

Appropriation Bill, 2014

Tuesday, September 16, 2014

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 16, 2014

The House met at 10.00 a.m.

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

APPROPRIATION (FINANCIAL YEAR 2015)

BILL, 2014

[Fourth Day]

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on question [September 08, 2014]:

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Question again proposed.

The Minister of Land and Marine Resources (Hon. Jairam Seemungal):

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to contribute in this debate, the fourth budget statement of the People's Partnership administration, and I want to say that this budget is one of the best budgets that has ever been delivered in the House. [*Desk thumping*] Every single newspaper after the delivery of the budget carried very positive response.

The Member for Oropouche East outlined in his presentation most of the news clippings, the *Newsday* of September 09, 2013, carried that this is a sweetener from Howai. All the other commentaries were very positive in respect of this budget, one of which was in the *Business Guardian*, "Howai: 3,000 jobs for La Brea".

Mr. Speaker, when one looks at the history of the PNM administration and how they governed the country, one wonders whether or not they were really in touch with reality, and one wonders whether or not they were in touch with their constituents. When I came into office in 2010 in the constituency of La Horquetta/Talparo, a constituency which was predominantly under the control of the People's National Movement when they were in office. Mr. Speaker, one wonders when you look at this constituency—and we did an overview of what will be transpiring over the next four years in 2010 in the constituency of La Horquetta/Talparo—and when one looks at the amount of neglect in that constituency—and that is a constituency along the East-West Corridor. It is a constituency which was a stronghold of the People's National Movement.

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La Horquetta, in particular, they never believed that they could have lost a constituency like La Horquetta, and here when you listen to them, speaker after speaker on the other side, and they chastise this Government for not doing enough along the East-West Corridor, one wonders what they did along the East-West Corridor.

Mr. Speaker, when you look at the constituency, La Horquetta is the largest single housing estate in the entire Caribbean, and when you look at the amount of neglect in La Horquetta, in particular, you wonder what games they were playing with their constituents. You wonder how is it that they are going to win election if not having a control over their constituents by keeping them back, by keeping them down, by doing nothing for them so that they can prosper and the young people can live a better life and see a better day.

Mr. Speaker, it was such a sad state of affairs when you look at the constituency of La Horquetta/Talparo, in particular. When you look at La Horquetta there were over 30,000 residents in that little area, not one recreation ground they had the audacity to even put one light on the ground. One light, Mr. Speaker, so that the young people can come out and move out of the streets, move out of the gang activities, move out of the liming on the block, and come and practise some type of meaningful sporting activity on the recreation ground. Not even a CEPEP gang to even help clean the recreation ground. Mr. Speaker, the dogs did not even visit the recreation ground, much less for people who need to play football on the recreation ground, because that was the size of the grass and the bush on the recreation ground. You could not call it recreation ground, you could not call it facilities for young people to proposer on, and that is a constituency on the East-West Corridor.

So, Mr. Speaker, if they could have treated their own like that, what you expect for them to do south of the Caroni River? Now you are seeing prosperity throughout the land, the entire [*Desk thumping*] length and breadth of Trinidad. When you are seeing that the new highway is being extended from Valencia, they have constituencies along the East-West Corridor; the Toco/Sangre Grande constituency was always theirs. For over 40 years, the Toco/Sangre Grande constituency fell in their hand, and the people, the constituents of Toco/Sangre Grande, have to traverse the Eastern Main Road every single morning.

Mr. Speaker, I originally came from Sangre Grande and to come to work you have to leave home either four o'clock or five o'clock in the morning otherwise you could not even reach Arima before the eight o'clock hour of work. They saw

it like that, they saw their people suffering and they left it unattended. It took this Government to come and build the Valencia bypass to Sangre Grande. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, when you were going to Diego Martin—I have relatives in Diego Martin and I spent a lot of my young years in Diego Martin. Mr. Speaker, to reach into Diego Martin, there was traffic from the National Stadium on one occasion, straight into Diego Martin on many occasions, and the Diego Martin constituency was always under the PNM. It resides in the East-West Corridor. Mr. Speaker, it took this Government to open the highway to Diego Martin; not “they could have done it”; we did it, so they talk; we deliver. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, when they come in this Parliament and chastise this Government for not doing enough, it is because they feel it in their hearts that if they come back into Government they are not getting anything from their colleagues. Mr. Speaker, this is why we are here, we are delivering for every single person. I want to read for you a speech from a very famous person in my constituency, and it goes:

When I walked through this constituency of La Horquetta/Talparo, from Brazil to Talparo to Arena to Mundo Nuevo to Mamoral, the sound of a very familiar cry was heard throughout the constituency, “No water in the tap”. Mr. Speaker, when I think about this constituency having the largest dam in the country, in the entire Caribbean, and not one drop of water came from that dam in Arena. Mr. Speaker, the answer is that the PNM administration just did not care about their people. They just did not care about people in the rural areas. They just lacked the vision. They simply were heartless, and I promised you that when I get into office I will make that wrong right and ensure that every single household in this constituency has access to pipe-borne water.

Hon. Member: Who said that?

Hon. J. Seemungal: This was taken from a speech dated 2010 by one Jairam Seemungal, [*Desk thumping*] UNC candidate for La Horquetta/Talparo. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker, when one looks at the neglect in the constituency—I recall walking through Todd’s Road—and I like to say this story—during 2010 when I delivered this, during that 2010 campaign and walking through Todd’s Road, every single house had a barrel. Every single house had a barrel. When you looked down in the barrel most of them had less than one rim of water and the colour of the water was black, and you had things moving around in the water.

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Mr. Speaker, one old lady came out to me, a very ageeable lady, a very nice lady, and she came out, she said, “Young man, I am going to give you my vote but when you come into office all I am asking you for is a grant so that I can replace these old barrels.” Mr. Speaker, this was the vision of people in rural areas under constituencies held by the PNM, because they knew they were brainwashed that they could not get anything; pipe-borne water was the least in the eyes and the minds of individuals in Todd’s Road, in Mamoral, in Talparo. They could not believe that they could get pipe-borne water, they wanted a barrel so that they could full water.

That is the state of affairs in which the PNM administration had their own people, and when they come to this Parliament and they keep crying, “We did not get this. What you did here? What you did there? What you did here?” Mr. Speaker, they did not do anything in their own constituencies when they were in charge. [*Desk thumping*]

Today, I am proud to report that the village of Talparo, the same Todd’s Road, has pipe-borne water. [*Desk thumping*] In the village of Mundo Nuevo, 200 years old, that is a village that persons went to settle during the colonial days to make the cocoa plantation. Mundo Nuevo, Mamoral was the best cocoa plantation ever in this land because of the soil. The 200-year-old village and they did not even have one drop of water.

Mr. Speaker, to make matters worse—this is how they treated “eh”, to make matters worse; the PNM administration installed waterlines in the Talparo, Mundo Nuevo area, some 25/28 years ago. Twenty-eight years ago they installed waterlines you know, Mr. Speaker, and then they left it like that. So every time an election coming they do something, and then they leave it just so. It took us, this People’s Partnership Government, under the leadership of the Prