme during the period June 1, 2010 to December 31, 2010 and the position they held?

Vide end of sitting for written answers.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

The Minister of Housing and Urban Development (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal): Mr. Speaker, may I indicate that question No. 96, in the name of the Minister of Local Government, this is actually the Minister of Environment and Water Resources will respond, and we will ask that this question be deferred by one week. We are in a position to answer the rest of the questions on the Order Paper.

The following question stood on the Order Paper in the name of Mr. Fitzgerald Jeffrey (La Brea):

**Clearing of Watercourses
(Details of)**

96. Could the Minister state when the following watercourses will be cleared of vegetation and debris, deepened, widened as well as reinforced with concrete channel walls:
- i. Lake Canal in La Brea;
 - ii. Brea River in Vance River;
 - iii. Lorensotte North River;
 - iv. Los Charos River;
 - v. Salazar Trace River; and
 - vi. Palo Seco/Erin River?

Question, by leave, deferred.

**Visit to China
(Details of)**

123. **Miss Donna Cox** (*Laventille East/Morvant*) asked the hon. Prime Minister:

With respect to the Prime Minister's recent official visit to China, could the Prime Minister state:

- i. how much public funds were expended on the official visit;
- ii. were contributions of any kind made by any person or agency/company, local or foreign towards the visit;
- iii. if the answer to part (b) is in the affirmative, what was the nature and quantum of each contribution; and the names of the persons who travelled to China on the visit; their positions and the cost of their travel, accommodation and living expenses for the visit?

The Minister of Housing and Urban Development (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal): Mr. Speaker, may I indicate that, like we did in a previous question filed on that occasion relating to the trip of the Prime Minister and her delegation to India, we are in a position to answer on behalf of the Office of the Prime Minister, and would kindly ask the Member to file similar questions to other Ministries.

In terms of part i., the Office of the Prime Minister expended \$1,358,937 on the official state visit to India. Part ii., the answer is yes. Part iii., accommodation, meals and ground transport were provided for the Prime Minister, spouse of the Prime Minister, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Trade, Industry and Investment, the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs by the Government of the People's Republic of China.

Part iv., the names of persons, their designations and the cost of travel, accommodation and live-in expenses for the Prime Minister's visit to China from the Office of the Prime Minister are as follows: the hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar, MP SC, Prime Minister, Office of the Prime Minister, \$320,342; Dr. Gregory Bissessar, spouse of the Prime Minister, \$212,591; Mr. Reynold Cooper, Permanent Secretary to the Prime Minister, \$229,713; Mr. Shem Baldeosingh, Special Advisor to the hon. Prime Minister, \$207,268; Mr. Barry Padarath, Advisor to the Prime Minister, \$100,233; Mr. Francis Joseph, Press Secretary, \$88,324; Ms. Carla Altamirano, Personal Assistant to the Prime Minister, \$100,233; Ms. Rosemarie Ison, Personal Assistant to the Prime Minister, \$100,233. Thank you.

Miss Cox: Supplemental. Could the hon. Minister state—the hon. Minister said yes to section ii., but section iii. was not answered, name and quantum of each contributor?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, I did answer question iii. The accommodation, meals and ground transport were provided for the Prime Minister; other Ministers of Government, they were provided by the Government of the People's Republic of China.

**Tourism Facilities
(Details of Construction)**

101. Miss Marlene Mc Donald (*Port of Spain South*) on behalf of Mr. Fitzgerald Jeffrey (*La Brea*) asked the hon. Minister of Tourism:

With respect to the construction of the Los Iros, Erin, Vance River and Carat Shed tourism facilities, could the Minister state:

- a) The expected commencement date of construction?
- b) The names and addresses of the contractors who were awarded the work contracts?
- c) The estimated cost of the works?
- d) The anticipated dates of completion?

The Minister of Tourism (Hon. Gerald Hadeed): Mr. Speaker, in relation to question No. 101, over the period 2007—2009, the Ministry of Tourism conducted improvement works at Vessigny Beach and at the La Brea Pitch Lake Facility, which falls within the constituency of the Member of Parliament for La Brea.

With respect to (a), there are no dates for commencement of construction of the Erin, Vance River and Carat Shed facilities, Los Iros. However, it is one of the beaches that fall within the purview of the Ministry

of Tourism and in fiscal 2012 lifeguard quarters were constructed under the Public Sector Investment Programme. These works commenced in December 2012 and were completed in March of 2013. In **Scalia**, 2014, the Ministry will execute emergency repairs to a vandalized lifeguard tower and will construct another lifeguard tower. In fiscal year 2014, the Ministry will execute emergency repairs to a vandalized lifeguard tower and will construct other lifeguard tower.

With respect to (b), the first contract for works completed in fiscal year 2013 was awarded to Doc's Engineering Limited, Phoenix Park Road West, Point Lisas. The second contract was awarded in fiscal year 2014 to Unique Construction Limited of 802 New Union Road, San Fernando.

1.45 p.m.

The cost for works completed by Docs Engineering was \$364,900, VAT inclusive. The cost for work by Unique Construction Limited is \$301,349.22, VAT inclusive. As indicated above, work in relation to the contract awarded to Docs Engineering was completed in March 2013. In relation to the contract awarded to Unique Construction Limited, work was expected to start March 22 and to be completed by April 11, 2014.

The Ministry of Tourism is at present having consultations with the various regional corporations, with a view of identifying community tourism projects to be executed under the 2014 PSIP. To date, the Ministry has had consultations with the Sangre Grande, Princes Town, Rio Claro/Mayaro, Chaguanas and Port of Spain regional corporations, with a view of formulating a priority programme of works for development of these sites.

A schedule for meetings with the other corporations has been completed, and a priority list for development of sites in these areas will be

identified at those meetings.

Dr. Moonilal: Well said! Well said!

Miss Mc Donald: Mr. Speaker, with the greatest respect, the question asked for the construction of tourism facilities at Los Iros, Erin, Vance River and Carrot Shed. The question was not answered.

Mr. Sharma: What is the supplemental?

Miss Mc Donald: The supplemental is, Sir, to make it very clear, through you, Mr. Speaker: Are these facilities going to be addressed? Are they going to be constructed?

Mr. Sharma: Repeat the answer word for word.

Mr. Speaker: Please, we do not need any help. Continue, hon. Minister of Tourism.

Sen. The Hon. G. Hadeed: It is the intention of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, under the Minister of Tourism, to address all beaches, all facilities, [*Desk thumping*] to bring equality to all of our people, those who will benefit under a People's Partnership Government.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Arouca/Maloney.

Miss Hospedales: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would just like to ask the Minister if he is aware that there is a very high level of unemployment in the La Brea area, and the fact that these facilities are outstanding if he intends to ensure that they are actually constructed in a timely manner. [*Interruption*]

Miss Mc Donald: That is a supplemental.

Mr. Speaker: Please, please.

Sen. The Hon. G. Hadeed: The Government, under the leadership of the

Hon. Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar, surely understands the needs of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. We are working towards ensuring that everybody gets an equal opportunity to jobs under her stewardship.

[Desk thumping]

Mr. De Couteau: Well said! Well said!

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

Trinidad and Tobago (Current Foreign Exchange Situation)

The Minister of Finance and the Economy (Sen. The Hon. Larry Howai): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to make a statement in respect of the current foreign exchange situation in Trinidad and Tobago.

Over the past few weeks, the business community and individuals in the market place have been voicing concerns about their inability to access foreign exchange, this in spite of the fact that the country's foreign exchange reserves remain strong and have continued to grow.

In particular, over the past four years, our foreign exchange reserves have climbed from \$9billion in 2010 to \$10.3 billion at the end of the first quarter of 2014.

Dr. Gopeesingh: US.

Sen. The Hon. L. Howai: US dollars.

Our Heritage and Stabilisation Fund has continued to grow, standing at US \$5.4 billion at the end of the first quarter of this year.

Much of the country's day-to-day foreign exchange needs are met by the energy sector companies selling funds to the banking system. Where demand outstrips the supply generated, the Central Bank of Trinidad and

Tobago steps in to inject US dollars into the financial system. This was the case as recently as May 09, when some US \$50 million was sold by the Central Bank to authorized dealers.

Over the past four years, 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013, the Central Bank has sold an average US \$1.2 billion per year to the system. So far for this year, the Central Bank has injected \$410 million into the banking system. Notwithstanding this support for the market, there have been continuous occurrences of tightness of supply. This caused the Central Bank to revisit the system for allocation of foreign currency to authorized dealers earlier this year, and to seek to introduce a new system to manage the distribution of foreign currency in a more effective manner.

The new system not only introduced a new technical regime, but also required changes in the behavioural patterns of the market. The new system has not worked as effectively as originally anticipated; as a consequence, the Central Bank has decided to revisit the system.

In addition, over the past few days and in response to difficulties being experienced by the public in acquiring foreign exchange, the Minister of Finance and the Economy has met with stakeholders to determine the nature and extent of the current problems and has encouraged discussion to address the short-term difficulties being experienced in the market place, as well as to determine measures which may be effected to improve the efficiency of the system.

To address the immediate short-term needs of the market and to alleviate any concerns of the public, the Central Bank has today agreed to

inject US \$200 million into the market, the equivalent of TT \$1.3 billion. [*Desk thumping*] This will meet all the demand in the system and allow for the continuing smooth operation of the market. In addition the Central Bank has agreed to introduce certain changes to the allocation system which I am advised has been well received by the banks.

Mr. Speaker, notwithstanding the challenges of the international environment, our economy remains strong and our capacity to address this problem in the way that we have done speaks to the resilience of our financial buffers. Our balance of payment remains positive. Foreign direct investment is projected to grow to well over US \$2 billion this year. The economy continues to grow and is projected by Moody's Investor Services to expand by more than 3 per cent next year. Unemployment remains low, inflation is subdued and the exchange rate remains stable. The Heritage and Stabilisation Fund continues to grow. Government's fiscal operations have continued in surplus for the first six months of this year and debt levels remain well-managed, with the international credit rating agencies rating the Government's financial strengths as very high.

While the structure of our economy where there are a small set number of sellers of foreign exchange and a large number of buyers, will give rise to continuing unevenness in market flows, we can give the assurance that the capacity and resilience of this nation in this matter remains strong, and all the demand for foreign currency can and will be met.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Very good Minister of Finance and the Economy.

Minister Dr. Bhoendradatt Tewarie
(Correction of Public Accusation)

The Minister of Planning and Sustainable Development (Sen. The Hon. Dr. Bhoendradatt Tewarie): Thank you very much, hon. Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives.

Last night, at a town meeting on the Brian Lara Promenade hosted by TV6, the Member for Chaguanas West, hon. Jack Warner, publicly accused me of not paying a contractor or contractors for work done on a water tank in Pump Trace, East Port of Spain in 2012/2013. Mr. Speaker, with your leave, I take this opportunity to point out that this is not a fact and that it is certainly not true. Therefore I seek your leave, hon. Speaker, to provide this honourable House and the citizenry at large with the facts and the truth about this matter.

On December 06, 2012, the Member for Chaguanas West who was at the time Minister of National Security, gave me by hand after a Cabinet meeting, a letter dated December 06, 2012 and an invoice for TT \$5.5 million from Park Square Development Company Limited for works completed at the Pump Trace reservoir, Pump Trace, Laventille, “for my consideration”.

The then Minister of National Security and I had discussed this project and had agreed that the East Port of Spain Development Company and officials of the Ministry of National Security would agree on the terms of reference for the project to be executed by the East Port of Spain Development Company.

The project was a good project, to turn an open space into a safe recreational space, and I was quite enthusiastic about doing something like

this for young people in Laventille. I was surprised though by the invoice because I was not aware that the East Port of Spain Development Company had, in fact, done the project, and I was surprised to receive a request for payment and an invoice for work done from a ministerial colleague. I asked the Permanent Secretary of my Ministry, Mrs. Arlene Mc Comie, to enquire into the matter.

The Member for Chaguanas West asked me on several occasions about the invoice, and I told him that I had asked my Permanent Secretary to enquire into the matter and that as soon as she secured the facts, action could then be taken.

In early January 2013, the PS shared a response to her request for information on the project from the Managing Director of the East Port of Spain Development Company, Dr. Deborah Thomas. I will share the contents of that letter with Members of this honourable House.

This is from the Managing Director of the East Port of Spain Development Company to the PS of the Ministry of Planning and Sustainable Development:

“I refer to the Invoice for ‘approval and payment for works completed’ submitted by Park Square Development Company Limited in respect of works at Pump Trace Reservoir, Laventille, which was transmitted by your office via Fax on Friday December 21, 2012 with a request for comments and advice on same. Please be advised that this is not a project of the East Port of Spain Development Company and is not connected to this Company in any way. The East Port of Spain Development Company has reviewed the invoice and visited the project site at Pump Trace, Laventille on Thursday December 27.

The site is a large WASA owned water tank, the surface of which has been used by the surrounding communities as an informal recreation space for many years.

The East Port of Spain Development Company has identified a number of concerns. It is significant to note that the Company has not had sight of the contract...”—that is to say the East Port of Spain Development Company—“in respect of the project carried out by Parks Square company. As a result, it is not possible to confirm:”—the following:

- “The identity of the Client (who commissioned the works)
- The scope of the works and the total contract sum (it is therefore unclear if this Invoice represents an interim or total/final payment claim and/or the total works to be done)
- The relationship between the works done or indicated in the invoice and the works specified in the scope of works
- The specifications for items of work and materials
- How the contractor was identified/selected and the procurement process used.

Having conducted the site visit, the following were noted:

1. The Invoice was (*supported sic*) by Park Square Development Company Limited, a Company with registered office in Guayaguayare. The works were carried out by Netfix Roofing of Laventille who appear to have been contracted by Kall Co Limited of St. Helena.”

2.00 p.m.

“2. The works evident on the site and apparently carried out by Netfix Roofing include:

- a Construction of two (2) reinforced concrete staircases from the roadway at Pump Trace to the top of the water tank with handrails
- b. Construction of walkway with handrails from the top of the water tank to nearby Pump Trace
- c. Painting of the surface platform of the tank
- d Markings for small goal football, half-court and basketball and cricket pitch. Small goal goal-posts were on site. No posts or nets for basketball or netball have yet been erected
- e Markings for hopscotch and moral boxes
- f 6ft foot high chain-link fencing (64m) framed with 2 inch diameter galvanise iron pipe around the tank’s perimeter.

3. Some of the items including Invoice for “works completed” were not evident on the ground. These include:

- a. Site accommodation
- b. Security
- c. Application of bituminous sealant
- d. Main and Pedestrian Gates
- e. Single leaf steel gate
- f. Electrical installation
- g. Basketball rings and backboards
- h. Netball ring and post

- i. Wire wall fence (PVC coated)
 - j. Undercoat and finishing coat to all concrete
4. Quality concerns...include:
- a. Quality of the finish of concrete work on the staircases is not good
 - b. Inconsistencies on the size of treaders and risers on the stairs”—[*Interruption*]

Miss Mc Donald: Mr. Speaker. Yes. Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Minister. Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of clarification. Could you please clarify for me whether this is, you know, a ministerial statement on Government policy, please? I would like to, you know, I just want this clarified, please?

Mr. Speaker: Well based on what the hon. Minister has indicated in his capacity as Minister, he was on a programme, and a statement was made concerning some project, and he is seeking to provide the Parliament with clarification as it relates to the policy of the Government in respect to that particular project. So it is both the hon. Minister clarifying a statement made by a Member of this honourable House, and at the same time, attempting to put some perspective as it relates to policy. But I understand the point that you are making hon. Member for Port of Spain South, because it confuses not only yourself, but I would imagine other Members whether it is a personal explanation or whether it is a policy statement.

So I will ask the hon. Minister if you are not going to be that—how long again would you have in terms of that statement?

Sen. The Hon. Dr. B. Tewarie: Probably about five minutes, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: All right. I will allow you, but in the future I would advise hon.—[*Crosstalk*] please. Members, Ministers, when statements are being

made I would like to be briefed in advance in that regard. Continue, please.

Sen. The Hon. Dr. B. Tewarie: Thank you very much. The quality concerns that they are identified included:

- “4. Quality of the finish of concrete work on the staircases is not good.
- b. Inconsistencies in the size of the treaders and risers on the stairs.
- c. Inconsistencies in the railings to the staircases and walkways...
- d. Instability of the perimeter fencing which needs tightening and lacks bracing.

Evaluation and Conclusion

Using comparable rates from works undertaken by the East Port of Spain Development Company, our estimate of the total value of works evident on the ground is \$692,813. The rates used include an average of 15% profit.

Based on the works indicated in the Invoice and the rates used by this Company, we estimate the cost of all these works if completed as specified to be \$1,664,136, VAT inclusive.”

Mr. Roberts: Good clarification on policy.

Sen. The Hon. Dr. B. Tewarie: Mr. Speaker, I was flabbergasted and literally did not know what to do on receipt of this letter or on review of this letter.

On the next occasion that the Member for Chaguanas West asked me about payment, I told him that there were problems with the project.

Miss Mc Donald: Mr. Speaker, again I rise on a point of clarification. Mr. Speaker, under Standing Order 20, this a personal explanation. I take it that

you need to tell us because in case somebody else has to join this. Because this is going to be confrontation; this is going to be debate. I saw what happened on television last night and, I believe, that the Member for Chaguanas West is directly involved. Let me speak directly to you, Mr. Speaker. The Member for Chaguanas West is directly involved in this matter. He is not here, Mr. Speaker, to defend himself and therefore, what the Member is doing is wrong. It goes against [*Crosstalk*] Mr. Speaker, may I speak? So what? Can I not speak? [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Please.

Miss Mc Donald: Can I not speak? I am a representative in this House! Can I not speak? [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Okay. All right. Member—for all of this. Take your seat.

Hon. Members: “Ummmm!”

Mr. Speaker: All right. Let us—[*Laughter*] marches are not taking place here. [*Laughter*] So we do not want that kind of behaviour and outburst; leave that for somewhere else.

Hon. Members, the hon. Member was on her legs. In accordance with Standing Orders 40 (b) and (c), the Member must be heard in silence. And she can only rise if I give her permission to rise. So I would like you—I would like Members to allow the Member to speak in silence, but this is not a time for you to speak in that lengthy way. If you want to make an intervention, it must be brief. I have already ruled that I understand your point that the Member is making a statement which appears to be a personal explanation, but having regard to the fact that you have three more minutes to go, I said I would allow him to complete his statement. And in future I would like to have a brief on these statements so I can guide Members, be

they Members of the Opposition or the Government. So I will allow the Member to wrap up in three minutes. Continue, hon. Member.

Sen. The Hon. Dr. B. Tewarie: Mr. Speaker, I thank you for your guidance and your indulgence.

I told the hon. Member for Chaguanas West that there were problems with the project, and that I did not see how the Ministry or the East Port of Spain Development Company had any responsibility for the project. Then I got a letter from the Member for Chaguanas West asking me to approve the payment. This was in the middle of March.

As Members are well aware, the accounting officer in any Ministry is the Permanent Secretary, and the Minister does not approve payments.

This is what I wrote in part to the Member, and I quote from my own letter.

The main problem is that the East Port of Spain Development Company was never involved at any stage of determining contract or cost and never played a role in quality control of the project. I had carried forward to the Member for Chaguanas West a copy of the report on the project from East Port of Spain Development Company as a basis for discussion on the matter.

My last letter was sent on March 22, 2013 and Mr. Warner resigned as Minister on April 20, 2013. We had no further discussion on the matter.

A newspaper report in the *Trinidad Express* had this information indicated by one of the contractors who indicated that a community job was done free of charge. Asked about the \$5.5 million bill submitted to the State for payment, he said he had no knowledge about that and insisted that it was all volunteer work to help an at-risk community.

A check with the numbers listed for Park Square Development Company revealed no company, and a referral number for the managing director did not get us to the managing director.

Neither the Ministry of Planning and Sustainable Development nor the East Port of Spain Development Company Limited paid one cent for this project.

Mr. Speaker, I came to this honourable House in order to ensure that I gave this statement in the House in which the Member is a Member, and I cannot be held responsible for the absence of the hon. Member. But I came here in good faith. Thank you very much. [*Desk thumping*].

Mr. Speaker: All right. What I would like to suggest in an effort to ensure that we are not confused in the future, Statements by Ministers, I will ask the hon. Leader of the House to brief the Speaker, so at least I can guide Members accordingly. There is a difference between a personal explanation and a ministerial statement, but because the hon. Member was on his legs, I allowed you to pursue. And the Member for Port of Spain South did object, but I allowed you to pursue. But in future there is a distinction between a personal explanation and a ministerial statement. Okay. So, Members are guided accordingly in the future. Let us go.

**MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS
(PROCEEDS OF CRIME, ANTI-TERRORISM AND FINANCIAL
INTELLIGENCE UNIT OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO) BILL, 2014**

Bill amend the Proceeds of Crime Act, Chap. 11:27, the Anti-Terrorism Act, Chap. 12:07 and the Financial Intelligence Unit of Trinidad and Tobago Act, Chap. 72:01 [*The Attorney General*]; read the first time.

PURCHASE OF CERTAIN RIGHTS (HCU) BILL, 2014

Bill to provide for the purchase by Government of certain rights belonging to shareholders and depositors of the Hindu Credit Union Co-operative Society Limited; to empower the Minister with responsibility for finance to make payments and issue bonds for the purchase of those rights and for related matters [*The Minister of Finance and the Economy*]; read the first time.

MISCELLANEOUS AMENDMENTS (REGISTRATION OF DEEDS AND REAL PROPERTY) Bill, 2014

Bill to amend the Registration of Deeds Act, Chap. 19:06 and the Real Property Act, Chap. 56:02 [*The Minister of Legal Affairs*]; read the first time.

UNACCEPTABLE CRIME LEVEL

[Second Day]

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on question [January 31, 2014]:

Be it resolved that this House call on the Government to take immediate steps to deal with the unacceptable crime level facing the citizenry of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Mr. C. Imbert*]

Question again proposed.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, those who have spoken thus far are the mover of Motion, the Member for Diego Martin North/East and the hon. Minister of National Security. The Member for St. Joseph. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Terrence Deyalsingh (*St. Joseph*): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me the opportunity to speak on this Motion today, May 23, 2014.

Mr. Speaker, with your permission I would like to read into the

Hansard the full title of the Motion because this Motion started actually Friday, January 31, 2014; so just for posterity sake and for the benefit of listeners and so on.

“Whereas there have been continuing and unacceptable levels of violent crimes in Trinidad and Tobago; and

Whereas the mishandling of the security systems and apparatus of the State have contributed to the spiralling crime rate in Trinidad and Tobago; and

Whereas the Government has been unable to effectively reduce the level of crime in Trinidad and Tobago;

Be it resolved that this House call on the Government to take immediate steps to deal with the unacceptable crime level facing the citizenry of Trinidad and Tobago.”

2.15 p.m.

I am hoping the hon. Minister, Sen. Dr. Bhoendradatt Tewarie stays for my entire contribution. I really hope so.

Mr. Speaker, this country is now governed by a Government which came into power on one of their promises, on a manifesto, admittedly written by Sen. The Hon. Dr. Bhoendradatt Tewarie—largely written by him—and in that manifesto it spoke about a 120-day crime plan to reduce what was then the unacceptable high crime levels.

Not only has the 120-day crime plan, as envisaged by my hon. friend, the Senator, failed to make any significant impact into crime, the subsequent actions of this Cabinet have placed Trinidad and Tobago in a very precarious position as it comes to crime and our international reputation. If I limit my argument to the criminal justice system—we have a criminal justice system

that cries out for leadership; we have an Attorney General who by his own words and his own admission has told this country he is not a criminal lawyer. When we told him that his plan to bring home the Caribbean Court of Justice in a half-hearted way could not work, he said, yes, it could work.

When it could not work for 2012 as one of the 50th anniversary promises, we are still with the Privy Council, the titular head of the bar, the legal advisor to the Government and Cabinet of Trinidad and Tobago, Sen. The Hon. Anand Ramlogan told this country that he is not a criminal lawyer. If the lack of leadership in our criminal justice system stop there it gets worse, because we now have a Minister of Justice who is in charge of the daily operations of the criminal justice system, who has never operated in any sphere of law, criminal or civil, and that is the state of our criminal justice system.

We have a Minister of Justice today who is now in his fourth appointment—four appointments in four years and he has left his mark or not left a mark in each of his previous appointments. And we preside today over a criminal justice system with his leaderless and rudderless, but you promise to do better in your campaign running up to 2010. Not only that, Trinidad and Tobago has fallen in the International Perception of Corruption Index, not once, not twice, not three times, but approximately four times under this Government, and you cannot separate corruption from crime.

Mr. Speaker, Trinidad and Tobago has moved from 2010 to being a respected member of the Caricom community, a respected member of the Western Hemisphere where our main trading partners, the United States, lie to being the laughing stock of the Caribbean after unfortunate statements were made about Trinidad and Tobago not being an ATM machine, after we

were told if we help a particular country overcome their hurricane troubles they must buy from us, we have abdicated our leadership in Caricom. But in recent months Trinidad and Tobago has become a pariah in the international community. And what is a pariah? A former member of any group that is now not welcomed. We have a Cabinet and a Government that has had to fire no less than 15 members in four years. When you pick up the newspapers you hear about other members being investigated. The reason I bring up the issue about being an international pariah is that one Garvin Nicholas who used to work for us in London is now back in Trinidad and Tobago. He knows that we are an international pariah.

I want Mr. Garvin Nicholas to explain to this country certain things, because the UNC has him walking in Aranguez, Farm Road, Bamboo No.1 and Valsayn, so when he goes into these areas I want Mr. Garvin Nicholas to tell the people of Valsayn, where he is walking, Aranguez, Bamboo No. 1 and Farm Road what is his position on crime? What is your position on crime Mr. Garvin Nicholas? [*Crosstalk*]

Miss Mc Donald: Could you all allow the guy to speak in silence.

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: Mr. Speaker, we no longer have a UNC/COP amalgam. We now have a Government, which I will call the SNP government. “S” stands for slap. The first slap in the face that this country got for security apparatus was Resmi Ramnarine and that is what this Motion speaks to, mishandling the security systems.

Trinidad received a slap in the face—[*Interruption*] I do not know what they are getting so upset about with the word “slap”—over the appointment of Resmi Ramnarine. [*Interruption*] That was the beginning. [*Interruption*]

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Miss Mc Donald: Mr. Speaker, I rise on 40(a), (b) and (c), please.

Mr. Speaker: Sustained. That point of order is sustained. I ask Members to observe 40(b) and (c), respectively. Continue, hon. Member.

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So, the first slapping was the imposition of Resmi Ramnarine to the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Cadiz: The second one is?

Mr. Speaker: Please! Please!

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: So, we have an SNP government; “S” is for slapping—*[Interruption]*—“N” is for nibbling *[Desk thumping]* because you have nibbled away at every institution in this country concerned with crime. You have nibbled away with Resmi, you have nibbled away with the OPVs, you have nibbled away by bringing back a flying squad, so “N” is for nibble. I would save you for “P” in a little while.

Mr. Speaker, while we cower in fear because of crime, the Congress of the People is going to go down to Chaguanas on Saturday and the COP is going to be on an all-time high—no pun intended—they are going to be high like a kite because of Government office. But while they are high there is a black market growing now for US currency that it took the PNM to raise the issue of a shortage of US currency and the link to that with crime *[Desk thumping]* is that it is years now where a black market for US has not existed in Trinidad and Tobago. *[Interruption]* How are the drugs and guns coming in? How are they going to be paid for? They are paid for in US dollars, but it took the PNM in a press conference on Wednesday to bring to the attention of this country the fact that we do not have US and that forced them to come and make a statement here today. *[Interruption]*

We are talking what? “S”, what? Say that again Member for

Toco/Sangre Grande. Mr. Speaker, the Member for Toco/Sangre Grande is saying some expletives across the aisle and I would not stand for it. His language is deplorable. [*Crosstalk*]

Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, 36(5).

Mr. Speaker: Well, I did not hear that. I did not hear any language as you have described it, eh, and I am sure if I did hear that I would take the appropriate action. So, could you continue, please.

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. But while the Congress of the People goes to celebrate and they are high on Saturday, St. Joseph has no water. You know that? No water but there is a big ad saying “Water for All”. While you celebrate someone in my constituency, Real Street was shot and killed by the police—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, 36(1).

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: This is crime—Real Street separates St. Joseph—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: The Member has risen on 36(1). I am allowing you to continue because if I believe that you are irrelevant I will address that matter. Continue, hon. Member.

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Real Street, San Juan separates the constituency of St. Joseph from Barataria/San Juan, a man was killed there, and I am going to come back to that, but we all high. We all high. The COP is high on Saturday.

Mr. Speaker, what is more frightening is this Government’s direct involvement in crime and I am going to explain—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: No, no, no.

Mr. Speaker: Remember when you say Government you refer to Members.

Members make up Government and, therefore, you are imputing improper motives to every member of the Government. That is unacceptable. So, I do not believe that you should go there at all by accusing a Government of being responsible for promoting crime. So, please be guided accordingly.

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: I am so guided and I apologize and I withdraw the remark. What I will show, therefore, is how Government money, taxpayers' moneys are being used to support crime—I hope I can say that—and I notice my hon. Sen. Bhoendradatt Tewarie could not stay. He is gone. *[Laughter]* Mr. Speaker, the *Daily Express*, Monday, May 19, 2014; “Jamaat raking in Govt \$\$”. This is what I am alluding to. “Muslimeem thrives on land, funding from State.” Now, Mr. Speaker, we could go down the road and say “you used to do, we used to do”; they promised to do better. But you know, they were caught red handed and it reminds me of a song by one Shaggy, “It wasn’t me”. The Government was caught on camera, but “it wasn’t me”; *[Laughter]* you were caught on camera using public funds to finance a criminal enterprise but “it wasn’t me”; you did it on the bathroom floor but “it wasn’t me”; did it on the counter but “it wasn’t me”; even caught on camera but “it wasn’t me”, Mr. Speaker.

Now, if it is part of the Government’s crime plan—and I applaud them if this is true—to send Ministers undercover to catch prostitutes and people selling marijuana, I have no problem with that. That is an excellent crime plan. Send as many Government Ministers undercover, because if we have no security apparatus, prostitutes coming through, marijuana coming through cocaine, who let the cocaine pass?

Mr. Speaker: Member, listen, I understand where you are coming from, I would not permit it. No, I am saying you cannot be going in a roundabout

way in trying to implicate and impugn the Members of Parliament. You started off, I told you you were on the wrong footing, and you have now summersaulted, so I am saying do not go there, because it has the same implications at the end of the day. You are imputing improper motives to Members of Parliament, do not go there. Continue, please.

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: I am so guided, Mr. Speaker. I thank you for the clarification and withdraw the statement, not a problem. But I could refer to an article in the *Express* by Asha Javeed. This article says, “The strength and composition of his followers”—this has to do with a place in Carapo—“have caused concern within the country’s national security apparatus”, and this Motion is about the country’s national security apparatus, it has led to frequent police patrols and a temporary post outside Carapo”—the series of articles goes on under the heading—“Jamaat raking in Govt \$\$”, and what I am speaking about is tax, and I want the taxpayers of Trinidad and Tobago to understand this.

2.30 p.m.

I want Mr. Garvin Nicholas to tell the people in Aranguez, Bamboo No. 1, Farm Road and Valsayn, when he has to meet with those businessmen in Valsayn North and in Aranguez, where taxpayers’ moneys are going. And here is where it is going.

“The Carapo-based Jamaat-al-Muslimeen is controlling the mammoth share of the Ministry of Sport’s...”

And listen to it, Mr. Speaker, taxpayers’ money, doubles vendors’ money who is paying taxes, taxi drivers, doctors, lawyers, businessmen in Aranguez, let me let them know where their money is going:

“\$113,502,273 Life Sport Programme, which the Ministry of Finance

has found to be riddled with irregularities.”

Mr. Speaker, \$113,502,273, you know what that could fund? Currently, if we send a student to MIC to learn a little trade—I think they get a stipend of \$89 a day or \$90 a day, let us say that is translated into \$2,700 a month. That money, taxpayers’ money, which is being funnelled for uses not intended, could pay 4,203 MIC students for a month, but that goes to a programme under the Ministry of Sport. The article goes on:

“The Life Sport Programme is one way in which the Jamaat has been funded through the Government in the past two years as payback for support for the People’s Partnership in the last general election.”

That is what is going on in this country, Mr. Speaker. That is why this Motion brought by the Member for Diego Martin North/East is so timely.

Dr. Rambachan: Mr. Speaker—would you give way for a question?

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: Sure.

Dr. Rambachan: Is it that you are saying, you are repeating an opinion of Asha Javeed or you are making a conclusion from some report? Is it Asha Javeed saying that or is it some conclusion from some report?

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: The question will be answered very soon, because the Auditor General’s Report speaks to it. So it is both. It is both a story written by Asha Javeed, supported in the article, because the Minister of Finance and the Economy has not denied that he investigated it, and also the hon. Minister, Member for Tabaquite, the Auditor General’s report has also raised the red flag. So it is both.

Dr. Rambachan: What year? What year.

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: “Ohhh gosh, doh interrupt meh too much nah.”

Dr. Rambachan: What year? What year?

Miss Hospedales: 2013.

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: The Life Sport Programme was an initiative of the Ministry of Sport's Permanent Secretary, Ashwin Creed. Now, Mr. Speaker, criminality in this country has taken on new dimensions, where, journalist are terrorized. We now have Mr. Mark Bassant, a citizen of Trinidad and Tobago having to flee his country. When last did a journalist have to flee Trinidad and Tobago under threat from the criminal element? But let me explain what is going on with Mr. Ashwin Creed.

Mr. Speaker, I have lauded the civil service in this country already. They do wonderful work. I have lauded the civil service for seeing this country through one of its most difficult constitutional crises, the 18/18 tie. If it was not for the civil service, and the men and women, especially the senior members of the civil service, this country could have gone down a different route.

And when we talk about the civil service, we must also mention, always mention three characteristics of a good civil service, because the article now impugns Mr. Ashwin Creed, a permanent secretary. And I am not here to either defend or castigate him. A civil service is characterised by three major parameters. One, its permanence. It must be there to span different administrations. Two, it must be unbiased, whether the UNC is in power or the PNM is in power, it continues; institutional learning. Three, a good civil service or a good civil servant should be invisible. It is the politician or the Minister who hogs the limelight, who speaks on behalf of the Government.

Since the advent of 2010 and the UNC/COP alliance, many institutions in this country have been called into question, including the

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Parliament, including the Parliament. We had the case of Ms. Cheryl Blackman, public servant, PS, and now we have the case of Mr. Ashwin Creed. When these issues of moneys being funnelled to agencies or bodies that should not be having it, when it reaches the upper echelons of the civil service—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Gopeesingh: Echelon.

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: Echelon—we have to be concerned. Because Mr. Ashwin Creed had to flee for his life from criminal elements. Similarly, Mr. Mark Bassant has to flee for his life from criminal elements, after four years of your stewardship. The article goes on, Mr. Speaker:

“The programme is similar in principle to the Ministry of National Security’s”—and this is the Ministry of National Security now—“\$70 million-plus, Hoop of Life, which is now under review by the Ministry.”

The Ministry of National Security is reviewing its own \$70million programme. That is what we are faced with, Mr. Speaker. Public moneys, taxpayers’ moneys—which could buy hospital beds, which could buy medicine—are being spent, funnelled, channelled, given to bodies which may not be in the country’s best interest. I am just repeating what is said here. And the Auditor General’s Report is not very complementary to the company, TTSPORT and the Ministry of Sport.

“In the Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure for the Financial Year 2014, Life Sport is listed as a Transfer Programme.”

And that is a fact; I checked it.

“In 2012, the programme was given \$6.6 m.”

So \$6.6 million started up in 2012.

“In 2013, the cost, multiplied by almost five times to \$29 million. By 2014, the programme increased in cost to \$84.4 m to \$113,502,200.73.

It was the largest increase in the Ministry’s transfer.”

The Ministry of Sport, Mr. Ashwin Creed had to flee the country.

“Because of ballooning costs, the Life Sport Programme was audited by the Ministry of Finance”—and I checked, it is true—“which showed multiple irregularities.”

I checked, it is true.

Mr. Speaker, do you know what went on under this programme? Taxpayers’ moneys, the little man paying his taxes, his NIS, his Health Surcharge, little employees, the doubles vendor as I said, \$90,000 goes to each participant a month. To do what, Mr. Speaker? The *Express* understands that Creed reportedly received threat from a known criminal, he gave a \$30 million contract under the Life Sport Programme. How does a PS give out a \$30million contract? Is there not a limit for PSs? What is the limit for a PS—\$1million?

Hon. Member: Yes.

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: One million dollars. The limit for a PS is \$1 million. How can Mr. Creed, and he has not denied this, “eh”, this story is about two-weeks old, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Ashwin Creed, a permanent secretary, has not denied this. How could he be giving out a \$30million contract, and the head of the civil service Mr. Reynold Cooper, “eh know”? He like Schultz, sees nothing, hears nothing.” And you know what is frightening, the same person who occupies the chair of Minister of National Security today, was also the advisor to the Prime Minister on national security issues, since

2010. The Minister of National Security now says, he is concerned that Government programmes are being used to fund gang activity. And this is his quote, and he has not denied it.

“My focus is on gangs and specific gang leaders who have access to State contracts and using their profit not to enhance their community and reduce crime, but to use the profit to fuel crime...”

This is what the Minister of National Security is saying, that he is concerned in 2014, that state moneys via contracts are being used to fuel crime:

“...via importation of illegal drugs and weapons and using naive youths to do their dirty work, upon which they become casualties...”

Mr. Speaker, do we understand the state of play that we are in after four years of this Government? And the COP is going to go down to Chaguanas and celebrate, because they have ministerial office, flashing blue lights, persons to carry their bags when they are going downstairs from when Parliament is finished, they like all that. That is what the COP has been reduced to. That is why I say, when the COP goes into Valsayn North, sorry, the UNC goes into Valsayn North with Mr. Nicholas, Aranguez, tell them there. Tell them that.

But, Mr. Speaker, it gets worse. If you think it could not get worse, it gets worse. Because there has been no denial of the factual content of this article. If there was a denial by the Government, I would have said, okay, Asha Javeed, this is fiction, this is *Alice in Wonderland*, this is a tale about the *Tortoise and the Hare*, this is absolute rubbish, that what Asha Javeed is printing here, saying here, carried in the *Express*, is absolute rubbish. But I have heard no rebuttal. So it gets worse, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, you remember the movie “Jaws”? Just when you thought it was safe to go back

in the water—do not go back into the water, it gets worse.

A fella called Hassan explained that even the police seeks his help. And I want to ask a direct—because this Motion is about crime, crime. The mishandling of the security systems. And the biggest “mishandler” of the security systems is possibly at the senior levels of the police service.

“A gun went missing in the police station. Twice. Officer send word to us see if we find his gun on the streets. Now we don’t want to betray them. We go and find the gun and pay for it and give them back in the station. Twice.”

Nobody has denied this, and I know my friend from Tabaquite is going to rise after I speak—tell me about this link here, with the police.

What is happening to our state security apparatus? What is happening, Mr. Speaker? I thought all these things were coming to an end. In 2010, they promised us milk, honey, 120-day crime plan, we will fight the criminals on land, not in the sea, 21st century policing.

“Contacted yesterday on whether the police had used Jamaat’s help...”—acting—“Commissioner of Police, Stephen Williams reserved comment until he had read the story in today’s paper.”

He reserved comment.

2.45 p.m.

This is what I was talking about and you rebuked me—and rightly so—about taxpayers’ money under this Government, being used to fuel crime. Deny it. Deny it. So, Mr. Speaker, I spoke earlier about, it is an SNP government. “S” is for slap, “N” is for nibble. What is “P” for?

Miss Hospedales: What is “P” for?

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: What is “P” for? That is a good question. SNP

government. “S” is for slap; “N” is for nibble and “P” is for pull. The first fast one this Government pulled on us was section 34. You pulled a fast one on us. Because of section 34—and you pulled that fast one—we cannot have cases go through the court system as rapidly as they should.

We voted—we supported that Bill, Mr. Speaker. It had a proclamation clause which meant we took the then Minister of Justice, Mr. Herbert Volney, at his word that certain things will be put in place before the proclamation of that entire Bill: the Judicial Centres; the Forensic Science Centre; we would amend the Supreme Court Adjudicature Act and have more Masters of the High Court. But they pulled a fast one back in 2011. So “P” is for pull. But this is not to one-pull Government; this is a two-pull Government. They pulled it again this week when somebody else said now, “I take the blame for section 34”.

Miss Mc Donald: That was a shame.

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: Who are we to believe? He pulled it twice on us. You pull it once, shame on you, you pull it twice, shame on me. We have no more trust in this country, absolutely no more trust. But just like Jaws, if you thought it was safe to go back in the water, it is not safe to go back into the water, not safe at all.

Mr. Speaker, the last time this Bill was debated, the hon. Minister of National Security, in response to the mover of the Motion, the Member for Diego Martin North/East, said this—and this is the hon. Minister of National Security’s *Hansard* of Friday, January 31 of 2014 when this Motion first came up for debate. At that time, Mr. Speaker, you will remember that January of this year was the most murderous start to any year in the history of Trinidad and Tobago, and none of us should feel happy about that—none

of us! And if you had extrapolated the most murderous start to 2014, you would have gotten a figure of around 700. Thankfully, that is not going to be so.

But let me tell you what the hon. Minister of National Security says. And, Mr. Speaker, I really crave your indulgence in reading this part of the *Hansard*, but it is important. You were not in the Chair then, Mr. Speaker. This is on page 80 of the *Hansard* report of Friday, January 31, 2014:

“Madam Deputy Speaker, it was mentioned about the escalation in the murder rate this year, but what is quite interesting is that we looked at the murder rate—yes, in the first seven days for the year, the murder rate was 19, immediately we put mechanisms in place, proper standard operation procedures, and—you know, what was not mentioned is that on January 22, one murder; January 23, no murders; January 24, no murders;”—and we are happy about that—“January 25, no murders;”—great, that is the way the country should be going—“January 26, no murders and January 28 and 29, no murders. In the last 10 days, there were six murders.”

So he was quite right in saying in the first seven days there were 19 murders. But then when he called out the last 10 days there were only six murders—and that is what we want.

He goes on:

“When we look at that ratio, because he”—and the ‘he’ is the Member for Diego Martin North/East—“was speaking about statistics and stating that in the first seven days—because he spoke about the first seven days—the murder rate would have been 700, but let us look at the last 10 days with six murders, that is an average of 18 murders per

month, which we are looking at a per annum now, if we keep on that pattern, we are speaking about 216 murders”—for the year.

This is his extrapolation now, because the murder rate had come down.

“We are speaking about 216 murders in comparison to SAUTT...”

So on January 31, 2013, after we had the most murderous start to this year, the Minister of National Security was speaking about ending the year at 216. And what did the *Hansard* recorders have in brackets afterwards? “[*Desk thumping*]”. Very good.

Mr. Speaker, if one goes to the figures provided by the Crime and Problem Analysis Branch, provisional figures as at May 07, 2014, the hon. Minister of National Security was predicting with desk thumping, that we will end the year at 216. Let me give you the statistics for murder from January to April 30—just four months: Port of Spain, reported—28; southern division, reported—10; western, 27; northern, 24; central, 14; south-western, seven; eastern, 19; north-eastern, 21 and Tobago, two, giving you a grand total of 152.

Now, if I do the same extrapolation that the hon. Minister of National Security did—so if you have 152 for four months and you multiply that by three to get the whole year, you would end up with 456, not the 216 predicted by the Minister of National Security.

But, Mr. Speaker, just when you thought it was safe to go back in the water, I urge you, I warn you, it gets worse. Do you know what the detection rate is? Nine point two per cent. Nine point two per cent detection rate after this Government spent \$300billion in four years. That is what we have to show for it, an extrapolated figure of 456 murders using the same logic that the Minister of National Security used, with a detection rate of 9.2

per cent after you have spent \$300billion.

But it gets worse. If you turn to a document called the *Medium Term Policy Framework 2011/2014*—and this is why I wanted my hon. friend, Sen. Bhoendradatt Tewarie to stay here because not only is he the author of the manifesto, he is the author of this document.

“Ministry of Planning and the Economy, October2011.” And when you turn to "Crime and Law and Order", this is what the Government put before the country in 2011, because this is a three-year plan, 2011-2014. I just quoted the statistic of a detection rate of 9.2 per cent. They detected 14 murders out of 152. Under “Crime and Law and Order Medium-term Objectives:

- “Increase the crime solvency rate. (Targets: 15% in 2011-2012; 20 % in 2012/13, 25 % in 2013/14)”

But listen to this one.

- “Increase homicide detection rate...”

Homicide means “murder”, eh. I just told you the statistics from Crime and Problem Analysis Branch. This is not PNM statistics, this is Crime and Problem Analysis Branch saying under all the murders reported from January to April, 152, they have detected—how much? Fourteen, which is 9.2 per cent after you spent \$300 billion. But this is what the *Medium Term Policy Framework* says.

- “Increase homicide detection rate (Targets: 15 % in 2011-2012...”

Sounding good, eh?

Mrs. Thomas: Yeah.

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: “20% in 2012/13...”

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Sounding good:

“25 % in 2013/14...”

But we are now in 2014. But what is the actual figure? Nine point two per cent. But just when you thought it was safe to go back in the water it goes on:

“increasing thereafter until an 80 % detection rate is achieved)”

Eighty per cent!

Miss Hospedales: When they out of office.

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: Eighty per cent! This is what this document says—
[Interruption]

Miss Hospedales: A projection for when they out of office.

Mr. T. Deyalsingh:—that you want to achieve a—detection rates going down to single figures, but you want to achieve 80 per cent detection rate. I mean, who are you fooling?

Let us see what other plans they had for us. Under page 30:

“A major initiative is the 21st Century Policing Project...”

You all remember that?

Miss Hospedales: Oh Lord, yes.

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: “which introduces a new delivery system for policing...”

You remember the first budget in 2010, hon Minister of Finance then, Mr. Winston Dookeran, in presenting his first budget, spoke about buying bicycles for the policemen?

Hon. Members: Yes. Yes.

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: We buy any bike yet?

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: He spoke about precepting all the private security

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guards, to work alongside the police service. Do you see Amalgamated walking around with the policemen as yet? I do not. This same document talks about:

“Key initiatives include the strengthening of the Coast Guard fleet by the acquisition of 12 interceptors, the sourcing of (2) two long range patrol vessels...”

Does that not sound suspiciously like the OPVs again?

Hon. Members: Yes.

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: So in 2014, Mr. Speaker—

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

Motion made: That the hon. Member's speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. [*Mrs. J. Thomas*]

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: I thank you, Mr. Speaker and I thank the Member for St. Ann’s East for moving the Motion for the extension. I do not know what the Chief Whip is doing there, but—[*Laughter*—]and I thank Members opposite for being gracious.

Mr. Speaker, in the last 30 minutes I have, I want to refer to other crime initiatives, and I am hoping when the Member for Tabaquite responds to me he can tell me what has happened to this particular crime initiative because this initiative was under “Crime”.

- “The East Port of Spain initiative for the cultural and artistic reinvigoration of East Port of Spain and the generation of creative industries and economic opportunities through culture and the arts.”

So Member for Tabaquite, when you are responding, let me know, please:

- “The designation of East Port of Spain as one of the (5) five economic growth poles in Trinidad and Tobago.”

And this was promised in the budget of 2010.

3.00 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, another crime initiative spoken about in this and it links directly back to the series of articles written by Asha Javeed—and just permit me because we agree that if we want to solve crime it is not only about policing, it is not only about legislation, it is not only about OPVs, it is also about the social aspect, what goes on in the home and how do we meet and treat with deviant youth. It says here:

“Implement a range of social support measures involving a number of Ministries and Institutions. These include the Ministry of Planning and the Economy,”—so far so good—“Ministry of National Security...”

And I pause there because the article as written by Asha Javeed, which has not been denied, speaks to a programme of \$70 million being run by the Ministry of National Security which is under review because the funds did not reach its intended target.

“Ministry of the People and Social Development, Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development, Ministry of Sport...”

And I go back to where the Ministry of Sport is taking taxpayers’ money, public money, and it is not reaching the destination we want it to reach. It may be reaching the intended destination you know, but is that the destination we want those moneys to reach as a society? So, those moneys, the \$113 million, may be reaching its destination, but, Mr. Speaker, I ask

you, is that the right destination?

Mr. Speaker, we, in August of last year, led by the hon. Member for Port of Spain South, including myself, met with the hon. Prime Minister, the then Ministry of Justice who was, I believe, could have been the then Christlyn Moore—could have been, I do not know—in a series of talks and we made many recommendations. We made many recommendations and it is worth repeating, ad nauseam, that following an amendment to the Constitution (Amdt.) Act, No 6 of 2006, which came into effect from January 01, 2007, amended section 122 of the Constitution with respect to the procedure for the appointment of members of the Police Service Commission, and we know arising out of that, we also have serious problems in appointing a commissioner of police. Mr. Speaker, do you know what the number one recommendation was? Because it is not good enough for us to come to the Parliament, you beat me over my head with a stick, and I beat you over your head, that does not advance our country's best interest. That is good politics because I am sure the Member for Tabaquite is going to respond in kind to me. No problem.

Dr. Rambachan: How do you know I am going to respond? You want me to respond.

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: The PNM's 11-point plan. First—well, whoever, whoever responds. The Member for Oropouche East?

Dr. Moonilal: Not tonight. I never respond to these things.

Mr. T. Deyalsingh:—the appointment of a police commissioner. We gave our word—and I want the UNC supporters and the COP supporters to listen to me if you are here in the Chamber, outside there. We gave the Government an undertaking that we are willing to come to the Parliament

anytime you call Parliament, day or night, Monday, Saturday, Sunday, and we promise you to have a guillotine debate, five minutes each. Let us do away with this process, please. It does not serve the country well, this convoluted process of appointing a commissioner of police which was their invention in the first place under Mr. Basdeo Panday. Five minutes each. You talk for five minutes, we talk for five minutes and we do away with this convoluted, nonsensical, expensive, detrimental process of appointing a commissioner of police. Nothing! This is since August 2013 we gave the Government our commitment.

We spoke about strengthening the municipal police forces in all the corporations. Put more boots on the ground, more people to build relationships with the communities. We spoke about the Caribbean Court of Justice as a final Court of Appeal. One of the bugbears in carrying out the death penalty in Trinidad and Tobago is the Pratt and Morgan judgment, where everything has to be done and dusted within five years. It is not that the PNM does not want to support hanging. It is that the law is hanging for murder. That is the law.

We support the law, and just like Mr. Lawrence Maharaj could have put to the gallows nine persons under the Pratt and Morgan ruling, we are asking you, why can you not do the same? And if it is the Pratt and Morgan ruling is a hindrance, and if it is that the Privy Council is an abolitionist court—they do not like the death penalty—we know that. Where is the Caribbean Court of Justice that you promised in 2013, that may be more prone to enforcing the death penalty? We said, “Come to us, we will have a truncated debate to ensure that you do not have these massive multiple appeals before the human rights bodies. We will go with the OAS.” We

promised them, “Come to us. We will help you to hang people within the five years Pratt and Morgan judgment.” Nothing! Nothing!

We said, “Come to us.” I was there. Hon. Member for Port of Spain South, Marlene Mc Donald, she led the team. She was there. We said, “Let us establish a standing committee of the Parliament to deal with crime.” This was before, Mr. Speaker, we amended our Standing Orders. This was in August 2013, and we said, “It does not matter. The Government could chair it.” We agreed to let anybody from the Government chair it. We did not want to chair it. It is our idea, but you chair it. You are the Government. Your hands are on the wheel. We will support you. Absolutely nothing!

We told you, Mr. Speaker—when I said you, Mr. Speaker, I do not mean you, personally. We said to the Government as led by the hon. Chief Whip, “We need to look at the criminal justice system, we need to look at witness tampering, we may need to look at plea bargaining, we may need to look at enhanced powers for the Police Complaints Authority”. Mr. Speaker, in that regard, I want to read into the record an innovative, well I will not use the word “solution”, but something we can do innovatively to speed up the criminal justice system because what you have done, the fast ones that you pulled with section 34, is not serving us well. Nothing promised under section 34, as far as speeding up the criminal justice system, has come to pass because you fooled us and you fooled the country on it. You had ulterior motives.

Mr. Speaker, there is a 2005 case *R v Goodyear*. It is a criminal case involving bribery and so on. The particulars of the case or the facts of the case are unimportant at this particular time. What is important is the learning that comes out of the case. It is a criminal case and I recommend it

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to the Attorney General, excellent civil lawyer as he is, and I recommend it to the Minister of Justice—[*Interruption*]

Miss Mc Donald: Full stop.

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: Full stop.

“The principle arising out of Goodyear is that a defendant may ask a presiding judge to give an indication of the sentence he or she would be minded to impose should the defendant plead guilty there and then.”

All of this could have been done with section 34 if we had implemented section 34. So if I am guilty and I do not want to waste the court’s time, I tell the judge, “Judge, I throw myself at the mercy of the court, I want to plead guilty. Tell me, what kind of sentence I will get. Tell me.”

“The defendant has the duty to make the application for an indication of sentence and a judge may remind defence counsel that the defendant is entitled to make”—such—“an application.”

This could have been used in tandem with section 34, but because you came to the Parliament and fool us on section 34, once, twice, the abolition of preliminary enquiries has gone through the window.

Dr. Gopeesingh: [*Inaudible*]

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: We supported the Bill. We supported the intention of the Bill. But we supported the Bill predicated on the promise of the then Minister of Justice, who was speaking on your behalf, that he will only proclaim the Bill once the judicial centres were built, once we amended the Supreme Court of Judicature Act to bring in the Masters and the forensic centre will be built, which would have taken three to five years and that is on the *Hansard*. We supported you, but you had other motives. You had

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friends to protect.

Dr. Gopeesingh: 36(5), Mr. Speaker. He is including the Government under section 34 saying that we have friends to protect. I think he is imputing improper motives on the Government and members of the Government.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, did you make that statement?

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Speaker: Well, I will ask you to withdraw it, please.

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: I withdraw it. Thank you. So we could have been using the Goodyear principle in tandem with that piece state of legislation. We could have, but no. Because of the mistrust that we now have for you out of section 34, that piece of legislation cannot be proclaimed.

Mr. Speaker, the Police Complaints Authority is another institution that which has not been exempt from battering. You will hear that the chairman of the Police Complaint Authority, appointed by the President with support of both the Government at the time and the Opposition, Miss Gillian Lucky, is now under attack from the Government. That is another piece of the security apparatus referred to in this Motion, and when we went to those crime talks we told the Government it is time to revisit the PCA. It is time to revisit the Police Complaints Authority.

Mr. Speaker, in my short four years in the Parliament, it is normal when you are bringing innovative legislation—under any administration—that it is very difficult to get it right the first time. The Police Complaints Authority Act, I think back in 2006, is no exception, but we have had the experience with that piece of legislation from 2006—2014. That is a collective what, eight or nine years of experience. In that eight or nine

years, whichever administration it is—because when we speak about crime, it is not about beating me and beating you. It is about what is best for Trinidad and Tobago. I spoke early and I want to reiterate, that we want to come to the Parliament to do away with this convoluted process of appointing a commissioner of police. Ten-minute debate, five minutes, five minutes and we done and dusted, and we could have a permanent commissioner of police. A permanent one.

3.15 p.m.

The PCA: Mr. Speaker, I saw in the newspaper today—I forget which newspaper now—that so far for the year, 23 people have been killed by police. Now, it could be some in the line of duty, whatever; I am not disaggregating the figures to cast blame. The fact is, it is in the public domain that 23 persons have been killed by the police. It is also in the public domain that one or two SRPs may have acted intemperately resulting in death to citizens. What this speaks to is not only the need for proper training and handling of the SRPs when they go out on the streets to perform their duties; it speaks to that, and I think the Leader of the Opposition spoke about that recently; that these SRPs should not be on their own. But the issue of “23 killed by police” brings home in stark reality, the fact that the PCA—the Police Complaints Authority—and their governing legislation need to be looked at.

Again, the Member for Port of Spain South was there with us when we presented this solution, or this as part of the solution, to deal with crime in August 2013. It did not fall on fertile ground, it fell on deaf ears; did not find favour with the Government, but they are busy attacking Gillian Lucky but they would not look at the piece of legislation under which Gillian

Lucky has to operate, and to see where the constrictions are, if powers need to be enhanced—Mr. Speaker, may I please ask how much more time do I have, please?

Mr. Speaker: You have until 3.28 p.m.

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The governing legislation for the Police Complaints Authority—as I said, we have had eight years of experience with it—we need to revisit it and we need to revisit it urgently. This is now a crisis; it is a matter of national importance and we, in the PNM, want to put it back on the front burner for the country to look at—not for the PNM to look at but for the country. Whether you live in Tobago, whether you live in Oropouche, Carenage, Mount D’or, Chaguanas, it does not matter—whether you wear yellow, red, white or green—this is a non-partisan affair; totally non-partisan.

Again, Mr. Speaker, we are asking the Government, we are imploring, we are begging, we are cajoling, we are asking: let us look at these 11-point recommendations we made. I only called out about three because time does not permit. But what did we recommend under the PCA? What are we looking at? The PCA needs enhanced powers, that is a given. Forget the fact that you do not like the head of the PCA, she is not going to be there forever. Forget the fact that you are calling for her removal and that you attack her at every point in turn. She is not the problem, the problem is the Act.

So let us go. What does the PCA want? What does the PCA need? What are we recommending? Mr. Speaker, we recommend—we put it out for consideration to all peoples of Trinidad and Tobago, all—that the provision of powers, privileges, authorities and immunities of the police to

also apply to the authority and its investigators. How are they to investigate without the necessary powers and immunities that the police have? Because they have to investigate police, they need to have the same powers and immunities.

We need to include in the PCA Act, and consider it, the right to be heard—an officer's right to be heard. The rule of law says that you have a right to be heard. So if a charge is made against an officer, he has a right to be heard. You cannot have mongoose logic and mongoose law applying there.

Mr. Speaker, we are expanding the remit of police, we are expanding the SRP force, and I want to ask the country—whether you wear yellow, red, green or white or you wear no such colour—is it time to broaden the definition of police officer under the PCA Act to now include estate constables and the rural police? We need to look at those things because a lot of criminal activity takes place in the rural areas—where are the marijuana fields? The marijuana fields are not in Port of Spain; they are not in Chaguanas. Where are the marijuana fields?

We need to have or to look at, or to consider, under the PCA and look at the other piece of interlocking legislation. How do other pieces of legislation dovetail with the PCA? Because for the PCA Act to work—it does not work in a silo, it does not work alone; it has to dovetail with other pieces of legislation. And one of the bugbears is the Interception of Communications Act, Chap. 15:08—we need to look at that—which will enable the authority to access information from a telecommunication's network. I am throwing it out for consideration. Do we want to give the PCA that? But I am throwing it out; we are here to work with you to treat

with crime. Under the PCA Act, we also need to have some witness protection built into it so witnesses are not culled.

Mr. Speaker, under section 22(1) of the Act, that section gives the PCA:

“...the powers of a commission of enquiry established under the Commissions of Enquiry Act...”

—and I quote:

“...as if it were a commission of enquiry for the purpose of the Act.”

And commission of enquiry are exempted from the provisions of Freedom of Information Act. We have to now—have we reached a stage where information deposited and held by the PCA need to be kept confidential? Do we need to look at the Firearms Act, Chap. 16:01, as it dovetails with the PCA?

One of the recommendations we may want to discuss—and I want to make the point to the Government again: we are ready to discuss crime with you at any time, day or night, Monday, Tuesday, [*Desk thumping*] Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday, Indian Arrival Day, Easter Sunday, Emancipation Day—any day—Republic Day, Carnival Monday, Carnival Tuesday—call us, we will convene the Parliament and do this. We told you this in our talks with the hon. Prime Minister. Do we want to look at amending the Firearms Act, Chap. 16:01 to include the PCA investigators to the listings of persons permitted to have possession of a firearm? How could the PCA—their investigators—investigating crime, investigating complaints against police not have access to weapons to protect themselves?

And, Mr. Speaker, one of the last points I want to make, and I said that the PCA piece of legislation is now about eight years old, and with the

experience under legislation, you could identify weaknesses, shortcomings and, as they say in law, the lacunas in the law. There is a lacuna in the PCA legislation and I want to throw out to the Government—because crime does not see colour, does not see race, does not see ethnicity. I could be shot leaving the Parliament tonight; you could be shot leaving the Parliament tonight.

We have to join hands and I want to make a plea, before I close, Mr. Speaker, I am begging the Government, the same way we extended the olive branch to you in August 2013, we are here again, giving you, not an olive branch but we will give you the whole olive tree; we will uproot it, give you the entire tree. You will find the path to our house fragrant with welcoming breeze, come and speak to us. [*Desk thumping*] Listen to what we have to say, do not just shrug it off.

Because you know when those talks ended, Mr. Speaker? The talks ended abruptly when it became clear that the Government just was not listening, had no regard for our recommendations, and those talks stopped on the day of the last Cabinet reshuffle. The Member for Port of Spain South was there. That was the date set aside to meet but you had to have a Cabinet reshuffle because there was another crisis. And we were meeting with a Minister of National Security before, who, I believe, was Mr. Emmanuel George. But, on that day, he was shifted to the Ministry of Justice, so the talks collapsed. The only person who came to the final set of talks that day was the hon. Attorney General, and we told him, “If it is you are not going to listen to us, why are we here?” But, I want to reiterate: we are here ready, willing and able to work with you any day, any night.

The last thing we need to do under the PCA is to remedy this lacuna

which has come to light, which leaves the SRPs not subject to disciplinary regulations under the Police Service Act. That has now come to light in stark reality that the SRPs need to come under the ambit of the PCA and ensure that regulations concerning the disciplining of such officers are made pursuant to section 22 of the SRP Act. So, there is a lot of work to be done in treating with crime. I urge the Government: meet with us, talk with us; you will find us able, ready and willing to do so.

Mr. Speaker, with those few words, I think I have cut it close with two more seconds to go. I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

3.30 p.m.

The Minister of Works and Infrastructure (Hon. Dr. Surujrattan Rambachan): [*Desk thumping*] Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for the opportunity to join and contribute in this particular debate.

Mr. Speaker, I thought I would have heard something much more profound, with much more substance than that which I heard from the Member for St. Joseph. But unfortunately, he tried to trivialize the entire matter and personalize it, especially by bringing into the domain of this Parliament, the names of persons, including the very distinguished High Commissioner to the United Kingdom on behalf of Trinidad and Tobago, and to several European countries mind you, Mr. Garvin Nicholas. It shows how insecure, Mr. Speaker, the Member for St. Joseph is; very, very insecure. Mr. Garvin Nicholas made two steps in the constituency of St. Joseph and he immediately ran scared.

Why are you attacking the High Commissioner to the United Kingdom who brought such distinction to Trinidad and Tobago while he was High Commissioner in the UK? It is unfortunate, Mr. Speaker, that the

Member for St. Joseph would seek to go so low, would seek to debase, not Mr. Garvin Nicholas, but in his own self and contribution, by stooping so low as if wanting to conquer, but instead defeats himself.

Mr. Speaker, before I get into my contribution, there are a few points that were made by the Member that I need to deal with. He said that—but you know, Mr. Speaker, maybe I ought to congratulate Asha Javeed, in fact, for his speech, because he did not write it himself, [*Desk thumping*] [*Laughter*] so Asha Javeed probably had written it, since he depended for almost 40 minutes on the opinion of a reporter that he read from.

Mr. Speaker, he said that the Partnership Government made certain promises in its 120-day plan in the manifesto. I want to tell him that in a couple of days a document will be released, which will show, in fact, how much we have accomplished of that manifesto, and he will be very much shocked to know that most of that manifesto, and the promises we made have, in fact, been achieved. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, but I think it is important to go to the statistics that he himself was referring to, in terms of crime and what is happening in the country, in order to paint a truer picture of what the reality is. Mr. Speaker, in saying that, let me be the first to say that as a Government, we ourselves are not satisfied with what exists in terms of the crime situation. We acknowledge that crime continues to be of major concern. It continues to be a major challenge for us, but we are not going to stand here and say that crime is not an issue, it is an issue. It is an issue that the Government is facing square on. I will point out later on in my contribution many of the things that the Government has been doing in order to deal with the criminal situation. But crime is but one of several issues that the Government has

been dealing with. One of the things that you cannot fault this Government about, is the fact that in these four years, no Government, including the PNM, has delivered as we have delivered in the areas that the people need.

[Desk thumping]

Mr. Speaker, in terms of the crime statistics, it is interesting and I probably will use a statement to describe it. I think the Member for St. Joseph and the PNM as a whole, Mr. Speaker, they want to hide an inconvenient truth. They want to make—they do not want the truth to come out, the statistics are an inconvenient truth for them as it were. And what are those statistics? Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that murders have increased in 2014, in terms of the comparative period for 2013. And, in fact, the murder figures as I have it at May 20, 2014 is 171, over 143 that existed in the same period last year. So, Mr. Speaker, we know that the murders have increased, but I think it is also important to analyze how these murders have occurred, and what has happened in the pattern of the murders that are taking place.

Mr. Speaker, in that regard, I will like to refer to statistics also provided by the Commissioner of Police, and from the same unit perhaps where my friend got his statistics. Mr. Speaker, what I want to present is murders by motives for the period January 01 to May20, 2013, compared to January 01 to May 20, 2014. In 2013, if you look at gang-related murders for the same period—I am talking about January 01 to May 20. In 2013 there were 68 gang murders, murders related to gangs, but for the same period there were 55. So there has been a drop of 13 in 2014 over 2013. So, Mr. Speaker, that is about a 26 per cent drop in gang-related murders for the period January 01 to May 20 for the same period. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Deyalsingh: Thank you for giving way. When the PNM was in power, did you all disaggregate murders by reason too? [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Mr. Speaker, I will tell you, it is very important to disaggregate it. My intelligent friend should recognize that if you want to deal with a problem, you have to know the source of the problem, you have to know the patterns, you have to know the trends, you have to know whether there is a switch in what is happening in terms of the murders. Mr. Speaker, that is the value of statistics, but then my friend does not appreciate statistics. He seems to be in a love affair more with Mr. Garvin Nicholas than he is with what he wants to deal with in the Parliament.

Mr. Speaker, so there have been a 26 per cent drop in gang-related murders, but interestingly enough something is happening in the society which we are looking at, and which is reflected in the statistics and this is the reason it has to be disaggregated. Domestic violence: murders due to domestic violence in 2013 was seven, in 2014 for the same period was 17, and so too as a result of altercations, it was 12 in 2013, and 17 in 2014. And there is one more area, revenge—murders as a result of revenge—19 in 2013 for this period, and 22 in the period for 2014. And then there is a category unknown, where they have classified 19 murders as unknown so far.

So, Mr. Speaker, we now have a situation where domestic violence, altercation and revenge are contributing to the murder rate, and it is important to understand that. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, what we recognize is that there has to be an intervention that will help people to deal with domestic issues. And this is why it is so important that the hon. Minister that deals with gender affairs and so on, is introducing measures, policies and programmes that are going to help people cope with each other. This is

why the Minister of Education in the schools, is focusing upon school violence and introducing family values, and the teaching of family values in the schools. And he is doing that because you have to attack a problem at the source.

Somebody who does not have the capacity to cope at an early age may grow up into an adult, and then does not have the capacity to cope with problems in a marriage, or problems in a home. Therefore, if we are seeing that these murders are occurring for these reasons then, we have to have interventions, and the relevant Ministers are introducing programmes to deal with those things.

But I want to compliment the police, in that if they have been able to bring down the gang murders from 68 to 55 for this period, that is an achievement and, therefore, they ought to be complimented for it. [*Desk thumping*] So for—it is very important to disaggregate and to see where the murders are taking place.

Mr. Speaker, having said that, I, therefore, am acknowledging that the murder rate has been higher in this period January 01 to May 20. I also want to say—and this is why, you know, it is such a problem for my good friends on the Opposition Bench. It is a problem for them because, you see, since 2010, we have been achieving a reduction in serious crimes. We have been achieving a reduction. It is not something that is palatable to their ears. They do not want to hear it, but the reality is that the police service has been working very hard to bring down the rate of serious crimes, and these statistics I am quoting, Mr. Speaker, are not my statistics. These are weekly statistics produced by the police service themselves from the reports in all their police stations and what have you. And what are these statistics?

Mr. Speaker, woundings and shootings have gone down from 213 last year to 180 this year; a 16 per cent reduction. Rapes, incest and other sexual offences from 237 to 188. Now, we are only dealing with the period January 01 to May 20. We are doing an equivalent comparison. It has gone down by 20.7 per cent. Serious indecency has gone down from 32 per cent to 17 per cent, a decrease of 46.9 per cent. Kidnapping has gone down from 52 to 33, a 36.5 per cent decrease. Kidnapping for ransom, zero per cent, one last year, one this year.

Now, Mr. Speaker, you remember the era under the PNM when you had kidnappings in this country, and when people ran from this country. I have a young friend, he is just about 30 years old, a very dynamic young man, he was kidnapped. If I go into an elevator with that young man, he does not go into the elevator. He will walk up the six or nine flights of stairs, but he would not go in the elevator, because he was put in the ground, in a hole dug in the ground, and galvanize sheets were put on top of that hole. He was kept there dehydrating, without water or anything for several days, and just fed in the night or given some water in the evening. That happened under the PNM. It is this Government when we came into office, that you noticed a complete reduction in kidnappings for ransom in the country. [*Desk thumping*] So that today it stands at one for the year, compared to one for the same period last year.

Burglaries and break-ins: 1,192 last year, 751 this year, 37 per cent decline; robberies, 1,316 last year, 825 this year, 37 per cent decline; fraud offences, 74 last year, 47 this year, 36.5 per cent decline. General larceny: 1,130 last year, 675, a 40.3 per cent decline. Larceny of motor vehicles. Mr. Speaker, there has been a dramatic decrease in larceny of motor

vehicles, and this might be due to several things. It might be due to the intensification of the highway patrol, it might also be due to the fact that the police service is working with malls and what have you, to put in cameras and to have them increase their surveillance at the particular areas. So larceny of motor vehicles, 435 in 2013, down to 241, a 45 per cent decrease, and larceny of dwelling houses, 154 last year, 97 this year, 37.0 per cent decrease.

Other serious crimes, 333 for the period last year, 190 for this year, a 42.9 per cent decline. Mr. Speaker, what has happened in terms of serious crimes reported, including murders, for the period January 01, to May 20 last year, 5,487 reports of serious crimes were recorded, compared to 3,534 this year, or an overall decrease of 35.6 per cent. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, I agreed that murders are heinous, and murders concern us all, but I will be the first to say, that I too, like the Government, is very concerned about the murder rate, very, very concerned. But it does not mean to say that the Government and the police service in particular, have not made critical strategic interventions which has caused the reduction in serious reported crimes in Trinidad and Tobago, and you got to give the police service credit for the fact that they have done that. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, I think, therefore, it is a very important that I put on record these statistics, and as I said these are not my statistics, these are the statistics of the police service but, Mr. Speaker—

Dr. Gopeesingh: What is the deficit again? It has moved from 5,400 to how much?

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: It has moved from 5,487 to 3,534, a 35.6 per cent decline. Mr. Speaker, the highest numbers of murders in the country are as a

result of firearms. Of 171 murders that I am talking about so far for this year, 129 were as a result of firearms, and 24 as a result of sharp instruments. And, therefore, Mr. Speaker, it means that knowing that firearms are such a problem, the police service has had to ramp up its efforts in order to take off from the streets and from the hands of criminals, the guns and ammunition.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is very important to note that between January 01 and May 22—which was yesterday?

Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: May 22—yesterday—288 firearms have been taken off the streets, and 3,528 rounds of ammunition. I am told by the police service, that is higher than any other comparative period in the country's history. Two hundred and eighty-eight plus guns off the streets, plus 3,528 rounds of ammunition is the highest number of guns and ammunition taken off the streets in a compared period, in the history of Trinidad and Tobago. But, Mr. Speaker, that deserves some commendation, that deserves some kind of accolade. It means to say that the intelligence of the police is improving with respect to finding the sources of where these arms and ammunition reside. So to say that the police are not making an improvement in terms of their intelligence, might not be a totally correct statement. True enough, the detection rate of murders remained low and that is something that is being dealt with, as I will show what the Ministry of National Security and the police service is, in fact, doing about that.

3.45 p.m.

But, Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member for St. Joseph also, unfortunately, attacked the Attorney General in terms of his professionalism. He said that

the Attorney General is not a criminal lawyer. With due respect to the hon. Member for St. Joseph, yes, there might have been Attorney Generals who were criminal lawyers, but I am sure that there were Attorney Generals in this country who were also not criminal lawyers, who never even practised in a court; never even practised in a court.

It is this same Attorney General whom they are attacking, AG Anand Ramlogan, who, in fact, saved this country billions of dollars recently when he got involved and caused the negotiation to take place—I believe in the UK—in which a ruling was done in favour of Trinidad and Tobago in the gas to liquids plant matter, World GTL Trinidad Limited, which would have cost this country billions of dollars, in a matter in which they set up a plant that today is scrap metal. That is a crime, and those people who were involved in that should be brought to justice also for wasting the public purse. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, it is also a crime that what has been done to Tarouba Stadium where public officials have caused almost a billion dollars to be spent and have not completed the Tarouba Stadium, which, today, I understand, will cost \$190 million more to do. That is a crime and if the hon. Member for St. Joseph wants to speak about the amount of money being spent on the Life Sport Programme, then he should also calculate what would have been the value to the country if that billion dollars for the Tarouba Stadium were in fact spent on education.

The Member of Parliament for St. Joseph will be well advised to go to Florida and he will see there a stadium that cost, similar to the one at Tarouba, US \$60 million and he will ask himself, “Where did the money go on the Tarouba Stadium?” I do not want to go there today, Mr. Speaker.

The country is well aware of those crimes that have been perpetuated against the people in terms of misspending. We recall the same Attorney General that he is attacking in such a vicious manner, calling it unprofessionalism, it is the same Attorney General who won a case against BAE to the tune of \$1.4 billion, when they wanted us to buy lemons in terms of the OPVs that were being built by BAE

Is that the reason they are attacking the Attorney General? Because he is exposing the corruption that they have engaged in or allowed to perpetuate itself in this country? We still have to deal with—and I hope someday the courts will deal with those who caused this country to get into a debt hole of \$20.8 billion-plus in terms of Clico; \$750 million in terms of HCU, without proper supervision. Where were they when that kind of crime was being committed in the country? These are very serious matters.

So he attacks the Attorney General. I do not know of any law in Trinidad and Tobago which states that the Attorney General of this country must be a criminal lawyer. I do not know that. It is like saying that the Speaker of the House of Representatives should have a Ph.D. That might exclude a lot of people who have the very great capability of being a Speaker, like the distinguished Speaker you are of this House. Very distinguished!

Then he talks about Members being investigated. He speaks about Members being investigated and about the Prime Minister having to fire Ministers. You know, one of the things that the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago did when she came into office was, in fact, come on a platform of integrity in public life. That is what she came on. [*Desk thumping*] And whether it has hurt her Government or whether it has benefited her

Government, she has stood on the principle of integrity. If it meant that Ministers had to be moved and so on, she did it in the interest of good governance. So when they speak about good governance that is an example of good governance in the country. This is what she has sworn to do and she has upheld that to which she has sworn in Trinidad.

He talks about people being investigated. How does he explain, in the integrity report, the Twenty-Sixth Annual Report to Parliament for the year 2013 of the Integrity in Public Life Act, Item No. 57 of complaints in this annual report, complaints of corruption against the former Prime Minister in respect of an agreement entered into with the Jamaat al Muslimeen—investigations continued—and there are two reports on that. How does he explain that? How does he explain Items No. 64, 65, 66 and 67, complaints against a former Prime Minister, alleging breaches of the IPLA in the award of land and construction of the Church of Lighthouse? Mr. Speaker, number 60, complaints against breaches of the Integrity in Public Life Act by the Ministry of Culture in the award of scholarship grants—completed; matter referred to the Director of Public Prosecutions.

So what is he talking about attacking Members on this side when, in his own backyard, the Member for St. Joseph, has, in the integrity report, to explain some of these matters of his own colleagues. They say do not throw stones if you have glass windows. Well, the Member for St. Joseph, may well take that advice; and take it under advisement, as they say.

Mr. Speaker, he attacked not only Mr. Garvin Nicholas, but he talked about this country—I cannot remember the words he used, but he used some very derogatory words about the image of this country in foreign lands. I think the Member has short memory, very short memory and I will explain

to you. Perhaps he forgets, or he has forgotten where this country was in terms of its foreign relations image in 2010 when we took over and what we have done to it.

This country during this term of office of the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, Mrs. Bissessar, has had visits from the highest level officials you can think about of the United States, Vice-President Biden. You had a visit by the Governor General of Canada. You had a visit by two of the distinguished—I think it is the Earl of Sussex, who was in Trinidad and Tobago during independence. You have had a visit by the Vice Premier of China, the Governor General of Canada and you have had a visit by Mr. Raul Castro also of Cuba.

Maybe he has conveniently forgotten that Trinidad and Tobago played a vital role in bringing about the arms trade treaty and the negotiations for that came to a successful conclusion at the United Nations. Maybe he has conveniently forgotten that although Mr. Rodney Charles, Ambassador Rodney Charles, took office only in 2011 at the UN, he rose to the position of Vice-President of the United Nations. [*Desk thumping*] If that does not say something for Trinidad and Tobago and the way it is recognized in terms of its foreign relations and the people who represent Trinidad and Tobago, I cannot stand here and hear him cast aspersions on the image of Trinidad and Tobago overseas in terms of its foreign relation.

If I may just say something about myself, the Prime Minister, when she came into office, she was Chair of the Commonwealth, which means that below the queen and in relation to the Secretary General of the Commonwealth, the Prime Minister was almost like the head of 54 Commonwealth nations, and, therefore, she presided over many meetings in

the Commonwealth and during that period of two years she performed with distinction. [*Desk thumping*]

She gained such respect for Trinidad and Tobago, such respect, that when she moved a motion on the margins of the UN General Assembly—I think it was the 66th General Assembly—for a meeting in order to get a motion accepted for greater participation by women in political decision-making, she was supported by many Presidents of the world, including the President of Brazil; the President of Costa Rica, Mrs. Chinchilla. She was supported by Mrs. Clinton, as well as the Prime Minister of Australia and otherwise. That is the quality of our Prime Minister and the lift we gave to Trinidad and Tobago during that time.

I would just very humbly tell you that I became the Chairman of the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group, CMAG as it was called. [*Desk thumping*] I was nominated by the Foreign Minister of Australia who was once the Prime Minister of Australia, Mr. Kevin Rudd. I was nominated by the Foreign Minister of Canada and by the Foreign Secretary of the UK to be the chairman of CMAG. One of the things I had to undertake was to lead a mission to the Maldives, where there was a coup that took place and I had to negotiate between the deposed president and the President who had taken over and come back to Marlborough House, write a report and then to keep negotiating in that matter until a resolution has now been arrived at.

Mr. Speaker, if we were not doing the right things in the international environment, in my case—maybe the country does not know this—I was given Chile's highest award—the highest award they could give to a non-national of Chile—for my contribution to relations with Chile and the Latin American Union. [*Desk thumping*] So I say these things because it is

important to debunk what the Member for St. Joseph is saying about our country and its foreign image.

He spoke about the Life Sport Programme. If something is wrong in our country where we are the Government, we do not sit as idle spectators to it; we intervene. If there is an audit to be done, an audit will be done. Programmes will have problems and if this one has a problem, this Government will accept that responsibility and do that which is necessary in order to ensure that the problems are corrected.

Having said that, these are the same persons, on the other side, who speak about introducing programmes in order to alleviate the pressures upon young people that will cause them to fall through the cracks and when you introduce the programmes, then somehow they want to condemn the programmes.

The Life Sport Programme, I am advised, has so far taken 1,989 young persons off the streets in high crime areas. In fact, the Life Sport Programme operates in 33 hot spot areas in Trinidad. They are not paid \$90,000 a month, if I heard the Member correctly. They are paid \$1,500 a month in terms of the stipend that they get; \$1,500, not \$90,000.

They play sport, but it is not only about that. Here you are trying to reform the lives of people. You are trying to catch them and you are trying to influence them and you are trying to help them reshape their character because you cannot reshape their character. You have to help them before they are caught up by others and taken somewhere else.

The Member for La Horquetta/Talparo will tell you about the 60 persons in the Life Sport Programme in his constituency who have been very successful in terms of sports, winning every league. But more than that, the

Life Sport Programme is not only about sport. They are taught anger management. They are taught numeracy. They are taught literacy. In other words, they are given skills for making their lives a greater possibility, so that they can fulfil their potential.

While the Member is criticising, I say if there is an audit to be done, it will be done. If there are problems to be corrected, they will be corrected. This Government will not run away from its responsibility. So when they talk about this Government not being open; this Government not being transparent, here I am standing and acknowledging that if there is a problem, it will be dealt with in an open and transparent manner. [*Desk thumping*]

4.00 p.m.

So that is why I can always loudly proclaim that we are a Government that is open and a Government that is transparent. Mr. Speaker, do you know that 14 of those young people who are on the Life Sport Programme have completed coach certification, certification as coaches? Do you know that 10 have gained scholarships to the Christian Community College, 70 have moved on to the MIC—Member for St. Joseph, you spoke about the MIC—70 have moved on to the MIC, 30 have entered drilling school, 12 now have a career in music and 46 have completed community development projects in the last two years. These are just some of the statistics as to some of the outcomes of the Life Sport Programme.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say something here because the Member for St. Joseph made a certain accusation that we are funding the Jamaat Al Muslimeen, or what have you. I would certainly ask the Member to remember two things: one, it is this Government under the Hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar that called a commission of enquiry into the coup, [*Desk*

thumping] so that what has to be revealed would have been revealed and, secondly, it was this Government who took the Jamaat to court in order to recover certain moneys. Mr. Speaker, I want to say that this Government has never and is not in the habit, now or shall ever be in the habit, of funding criminal elements in Trinidad and Tobago. That will not happen under this Government.

The Government will always strive to ensure that people who conduct themselves within the law will be the beneficiaries of that which the Government has to offer in the country in terms of its development. Mr. Speaker, these are some of the comments that were made by the Member for St. Joseph as he spoke here this afternoon. We know that the nation wants action on crime—we know that—and we know they want it now, but in the pursuit of crime reduction the protective services and the police have to be acutely aware of ensuring that their actions are not to perceive to be reckless. You cannot go around just shooting down people or locking up people.

Mr. Speaker, you have to be very careful that you respect the rights of people in terms of their human rights. In other words, the country might want you to be overly aggressive and you might have to be aggressive, but you have to act within the framework of the law and what the law prescribes. This is why you have a Police Complaints Authority which is fully supported by the Government, and in which the Police Complaints Authority has been doing several investigations and making its reports public. That is part of the architecture of the judicial state of the country, and we have to accept that.

So that the actions of the police, they have to be careful. They cannot be perceived to be reckless and overly aggressive. You know, it is

interesting, the same people who are asking today for aggression will be the same ones who will be shouting about human rights abuse and respect, and justice and so on, if mistakes are made. But, Mr. Speaker, I have demonstrated by the statistics that were presented on reported serious crimes, that the police are making serious interventions and bringing down the reported serious crimes, as they have done for this period, January to May, over last year, 2013, already, by 36.5 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, the Government under the Hon. Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar always strives to do things the right way so that we can have equity and fairness in the country, equity and fairness. Mr. Speaker, I will give you an example. This is why, for example, in the matter regarding acquisition of properties on the highway, we did not seek to bring in the Commissioner of Valuation on every matter. We first engaged in private treaty negotiations, respecting the rights of people so that they could get their valuations and then NIDCO will get its valuations, and then they would sit down and negotiate and then bring in the parties.

Mr. Speaker, when I go back to the essence of what the Motion states. In the Motion it says in the second paragraph:

“...and

WHEREAS the mishandling of the security systems and apparatus of the State have contributed to the spiralling crime rate in Trinidad and Tobago;”

Mr. Speaker, this sounds like there was no crime before 2010. This sounds like if there were no 550 murders in 2008; was it? It sounds like everything was hunky-dory and very good; nothing wrong at that time. Mr. Speaker, this sounds like there was no kidnapping in that time. There was no car

stealing in that time. None! So that everything seems to be mishandling of the security system.

Mr. Speaker, I thought that it would better have been read, and maybe I should have amended the Motion: “Rebuilding the deficient and mismanaged security system apparatus of the State by the PNM.” [*Desk thumping*] That is what I think we are doing; rebuilding it, reshaping it, because what we inherited is what is important, but perhaps what we inherited is not as important as what we are doing with what we inherited, and how we are turning around the situation.

Mr. Speaker, let me give you one example: what was the state of the radar system that we inherited in 2010? The much touted 360-degree radar system across Trinidad and Tobago. MyFriend, the Member of Parliament for St. Joseph, was very happy to read from the newspapers, but let me read from a different newspaper, Sean Douglas, Sunday November 26, 2006. I think Sean Douglas is the *Newsday*—a very good reporter: “Israeli radar detects rubber boat”, and it says here:

“THE \$130 million Israeli radar system bought for the Ministry of National Security can spot a rubber dinghy...30 kilometres away, according to the web-site of its manufacturers.”

But, Mr. Speaker, it would be very interesting to go and look at how much drugs were seized between 2006—2010 compared to what has been seized between 2010—2014. It would be very interesting to go and check that and see.

You know, Mr. Speaker, what is very interesting about this, it was one, Senator Wade Mark, who was then the PA(E)C Chairman who:

“...repeatedly questioned VMCOTT acting CEO Joel Brown who in

turn repeatedly said he was unable to give the technical specifications”—I want to use the following words in inverted commas all quoted here—“of the semi-secret purchase which occurred before he assumed his post.”

That was a Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee meeting of Parliament in which Senator Wade Mark was able to expose the controversial purchase of the Advanced Coastal Surveillance Radar for the Ministry by the Vehicle Maintenance Company of Trinidad and Tobago, whose mandate then was to repair old buses. I wonder, if they bought the radar then that is why it broke down so quickly.

“VMCOTT also purchased unknown items from another Israeli firm, ECTEL,…”

Here is the danger? This equipment from ECTEL, that firm:

“...makes equipment to monitor telecommunications such as telephones.”

So you leave me to wonder, Member for St. Joseph, whether you all had bought equipment to monitor the telephones of Opposition people in the country at that point in time and why it was done in secret. [*Desk thumping*] Lift your head, Member of Parliament, and we will talk. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker, what is also very interesting is that in 2008, two years after this equipment was bought, Richard Charan, in the *Trinidad Express* in a headline, “Drug, gun-tracking unit down for past 3 months”. Just like the PNM, they cannot maintain nothing. They cannot maintain anything. They cannot maintain anything, Mr. Speaker. They just let everything fall apart, and that is how we found the country and found the security system that he is talking about that we now have to rebuild, it had fallen apart. That was

when the expensive police officers from the UK came here and were getting \$100,000 a month each, and yet the rate of crime detection was lower than it was now. This is very serious business.

So when you talk about mishandling of the security systems and apparatus, I am saying, this Motion should really read about the rebuilding and reshaping, and reconstructing and retooling. That is why tomorrow we are celebrating the continuation of the journey to recovery for the next six years, Mr. Speaker. [*Desk thumping*] That is why we are doing that. [*Crosstalk*] The Member for St. Joseph will be well advised to know that under this administration 57 per cent of the people are now getting water 24 hours a day compared to what they were getting under the PNM.

Mr. Speaker, you know, we talk about crimes, when Sen. Emmanuel George was the Minister of Public Utilities—since he raised water—there was a project to run a line from Navet to San Fernando that was calculated in 2006 to cost \$305 million under the PNM. Mr. Speaker, WASA did it with internal labour and they did it with their internal engineers, and they bought the pipes and everything, the same 42 or 38 kilometres, and did it for about \$160million. Where was that other \$140million-odd going? How come that project was costing \$305 million but we were able to do it for such less?

Mr. Speaker, it is very, very interesting when you bring these matters up—but that was also a crime. That is also a crime. So here you had a situation that for three months the radar system down and nobody monitoring it, nobody fixing it, in 2008, and you are talking about security apparatus and the dismantling of it, and what have you. They never maintained anything, [*Crosstalk*] everything collapsing. Which one is that, Member?

Mr. De Coteau: Moruga has radar system; it was not working when they were there.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Yeah. Mr. Speaker:

“Southern Division police said they were aware the installation went down last October, since it had stopped rotating.

Mon. Repos officers patrol the installation.”

Mr. Speaker, this is very serious, you know.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the speaking time of the hon. Minister of Works and Infrastructure and the hon. Member for Tabaquite has expired.

Motion made: That the hon. Member’s speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. [*Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh*]

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: You may continue, hon. Minister.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I really wonder what I will do when we only have 35 minutes to speak when the rules change.

You know, in terms of the apparatus that they are taking about, do you remember when you called a police station you could not get a car? Now blue lights are behind your head and back of your head, and side of your faces everywhere you go. Blue lights on the highway, the police are there. And you know why, Mr. Speaker? Because if you recall, they had spent \$1 billion on the CHOGM and the Summits of the Americas, and during that time they had bought hundreds of Prados. Remember that, Mr. Speaker? One of the first things we did when we came into office is took hundreds of those Prados and gave them to the police service. We gave them to the police service.

4.15 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, between 2010 and to date this Government has bought on behalf of the police service 747 vehicles—747 vehicles we have bought on behalf of the police service. Not only have we done that, but we have created the Rapid Response Unit. I wish I had a lot of time to talk about the Rapid Response Unit, but just to let you know that 48 vehicles have now been allocated to the Rapid Response Unit. These recently-bought vehicles have GPS; that means to say the vehicles can be tracked wherever they are.

We used to talk about the fact that we did not have enough policemen in the country, but this Government has not been sitting just talking about it. We have made intervention in this regard, and between the year 2010 and 2014 a total of 2,104 Special Reserve Police Officers have been trained by the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service. [*Desk thumping*] That was ramped up in the year 2013, when 1,197 were trained.

For this year, 2014, as at April 30, 263 have been trained and 150 special reserve police trainees are presently undergoing training at UTT campuses in south and in Valsayn. You know what the problem was? They were not thinking outside of the box. They were only thinking about the fact that you had St. James where you could take people to train, but they forgot you had classrooms all over Trinidad. Therefore, the first thing you had to do was identify the classroom and the physical space, the lecturers and the trainers, so you could have lifted the numbers. This Government did that. Do you know why? Because we are an intelligent, thinking Government who thinks outside of the box and are not constrained by the box.

Mr. Speaker, you know the PNM is like—I will give you an example—if you take a pumpkin seed or a melon seed and you plant it, and

as soon as the melon or the pumpkin begins to grow you put it in a bottle, you will find that it only grows the size of the bottle because it is constrained by the walls of the bottle. Their minds are constrained just like that. They are always inward-looking, not outward-looking and therefore they have been unable to create new solutions to problems in Trinidad and Tobago. So we have been thinking outside of the box, and looking at improving the architecture of the police service.

Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member of Parliament for St. Joseph—*[Interruption]* thank you Prime Minister, I was looking for this book earlier this afternoon—talked about the manifesto of the Partnership. Member for St. Joseph, show me where your government has ever had the courage, firstly to lay their manifesto in Parliament as a public document and, secondly, to put in a document to report to the country what we have done. *[Desk thumping]* You talk about openness, you talk about transparency, you talk about fearless, principled leadership. I am proud to stand today next to the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago. *[Desk thumping]*

Policy shift No. 3:

“...the crime and personal security...”—issues—“will be decidedly improved and the justice system overhauled resulting in faith that justice will be done and seen to be done. Poverty will also be reduced on a systematic basis and the quality of life in individual homes will be in further improved...”

What have we done?

“...establish a National Security Operational Centre...”

Mr. Speaker, the National Operational Centre called NSOC has been established with the main objective being to provide operational intelligence

for the law enforcement bodies and the military. It is a centre that has never been there. It was always needed, but this Government had the intelligence and the action to bring it about. [*Desk thumping*]

What does it do? It provides a facility for a total Government response to national security threats and provides a planning facility where all law enforcement bodies can access state-of-the-art technology and operational intelligence that will enhance their capability to fight crime. Where was that under the PNM?

Secondly, with respect to this manifesto commitment to implement the use of:

“GPS bracelets on offenders who are on probation but are deemed a security risk.

The use of GPS bracelets will be introduced through the Administration of Justice (Electronic Monitoring) Act, No.11 of 2012, which was not only passed, but assented to on July03, 2012. [*Desk thumping*] The Act will soon be proclaimed, once there is the finalization of an order by the Minister of Justice that will specifically provide the feature of electronic monitoring devices.

The third area of this policy shift on crime:

“Training programmes and merit systems will be established to motivate police to new ideals of justice.”

Let me just say, he was talking about manifesto promises and saying in our 120-day plan we did nothing. It is in yellow and black writing, not black and white, [*Laughter and crosstalk*] because yellow is going to prevail for the next six years in Trinidad and Tobago, just like it prevailed today. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, the National Security Training Academy was established to provide members of the national security community with the unique competencies they require to successfully conquer the security and safety challenges they face. Not only was the National Security Training Academy established, but more than that, several training programmes were conducted in fiscal 2013.

Mr. Speaker, you will be very happy to learn, in fact the community of Trinidad and Tobago will be happy to learn, that it is projected that the National Security Training Academy will deliver a minimum of 204 training sessions in 15 core courses for the fiscal period commencing October 01, 2013, and 8,916 persons from various divisions within the national security and law enforcement sectors will in fact benefit.

We are doing; we are delivering. You know, having said that, this is the problem. Because we are delivering, they are trying to find everything under the sun in order to detract the minds of the population from the delivery that this Government has been engaged in. That is what they are doing. [*Crosstalk*] But I want to say again: show me where in the history of your government you have been able to publish a document—just when we are celebrating year four—we have not reached year five yet, but we are proud of our achievements from our manifesto that we can put it at the end of four years, because the public can judge us, and the public will judge us in terms of our delivery. In other words, we do not only speak, we do not only talk, but we close the gap between talk and action, and that is what we are doing, Mr. Speaker.

The fifth item here is strengthening the National Security Council. The Strategic Services Agency has been established with some core

functions being to centralize information that could facilitate the detection and prevention of drug trafficking and prepare and update a supply and reduction drug programme.

Mr. Speaker, you recall that recently in collaboration with the Spanish authorities and the European authorities we were able to seize a high level of drugs that was being transmitted, to Spain I believe it was. There have been several drug interventions that have taken place within recent times. Why? Because we have placed the architecture in place in order to assist in achieving those results.

The Trinidad and Tobago Police Service is engaged in an exercise to enrol some 5,000 SRP officers, and I have mentioned some of those, but not only SRPs, but they are also training regular police. The intention is by the end of this year to recruit 1,000 police officers. They have already recruited close to 300, and another 700 are in the process of being recruited and trained.

You see, one of the things this Government does is set objectives and work towards the achieving of those objectives. In other words, we plan what we want to do.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Not fly by night.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Not fly by night, we plan what we want to do. We set targets, so the population can judge us by the targets we have set, and we communicate these targets, as I am doing here, to the national population.

I just want to finish this and tell you that several enrolment exercises are being run concurrently. In batch No. 1 we just recruited May20 to August16, and down at the Police Academy there was an enrolment of 125

persons. Batches 2, 3 and 4 were conducted and recruited at COSTAATT campuses in south and Sangre Grande, and there are current enrolments of 86, 140 and 150. So we are proceeding to augment the number of police officers.

We came before this Parliament, and we wanted to augment it even further. We came and asked for the support of the Opposition, to bring members of the defence force so that they could have been precepted and what have you. We were able to pass it here without the support of the PNM, and then, of course, we were shot down in the Senate. But we have been brave enough to bring the kind of legislation and to let it be debated here in the Parliament. Otherwise we would have had many more police officers, as it were, on the streets of Trinidad and Tobago.

As I say that, let me compliment the Minister of National Security, and through him the Defence Force, for the manner in which they conduct the joint patrol exercises with the police in the several hot spot areas in Trinidad and Tobago. I am sure that is what has also helped to reduce the number of serious crimes in Trinidad and Tobago.

One of the platforms which we have also engaged in is the modernization of the “physical infrastructure and amenities” to improve “morale and...productivity” of the police service. I could remember, about 2008 or 2009, the women’s dormitory of the Chaguanas Police Station had no windows, and when the women police officers wanted to change they had to put up part of their clothing as curtains and barriers, at a time when they had money in this country, and they would not take care of the police. Those who get up every morning to defend the lives of others in this country, they would not get up to do it. But what have we done?

Since we came into office, currently we are building eight new police stations. La Brea—you know, the Member for La Brea always talks about discrimination. The Member for La Brea always talks about the fact that nothing is being done in La Brea. I must say this: this Government does not care about the colour of your skin, the tilt of your nose, the colour of your eyes or the texture of your hair. This Government cares that you are a citizen of Trinidad and Tobago and we move to satisfy that when we move.
[*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, Oropouche Police Station that had been destroyed for a very long time; Arima; Maloney; Piarco; Cumuto; Brasso. You know, Madam Prime Minister, in Brasso that police station was destroyed sometime in 1999. Mr. Speaker, I believe, if I may say, you marched along with us for the rebuilding of that police station in the year 2003, I believe it was. Today, this UNC Partnership Government is rebuilding the Brasso station, it will be finished next month; a \$42 million-plus facility. In fact, six of the eight police stations have already been completed. As I said, the one in Brasso will be opened by the end of this month; it is about 90 per cent completed, and the Moruga station is about 80 per cent completed also.

You know what?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Arima.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Arima, completed; Piarco, almost functional.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Functioning.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Functioning. Mr. Speaker, I am a very happy person to speak on this Motion, because there is so much our Government has done in order to improve the architecture of this security system in Trinidad and Tobago.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: And these are not just UNC constituencies.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: And that is the point I am making. You see, Madam Prime Minister and Mr. Speaker, they make this accusation that we do not deal with the East-West Corridor. [*Crosstalk*] Arouca/Maloney—Maloney Police Station—how come the Member for Arouca/Maloney has not one day gotten up and say, “Thank you Partnership Government for giving me what the PNM never gave me”? [*Desk thumping*] You cannot do that. If the Member attempts to do that, the member will be disenfranchised, just like the Member for Laventille West has been disenfranchised now. [*Crosstalk*]

Miss Mc Donald: What have you given me? What about my five roads? I want to tell you thanks!

Hon. Members: “Oh good!”

Hon. Members: What is your problem? [*Laughter and crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Chief Whip, Chief Whip, please. I know you like to exercise your lungs, but please, please.

It is 4.30; the hon. Member has 13 more minutes to go and then I know we have two matters on the Motion for the Adjournment. With the leave of the House, I will ask the hon. Member to complete his contribution and then we will take a suspension, because there are two matters on the motion, which will take another hour. So we will break for tea at around 4.45.

You may continue, hon. Member, please.

4.30 p.m.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, sometimes, you know, words hurt more than lashes, and the facility of

languages is really something at your command, Mr. Speaker, sometimes people jump up—like they say like jep—because the words sting. But I do hope to receive a nice letter from the Member for Arouca/Maloney complimenting the Government for giving her, in her constituency, what the PNM has failed to ever give her, to protect her constituents of Maloney. She is so passionate about her constituents that I hope that happens.

Mr. Speaker, several other things have been done. You see, we are talking about the Motion. He talked about we dismantled this and we dismantled that, and I am saying, Mr. Speaker, we are reconstructing. We are rebuilding what they have dismantled. We received it in a dismantled fashion. We could not just—we thought we could have reassembled it, but we could not reassemble it, we just had to build it over. And that is exactly what we are doing.

You know, Mr. Speaker, when last have you heard that there were 594 vehicles, police vehicles, with GPS?

Hon. Member: Never.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Umm? To facilitate computer-aided dispatch. When last have you heard that? Never! Never! That helps to improve the response rate of the police and response time of the police.

Mr. Speaker, in San Fernando at the San Fernando Police Station there was the upgrading of the fingerprint and photography units; installation of CCTV cameras. This was done at 16 locations throughout the country; 16 locations throughout the country, there are nine locations still outstanding.

And, Mr. Speaker, the Member for St. Joseph was talking about the forensic centre. In fact, I want to advise him that plans are currently underway for construction of a state-of-the-art forensic facility, and a site

has already been identified, and a draft RFP for conceptual design has been submitted to the Trinidad and Tobago Forensic Science Centre for review. You know, Mr. Speaker, we are moving, you know. In that regard, you know, Mr. Speaker, it is giving me an opportunity to say something.

For so many years cancer patients have been dying in this country because you did not have an oncology centre. And that oncology centre stood there with some rotting steel for so long. Today, under the Partnership Government the oncology centre is rising from the ground [*Desk thumping*] just like the Children's Hospital is rising in Couva. And just like the Aquatic Centre is rising and has reached the roof stage now, in Couva, Mr. Speaker. And just like the university campus which the PNM said should not be built in Debe because Debe people are not people. Today, let me tell you, that by January it would be operational. We open in September, Mr. Speaker. That hurts "eh".

Hon. Member: Tell them again.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: That hurts, "eh"? It hurts, "eh"? It hurts. Ask the Member for Princes Town—and the Member for Princes Town will tell you about how the dilapidated roads she has had to endure which are only now being reconstructed; but we are a doing Government.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of shifts, here is an important one: manifesto commitment—implement the criminal injuries and compensation laws and adjust the measure of compensation. Mr. Speaker, we have done it. This has been achieved through the programme of compensation to victims and their families which is being undertaken now by the Ministry of Legal Affairs. And do you know what? A hundred and fifty-three persons, as at September 2013, applied for various types of compensation of which 106

have been awarded grants. How many were awarded or even applied before 2010? How many did? And you are talking about a Motion—you are saying, we have dismantled the security apparatus and so on in the country. I am very proud of these matters that we have been doing here.

Mr. Speaker, another promise we made in the manifesto—and I am only doing this, Mr. Speaker, because he referred to our manifesto. He referred to it—implement legislation, manifesto promise, which will rebalance the justice system in favour of victims with emphasis on protection for the rights of victims, witnesses and jurors.

Mr. Speaker, what have we done? We have implemented a programme or implemented programmes such as counselling and mentorship programmes for the support of State witnesses to the justice protection programme. And Mr. Speaker, further to that, progress has also been made through the passage of significant legislation. Mr. Speaker, the Anti-Gang Bill, 2010. In fact, recently someone has been arrested and is now behind bars as a result of the Anti-Gang Bill. The Anti-Terrorism (Amdt.) Bill, 2011, the Firearms (Amdt.) Bill, Mr. Speaker. Earlier in my contribution I referred to the fact that of 171 murders for this year up to May 22, 129 was as a result of firearms. The Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons (No. 2) Bill, 2011, the Miscellaneous Provisions (Bail and Kidnapping) Bill, 2010 the Children's Life Fund Bill, and the Financial Intelligence Unit of Trinidad and Tobago (Amdt.) Bill, 2011.

So not only are we dealing with the physical assets, but we are dealing with the architecture of laws also, you see. So it not just a one-pronged approach; several prongs. So we are looking at legislation. We are looking at the physical assets. We are looking at the human assets, and we are

looking at training and development of the intelligence of the police service. We have a coordinated plan that we are going behind this. So when you say that we do not have an approach, we have an approach; it is just that you do not want to see it. Because when you are in Opposition it is convenient not to see anything at all. The only thing you can see before your eyes, my dear friend from St. Joseph, is Garvin Nicholas walking the streets of St. Joseph. That is the only thing that you are seeing.

Hon. Member: He is haunted by his presence.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Garvin Nicholas. [*Crosstalk*] Garvin Nicholas. My God.

Mr. Speaker, another promise we made [*Crosstalk*] is community policing. A strategy that involves the police presence in the community as an important deterrent to crime, Mr. Speaker; important deterrent to crime. Mr. Speaker, there are three aspects to this. One, police caravans; The aim of the police caravans is to showcase the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service so that citizens can be educated on the activities, roles and functions of the various arms of the police service. This was launched in June 2012 in Port of Spain. Now, I am giving you the date because it is important to know that it is taking place after 2010. And since then the caravans have been going into communities throughout Trinidad and Tobago and it is continuing into 2014. Now, why the police caravan? Mr. Speaker, if you want to deal with crime you have to befriend the communities because the communities are an important source of intelligence; importance source of intelligence. Let me tell you something. People know who the criminals are, you know, and if you can give them a sense of assurance and they can trust you, they are going to give you information.

So this is a strategy in order to embrace the people and to engage their trust, so that they give you information. And that, in fact, will eventually lead to a heightening of the amount of crime that will be solved in the country. So you just cannot talk about—like the Opposition, a breakdown of trust. No. This is what we are doing about rebuilding trust between the police and the people. Community policing; officers of the Community Policing Secretariat—all of these things we made promises in 2010 in the manifesto, so that is why I am repeating them because I want my friends in the media also to report on this, and to know that this Government has been achieving its manifesto promises.

Hon. Member: That is right.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Judge us by what we promised you. What we promised you was the mandate you gave us, and if that is the mandate you gave us, go into this book and you will see that we are delivering on the mandate, and we are closing the gap between talk and action, Mr. Speaker.

Miss Hospedales: At what cost?

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Officers of the Community Policing Secretariat made approximately 50 school visits since October 2012. And that is important, and they are supported by the Minister of Education, who as I said earlier has also introduced family values education. And, Mr. Speaker, very important one—the establishment of police youth clubs throughout the country. There are some 200 clubs, 10 of which we have established in the last fiscal year, and the membership of those clubs now stand to just over 6,000 youths and continuing.

Mr. Speaker, let me just take a moment to congratulate Inspector Subhas Ramkhelwan in my own constituency of Tabaquite, where he started

a police youth club about six months ago and now there are 46 youths in that police youth club; 46 youths in that police youth club. And they have a building, and we have placed computers, and we have placed table tennis boards, and all kinds of things in there, and these kids are contributing. So, Mr. Speaker, so much is being done in order to improve the infrastructure to deal with crime in the country.

So when I said to my friend that I thought I should amend his Motion to read, instead of mishandling the security system, it should read: rebuilding the deficient and mismanaged security system and apparatus of the State by the PNM. That is what the Motion should have really read. And I think I have proven my point in my contribution. I have given you all the examples and evidence to show how we are reconstructing and rebuilding, and reshaping, making more functional, and making more operational, and making more citizen-friendly the police service as we seek to improve the crime situation in Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, I would have liked in my contribution to go into some major accomplishments of the Minister of National Security, but I do not want to leave without saying or speaking about the reintroduction of the police Highway Patrol. When we brought out the police Highway Patrol, they say, “oh, they paint it yellow”, not realizing that you could see yellow in the night good, and that also is about policing. But they are very happy to see where the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure has placed these yellow barriers—when you are getting off the highway and so on now—so that you do not miss the highway throughout the country. So now, that yellow is okay, but the ones for the highway patrol was not okay. But the fact is that we have reintroduced the highway patrol, and those highway patrols are

using the surveillance bays. And, very soon we will complete the legislation on radar speed guns.

Mr. Speaker, we want to move to new technology of radar speed guns. They found every reason why we should not adopt radar speed guns in Trinidad and Tobago. Can you imagine that? Everywhere in the world you are using radar speed guns, but here in this country the Opposition finds every reason why we should not use radar speed guns. They want to stay in the 1940s technology rather than coming into the 2014 technology. They want to still stay with, you know, a little piece of paper like this hook up on a thing, and the policeman waving you down when you drive on the highway, rather than the speed gun that traps you and gives you away.

Mr. Speaker: You have one more minute.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to have contributed to this debate because I think that we have made it very clear that we have not negatively affected the security apparatus; that we are making vital changes. It is a work in progress, and we are going to succeed. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I think this is a good time for us to have some tea. This sitting is now suspended until quarter past five.

4.43 p.m.: *Meeting suspended.*

5.15 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Housing and Urban Development (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this House do now adjourn to Wednesday, May 28, 2014 at 10.00 a.m., and to serve notice on that date is the intention of the Government to debate Bill No. 10 on the Order Paper

today and Bill No. 2 on the Supplemental Order Paper.

Bill No. 10 on the Order Paper today, an Act relating to committal proceedings and Bill No. 2 on the Supplemental Order Paper, the Purchase of Certain Rights, HCU Bill, 2014. So, just for clarity, we would debate Bill No. 10 an Act relating to committal proceedings in respect of indictable offences by Magistrates and for ancillary matters and Bill No. 2 on the Supplemental Order Paper, the Purchase of Certain Rights (HCU) Bill, 2014.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, before putting the question, there are some matters on the Motion for the Adjournment in the name of the hon. Member for Diego Martin North/East.

We have two matters: one dealing with CL Financial and/or Clico, the disposing of the assets of those organizations and the second one deals with irregularities in the Evaluation of tenders and award of contract re the Churchill Roosevelt Highway and the Southern Main Road.

So I will now call on the hon. Member for Diego Martin North/East to deal with the CL Financial and Clico matter, as the first one, to be followed by the package “d” in the matter involving Irregularities in the Evaluation Process. The hon. Member for Diego Martin North/East.

**Clico and CL Financial
(Disposal of Assets)**

Mr. Colm Imbert (*Diego Martin North/East*): [*Desk thumping*] Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago took control of Clico’s assets in 2009. There should have been an orderly disposal of those assets, but there was a change of Government, and it is high time that there

be full and frank disclosure as to what this Government is doing with respect to the disposal of the assets of Clico and CL Financial.

Because, approximately \$20 billion of taxpayers' money has been invested in the Clico bailout, and from time to time the country hears confusing and conflicting information from the Minister of Finance and the Economy, in particular, with respect to what is going on with Clico.

Let me just say at the outset I am very concerned about allegations of nepotism, cronyisms, directors of Clico appointing members of their family to key positions within the Clico group, directors of Clico benefitting from income from Clico and its subsidiaries, and I think it is necessary to have full and frank disclosure. I would like the Minister to tell us, is he aware whether any directors of Clico are benefitting in terms of income from Clico or any of its subsidiaries or affiliated companies? I can assure you that if you do not tell us the country would find out.

But the first thing I would like the Minister to tell us about, is the sale of Valpark Shopping Plaza and Atlantic Plaza. These are two shopping malls owed by Home Construction, a subsidiary of CL Financial. And in June 2013, just about a year ago, the *Express* published a story which the Minister has not denied, that Clico, the Government appointed board of Clico, had executed a deal to sell Valpark Plaza for \$102 million and Atlantic Plaza in Point Lisas for \$60 million. Now, anybody who has any knowledge of Valpark Shopping Plaza, for example, would be aware that \$102 million—if this has actually happened—is a fraction of the value of the Valpark Shopping Plaza.

Now the Government took over Clico, injected \$19 billion or \$20 billion into this bailout, and we keep hearing about fire sales and we are told

that Valpark was sold to two persons who were affiliated with the Clico or CL Financial group. So, I would like the Minister to clear the air on that. Was ValPark Shopping Plaza sold without the knowledge of the Government or with the knowledge of the Government for this peppercorn price of \$100 billion? Was Atlantic Plaza sold for \$60 million—all of this being a fraction of the true value.

My estimation of the value of Valpark would be somewhere close to \$300 million, at least. So, if it has been sold for \$100 million, that is scandal and I would like the Minister to tell us what is going on. Who is buying up Clico's assets? The situation is made worse, because Clico is posting profits and the Minister of Finance and the Economy should be reporting this to the House, and he is not. In fact, when we pass the legislation relating to Clico there was a requirement for periodic reports to the Parliament. This Government has breached that arrangement and is not reporting to the House on what is happening with Clico and the CL Financial group.

My understanding is that Clico has made a profit in 2011 of \$2.5 billion, of \$642 million in 2013 and it is expected that the profits in 2014 will also be significant. Can the Minister tell us where this money is going and what is being done with it? We are also hearing rumours that there are secret negotiations between members of this Government and a local conglomerate to acquire Angostura. Can the Minister tell us if this is true? Because Angostura is already listed company, and it is only right and proper that the Government shares in Angostura be the subject of an IPO, not like the FCB IPO, that scandalous FCB IPO, but a proper public offering so that the shares of Angostura, some of them already on the stock exchange, but the Clico shares, could be sold by way of an IPO to the wider public, who

are the ones who put the \$20 billion into Clico. So, I would like the Minister to tell us, what are you doing with Angostura shares? Is it true that you are negotiating with a local conglomerate to sell Angostura secretly? Do you agree that Angostura should be divested by way of an IPO?

Mr. Speaker, we also hear about the assets of the insurance company itself. The Minister is on record as saying that he is considering selling Colional Life, the insurance portfolio to a foreign firm, and there is an article published in the *Guardian*, not too long ago, May 18, 2014, five days ago where the Minister of Finance and the Economy is telling us that the Government is actively considering the sale of Clico's traditional portfolio and that he, the Minister, has been advised by the Central Bank to sell Clico to a foreign firm because of the systemic risk in selling the company on the local market. What on earth does that mean? If you sold Clico on the local market, why would there be any systemic risk to the economy? And why do you want to give away Clico to a foreign firm?

Mr. Speaker, when you look at the statements being made by the Government and especially this Minister of Finance and the Economy, this is just not good enough. I know that the agents and policyholders and salesmen at Clico have written the Minister a letter with respect to the announced sale of Clico's insurance portfolio, and they have made the point and I am reading now from the letter to the Minister, that the pending sale of Methanol Holdings, if done at market value of somewhere between \$12 billion and \$15 billion would effectively put Clico back in the black with surplus assets of about \$1 billion to \$3 billion, and they have asked the Minister to say, why are you selling Colonial Life's portfolio? Why are you rushing to do it when you could dispose of Methanol Holdings and you

could bring Clico back into profitability?

Mr. Speaker, I can tell you something: if there is a change of government in this country a lot of people is going to have to answer a lot of questions. Who sold Valpark Shopping Plaza for one third its market price? Who bought it? Was it connected parties? Was there insider trading? Do you in fact intend to sell Angostura to a local conglomerate? Are you having secret negotiations? This is just not good enough.

Then you have the arbitration with Methanol Holdings. Because the foreign partner in Methanol Holdings took the Government to arbitration and tried to enforce an arrangement whereby if Methanol Holdings is sold they have first call on the assets. We are not hearing anything from the Government and we understand there has been a ruling in that arbitration and that the foreign partner has won and that they have beaten the Government and that the portfolio has to be sold. The Methanol Holdings assets have to be sold to the foreign partner. Is the Government appealing that arbitration award? What are the facts, Mr. Speaker?

It is time for the Minister of Finance and the Economy to come clean, tell us what you are doing. We cannot go by what you say in the newspaper, because every month the Minister of Finance and the Economy has a different story. One day he is selling; one day he is not selling. One day he will recover all of the money they put into the Clico group, the next day they lose money.

Next thing we hear they want to give the original owners of Clico \$1.5 billion. You said that! You took a note to Cabinet. Mr. Speaker, I have details of it right here: Howai's Cabinet note on Clico resolution, owners to share \$1.6 billion. I see you are laughing. Mr. Speaker, I am telling you,

there is going to be a forensic audit into the disposal of the assets of Colonial Life. [*Desk thumping*]

I am hearing too much about friends and family and directors sharing up the proceeds, earning money from Clico [*Interruption*] secret negotiations to sell the assets of Clico to friends of this Government. I am calling on the Minister to come clean and give this Parliament full disclosure today.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Minister of Finance and the Economy (Sen. The Hon. Larry Howai): [*Desk thumping*] Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would certainly like to thank the hon. Member opposite for, in a sense, broaching this topic and allowing us the opportunity to once again demonstrate this Government's commitment and its capability to transparency and accountability in general. [*Interruption*]

I would also like to congratulate the hon. Member for his facility with the language and certainly for his almost unique ability to make innuendoes sound almost as if it is fact. [*Laughter*] The fact is that, Mr. Speaker, perhaps, I should, in dealing with the issue of how we go about the sale of these assets, probably before dealing with some of the specifics, speak to the approach which this Government has taken as far as the sale of the assets are concerned, and in dealing overall with the entire issue of the CL Financial crisis.

The Government is really guided by three principles and I think the first one is very important. The first one is that we are not prepared to let politics enter into this matter at all. This crisis is too big a crisis for us to treat with in any kind of dismissive, any kind of partisan political manner

[*Interruption*] as my colleague say, any frivolous manner. The fact is that the CL Financial crisis has the potential to affect thousands of jobs; certainly it affect the lives of thousands of citizens who had their deposits, their pensions, their insurance moneys, their businesses all tied up with this particular crisis.

5.30 p.m.

And of course it had the potential to threaten the entire viability of the financial sector and erode confidence in the system.

Therefore, the Government at the time was quite right to make the intervention into the affairs of CL Financial, and certainly we ourselves have approached this particular matter in a way that will ensure that the beneficiaries of this crisis are not just the legal profession, but in fact, who, of course, would have the benefit of the pile-up of traffic resulting from thousands of persons going to the courts, both civil and criminal, if this matter had been allowed to take its course and perhaps result in the failure of such a significant group.

As the hon. Member mentioned, the cost to the country is a little over \$20 billion. In fact, when I read the budget back in 2012 I had mentioned the figure of \$19.6 billion. Since that time, we have had to advance a further US \$150million in respect of the settlement of British American policyholders throughout the region, and a further \$50million we have had to put out—US dollars I am talking about here—to stave off the liquidators of British American who had obtained judgement in the Bahamian courts and who were seeking to enforce the judgement here in Trinidad and Tobago and put CL Financial in liquidation. So we had to move rapidly to prevent that.

The second principle which has guided this Government, is that there should be full accountability and transparency. To this end, we have already established a framework which involves input from members of the Board of CL, members of the Board of Clico, representatives from the Central Bank, representatives from the Ministry of Finance and the Economy, on a committee to oversee what is happening as far as the disposition of these assets are concerned. And this is an arrangement which we have put in place to ensure that we also meet the third broad principle that we have, which is, that there should be the broadest possible consultation as part of the process of the sale of these assets.

I want to say, that, in fact, over the years—I have here a list of the different major assets which have been sold by the CL Financial Group. I want to say, I could list them down: Premier Energy Group; Lawrenceburg Distillers, Indiana Limited; Lascelles de Mercado Limited; Burn Stewart Distillers Limited; Thomas Hind and Company Limited; Societe Dugas Limited; Valpark Shopping Plaza Limited; Atlantic Plaza Limited. In total—and these sales, Mr. Speaker, were meant and were entered into with a view to meeting the debt obligations, maturing debt obligations of the CL Financial Group.

In fact, when the CL Financial Group collapsed, they owed approximately TT \$90 billion to creditors. That is almost 50 per cent of the GDP of Trinidad and Tobago—it was quite significant—and a number of these loans were coming due, and a number of lenders were at risk, and the CL Financial sought to meet many of these obligations. That is what accounted for the sale of these assets, Mr. Speaker. The independent valuations, and these independent valuations, if I could refer, these were

done by companies such as: Union Bank of Switzerland, Deloitte, Winchester Capital, Ernst & Young, Raymond & Pierre, and PricewaterhouseCoopers.

So, Mr. Speaker, what we have done is sought to have as far as possible, as many reputable third party valuers both in terms of valuing the assets as well as valuing the companies, to ensure that we get the best possible price. In total, the information that we have here puts the independent valuations of these eight companies at approximately TT \$3.7 billion. The actual sale price, Mr. Speaker, was approximately \$5.6 billion or \$5,583,600,000, or we received a value in excess of the valuation by one of \$1.9 billion, almost 50 per cent more than the valuation which had been placed on these assets.

So, we have ensured that we receive at all times values that would ensure that we could meet the liabilities of this company, and specifically, with respect to Valpark—and if I may refer to the notes that I got from the company with respect to the sale of Valpark—Valpark was sold somewhere around 2012—sorry, early 2013. The sale was based on valuations of the companies which were done independently by Ernst & Young and of the assets by Ray Pierre Chartered Valuation Surveyors. The valuation, for example, of Valpark at the time, amounted to approximately \$61.75 million, based on the valuation that we had.

Mr. Imbert: Fraud, fraud.

Sen. The Hon. L. Howai: And similarly, the valuation for Atlantic Plaza amounted to \$33 million. The sale proceeds, Mr. Speaker, the amount received was \$99 million which was used to pay off loans to two financial institutions as well as—

Mr. Speaker: The Members for Port of Spain South and the Member for Diego Martin North/East, I want to hear—

Mr. Imbert: I cannot believe what I am hearing.

Mr. Speaker: No, well if you cannot believe, you can leave, but you cannot be disturbing the proceedings. The hon. Member is speaking, I am trying to hear what he is saying, *Hansard* is trying to record what he is saying, but I am getting a constant disturbance from you and from the Member for Port of Spain South. It is unfair. Allow the Member to speak in silence and you can quarrel with him behind the Chair, not whilst you are in your seat. Continue hon. Member, please.

Sen. The Hon. L. Howai: So, Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that the prices received were in excess of the valuations, and they have been consistently in excess of the valuations. By and large, the amounts which had been received were used to pay loans to local financial institutions, legal institutions, legal fees, an severance payments for workers where these were required, as well as some professional fees which were incurred as part of the process.

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to emphasize that at all times, and even now we are looking at the sale of the W Hotel. The W Hotel is about to be placed in receivership in Florida, and we are also looking at—and therefore we are looking at the possibility of the sale of that. We have actually placed that hotel on the market in order to try to obtain the best possible price so that payments can be made to the lending institutions which provided the financing for the construction for that particular hotel, so that that hotel can be—so that the facility can be liquidated in an orderly manner.

The oversight of this process, and again—sorry, I should also

mention, Mr. Speaker, that we are also looking at possibly the sale of Colfire. Again we have particular loan repayments that are coming due to a number of local lenders. These are also imminent, and we are looking to generate cash in order to meet these obligations. The Government has indicated to the CL Financial Group that we have put out enough, we do have some potential contingent liabilities that could take this \$20.8 billion that we have put out, up to possibly as high as \$24 billion. If all of the liabilities do crystallize, some of which we are in the process of appealing, for example, the judgement which went against us in the class action suit by some of the holders of the short-term investment products, and we are appealing some of those, but in the event that we lose that as well as have to pay some of the other related cost, these numbers could go up to as high as \$24 billion. So, the thing is that we have indicated to them that we are not prepared to put out any additional money other than the ones that we are aware of, and we have asked the company to as far as possible meet its obligations by way of the continuing disposal of assets.

So, Mr. Speaker, there has been also the issue raised in the media, as the hon. Member mentioned, of the sale of the Clico assets. What we have indicated is that, to recapitalize Clico in a new company, such as, **Atrius** which we were considering, would have resulted in the Government having to inject capital based on the new formula that would come into place with the new insurance legislation of approximately \$1billion. We would also have had to pay for the acquisition of the portfolio from Clico which would have amounted to between \$200 million to \$500 million. It would have required the Government now to put out a further \$1.5billion as far as Clico is concerned, and therefore, the consideration of the potential sale of that

asset—

Mr. Speaker: One more minute.

Sen. The Hon. L. Howai: Yeah—has been brought into account. I should say that there has been, to my knowledge, no discussion as far as the sale of Angostura is concerned, we have had no discussion in respect of that particular matter.

So, Mr. Speaker, the thing is that we have a system in place, the sales of assets are managed by the Board of the company using independent valuers. They are reviewed by the Central Bank which has control of Clico under section 44, as well as by the Ministry of Finance and the Economy. No system is perfect, but we have a formula that allows for the robustness that is required to ensure that the best possible value for shareholders of the company and for the citizens of the Republic of T&T is obtained. With that I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Irregularities in Tenders and Contract Award (Package D)

Mr. Colm Imbert (*Diego Martin North/East*): Mr. Speaker, I sincerely hope that the Minister of Works will be more forthcoming than the Minister of Finance and the Economy. And I would ask the Minister of Works, do not bother to read your brief, I have it, okay, so let us not waste time here. There are some issues I would like to raise with the Minister—I will take it from your brief, prepared for you by NIDCO. Mr. Speaker, on July 25, 2013—I am reading from the Minister's brief—

Mr. Cadiz: If you have the answer what you bring the Motion for?

Mr. C. Imbert: No, it is not the answer, it is the brief, this is not the answer, because this is also another scandal. On July 25, 2013 using the open tender

two-envelope system, NIDCO invited bids for package D which is the design on construction of a flyover at the intersection of the Churchill Roosevelt Highway and the Southern Main Road. Mr. Speaker, five companies submitted bids: China Harbour; China Railway; GLF Construction; Lutchmeesingh Transport; VINCI Construction. And the bids were as follows—so do not bother to repeat all of this, “eh”, I am putting this into the record. The bids were as follows. But in the first instance they threw out China Harbour, China Railway and China Shisiju Group Corporation. They were left with three bids: VINCI Construction Grand Projets in the sum of \$522,548,500. GLF Construction, in the sum of \$412,390,000 and the Lutchmeesingh Transport in the sum of \$331,219,000.

Dr. Rambachan: Nineteen thousand.

Mr. C. Imbert: One hundred and seventy-five.

Dr. Rambachan: You are not reading the brief good, you know.

Mr. C. Imbert: Three hundred and thirty-one million, two hundred and nineteen thousand, one hundred and seventy-five dollars and ten cents, okay.

5.45p.m.

You are saying it is \$300. Who cares? Two hundred dollars difference?

But the fact of the matter is VINCI’s price is \$522 million, GLF’s price is \$412million and Lutchmeesingh’s price is \$331 million—*[Interruption]* I am coming to that—and the difference between the highest bidder and the lowest bidder is \$189 million, almost \$200 million.

Now, NIDCO has been using a completely retrograde method to evaluate tenders. For something as routine as this—we have built many flyovers in this country, many bridges—what NIDCO has done—and this

opens itself up to bid manipulation and manipulation of tenders—is to apportion 80 per cent of the points to quality and 20 per cent to price, and when you put such a high weighting on technical quality, then it does not matter what the lowest price is.

Look at this situation. The lowest price is \$331 million, the highest price is \$522 million. As I said, almost \$200 million more, and yet, all you have to do is manipulate the evaluation and give the high bidder high points for quality and give the low bidder low points for quality, and because the system is so out of whack—80 points out of 100 are allocated to quality, only 20 to price—you have an absurd situation where somebody who has bid \$522 million is adjudged to be the best tender.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we really have to do better than this in this country, and the Minister is no fool. This particular Minister is no fool. He is an intelligent man, and I am sure he can see that this is farcical. A bridge is a bridge! The point of this flyover is to cross the Churchill-Roosevelt Highway, to take traffic from one side of the Southern Main Road to the other side of the Southern Main Road. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker: Allow the Member to speak in silence, please.

Mr. C. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, they can justify spending an additional \$200 million on a project if they want, “yuh know”. Time is longer than twine. Their days will come to an end with this kind of foolishness.

Now, Mr. Speaker, let me tell you what is done in developed countries, and let me read into the record what is done in the United Kingdom. In the United Kingdom, in all of their cities and boroughs, and all of their procurement agencies, they grade projects in terms of complexity. So you would have a particular project where there are very few suppliers in

the market and the project is very complex, and on the other end of the scale you would have a routine project with a high number of suppliers.

When you have a routine project with a high number of suppliers, in the United Kingdom they allocate 70 per cent of the points to price. It makes sense. It is a simple project, you have a lot of people who can do the job. Why would you want to give a lot of points to quality? So when you have a simple project—and this is done through all of the municipal corporations throughout the United Kingdom which award contracts in the hundreds of millions of pounds—billions of TT dollars—and they use a ratio of 70 per cent for price; 30 per cent for quality for simple projects. When you get up to very complex projects where you have very few people who can do the job and the job is very complicated, 60 per cent is apportioned to quality and 40 per cent to price.

What do we have in Trinidad and Tobago? “It doh matter whether it simple; it doh matter whether it complex, it doh matter whether it hard; it doh matter whether it have 1,000 suppliers or one, 80 per cent to quality and 20 per cent to price. And what happens in a case like this? You have a bidder who is adjudged to have the highest quality but an extremely high price being adjudged the winner of the process.

How do they guard against this in the United Kingdom? They have a caveat that you have to be very careful—very, very careful—when your weighting process—and I am talking about a situation where they are only giving 60 points out of 100 to quality and 40 points out of 100 to price. That is the most extreme condition in the United Kingdom. They have made it clear in their guidelines to all of these local government bodies and government departments in England, that you need to be very careful if at

the end of your procurement process when you do your weighting and you do the apportionment of quality and price, if the highest tenderer is awarded the highest price, you have to do in-depth evaluation to make sure that is what you want.

In other countries what they do is, they do not allow you to award excessive points to tenderers who produce a design that is superfluous or unnecessary. As I said, a bridge is a bridge, Mr. Speaker. This bridge just has to take traffic from one side of the Southern Main Road to the other side of the Southern Main Road. You could have different types of design, but in the United Kingdom they do not allow you to award excessive points when the design is superfluous; it goes way beyond the whole concept of fit for purpose.

The way they do things in the United Kingdom—and it makes a lot of sense—you have a basic fit-for-purpose threshold and you get up to those points and you are not allowed to have any more points beyond that. But what are we doing in Trinidad and Tobago? What are we doing here? We have 80 points for quality, 20 points for price. So a man who bid \$200 million more than the lowest bidder—a local contractor, lowest bidder—you are going to tell him that he is not entitled to do the job because of your point system.

As I told you, the Minister is an intelligent man and NIDCO, in its brief to him, has told him some foolishness about how this weighting system has been in place since 2008. Yes, a weighting system has been in place, but it was not 80/20. You see, you are not getting full disclosure, Mr. Minister. The weighting system on the Aranguez Flyover, for example, was 70/30—70 points for quality, 30 points for price, and that is the European Union

standard, by the way. Throughout all the 28 countries in the European Union, procurement entities are not permitted to apportion more than 70 points out of 100 for quality. So on the Aranguez Flyover, 70 points were apportioned for quality and 30 points for price. As I said, that is the European standard.

So why is Trinidad and Tobago, a developing country—they are sending a rocket ship to the moon? Why is it in Trinidad and Tobago, a developing country where resources are scarce, where cash is scarce, where we are still struggling with deficit budgets, you want to spend \$200 million more on a simple bridge? As I said, I do not want the Minister to repeat for me, his brief. I have it all. I have everything here. I have all the price, the quality, the technical, the weighting. “I doh want tuh hear dat.”

What I want to hear from this Government: do you agree that in a simple construction project, that you should apportion 80 per cent of the points in the evaluation to quality and 20 per cent to price? Do you agree that you should spend \$200 million more—[*Interruption*]*—*that was low price bid. Do you agree that you should spend \$200 million more on this flyover? That is what I want to hear from you. Do not regurgitate this foolishness that they have written for you. I want to hear from the Government: do you think it is a good idea to spend an additional \$200 million on this flyover?

I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Minister of Works and Infrastructure. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of Works and Infrastructure (Hon. Dr. Surujrattan Rambachan): Mr. Speaker, thank you very much, and I thank the Member

for raising this matter. Mr. Speaker, one has to be very careful in speaking here this afternoon, careful in the sense that you have a project that has been tendered publicly and the tenders have been opened publicly and the prices for each one of the tenderers, in fact, are publicly known.

Mr. Speaker, I have to be very careful that the Member is not trying to lead me down a path where he is trying to get me to announce a decision which should be part and process, and responsibility first and foremost of the evaluation committee, then the tenders committee of the board and then the board of directors, and I will not be led down that path because I do not intend, as a Minister, to be seen as influencing a decision which has to be open and transparent.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, it is important to note and to make clear that no award for this contract has been made thus far. No award has been made. An evaluation process is ongoing. Secondly, I want to say, as a Minister of Government, that I take very seriously—and I mean that, very seriously—my responsibility for the way moneys allocated to my Ministry and taxpayers' moneys, are used in the country on projects. I take that very seriously—very, very seriously.

I am very proud that jobs that are being undertaken now, thus far, including the expansion to the Diego Martin Highway and the building of the bypass road in Valencia, are within budget and will be on time. [*Desk thumping*] I take that very seriously. In that regard, therefore, I note well, that the Member of Parliament has the very brief that I have, and this is disturbing, that a Minister of Government is given a brief by the management of NIDCO and the very brief is given to the Member of Parliament for Diego Martin North/East. It is very disconcerting that the

brief that is given to a line Minister is the very brief, in the same print, that is in the hands of the Member for Diego Martin North/East.

I just want to tell the Parliament that it was the Minister of Works, who is now the Member for Diego Martin North/East, who brought VINCI into the country—*[Interruption]*

Hon. Member: That is true.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:—and that the 80/20 apportionment was used by the PNM—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Imbert: Not true.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:—in the San Fernando to Mayaro Highway,—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Imbert: No, it was 50/50.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:—in the Point Fortin Highway—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Imbert: That is not true.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:—and in the highway to Manzanilla. Mr. Speaker, in the one that he mentioned, Aranguez—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Imbert: That is not true.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:—in the Aranguez Flyover—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Imbert: You are not speaking the truth!

Mr. Speaker: Please! Member for Diego Martin North/East, I always protect you when you are speaking because you seek the protection of the Chair. Allow the Minister to speak in silence, please. I do not know if you want to go home early, but do not allow me to have you exit the Chamber. Allow the Minister to speak in silence, please. Continue, hon. Minister.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Imbert: “They setting you up.”

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: I would not be set up in this matter at all. I mean it when I say that I will not be led down a path to be standing here and being cajoled, as it were, to announce a decision on behalf of any contractor. That is not my role. My role is to ensure that the public purse is well protected and there is value for money, of the money spent in this country. [*Desk thumping*] That is my role, Mr. Speaker.

Therefore the 80/20 was used by the PNM on those three. He said that on the Aranguéz Flyover 70/30 was used. Why does the Member for Diego Martín North/East want to be a stranger to the truth? Why does he want to be a stranger to the truth? He used the word “fact”. What is the fact? The fact is that the Aranguéz Overpass was tendered but it was cancelled and then selective tendering was used.

Mr. Imbert: Tendered with 70/30—

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Selective tendering was used. Let us go back to the facts. If you want the fact, that is the fact. Those are the facts. Mr. Speaker, anybody will be concerned where the difference between the number one tenderer and the number two tenderer, or number three or what have you, is a difference of nearly \$200 million. Anyone will be concerned. I will be concerned about that, and I am sure today, now that it is in the open public, everybody will be concerned about that. But what I wish to assure is that there is a process that is going on and that process will continue.

Part of that process means as follows: if you have a situation where the people who have qualified—and let us just put it on the records.

The people who were qualified in terms of the technical requirements were—and I want to read it into the records and read it properly, Mr.

Speaker. The people who were qualified were VINCI, Lutchmeesingh and GLF Construction. Those were the three that were qualified.

6.00 p.m.

Mr. Imbert: I have the brief.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Yes, you have the brief. Mr. Speaker, there were five prime contractors as they say:

China Harbour Engineering got 68.71 per cent;

China Railway Construction (Caribbean) Limited and China Railway Shisiju Group Corporation, 66.43;

GLF Construction got 84.06;

Lutchmeesingh's Transport Contractors got 80.32; and

VINCI Construction Grands Projets got 90.76.

So three contractors, VINCI, Lutchmeesingh and GLF, they passed the technical evaluation.

Mr. Speaker, when that happened, then the financial proposals of these three firms were opened, and when they were opened the VINCI Construction company, their corrected tender price inclusive of VAT, et cetera, was \$522,548,500; the GLF Construction Corporation was \$412,390,000; and Lutchmeesingh's Transport Contractors was \$331,219,175.

Mr. Speaker, when you put the 80/20 system together, VINCI Construction was ranked number one with 92.68, Lutchmeesingh's was 90.80 and GLF was 90.16. Very close in terms of when you put the technical and the financial together. So, in other words, if you look at the difference between VINCI and Lutchmeesingh is perhaps about one point difference, and that represents \$189 million as they say.

Mr. Imbert: One point.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: One point, sorry. So, all this is before the evaluation committee.

Mr. Speaker, I know that there also has to be an engineer's estimate which NIDCO has to get and which NIDCO has gotten, and the estimate by AECOM was \$187.4 million VAT inclusive and, of course, VINCI's bid was 2.7 times that, Lutchmeesingh 1.7 times and GLF 2.1. Mr. Speaker, the tenders committee, I understand, expressed concerns about the accuracy—you have the reports, you can read it—of the engineer's estimate and they went for a new estimate.

Mr. Imbert: Yeah, \$315 million.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: How much?

Mr. Imbert: 315.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: 315. And 315 the Member I suppose is arguing, is close to Lutchmeesingh's bid.

Mr. Speaker, the negotiating committee has commenced negotiations with the first rank bidder who is VINCI, but what the Member for Diego Martin North/East should have said, is that NIDCO is committed to do that because in the tender documents there is a certain procedure that is defined and I want to read it:

Based on the result of the evaluation, the bidder with the best tender overall for the project will be invited to enter into contract negotiations. If an agreement on the terms of the contract is not reached with the first bidder, negotiations will be initiated with the second bidder and so on until a satisfactory agreement is reached—instructions to tenderers, clause 41, paragraph 1.

If an agreement on the terms of the contract is not reached with the first ranked bidder negotiations will be initiated with the second highest ranked bidder and so on until the satisfactory agreement is reached as stated in the tender documents.

To continue:

The inability to agree on detailed cost or compensation for the services or a judgment on the part of NIDCO that such cost or compensation are inappropriate or excessive, shall be sufficient cause to the rejection of the tender and for initiation of negotiation with the bidder which follows in order of merit.

Once a bidder has been rejected, it will not be recall further negotiations on the contract, and that is instruction to tenderers, clause 41, paragraph 3.

Just to correct one thing I said earlier, Mr. Speaker. I am informed that the Point Fortin Highway was 50/50.

Mr. Imbert: Oh really! Oh, ooooh.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: And I am correcting it.

Mr. Imbert: You would have gone before the Privileges Committee, you know.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: And I am correcting it.

Mrs. Seepersad-Bachan: But he is correcting it.

Mr. Imbert: Why did he not say that?

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: I am correcting it. The information I had, I got it corrected and I am correcting it. I am correcting it. At least I have the courage to correct it. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Imbert: All right, thank you.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: I have corrected it and be truthful.

So, Mr. Speaker, this negotiation is still continuing. It is not over, and I want to assure the House and assure the national community that this Government is not in the business of just spending money willy-nilly or throwing away money, but we will look for the best value for the money and ensure that the proper process is followed and that equity and fairness prevails in the selection of the contractor for this project. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker: All right, Member for Caroni East. Member for Diego Martin North/East, could you give this House your utmost attention and have some silence at the same time.

Mr. Imbert: You would throw me out?

Mr. Speaker: No, I would not do that. I know you want to invite me to do that, but we are now about to close so there is no need to throw you out.

[*Laughter*]

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 6.06 p.m.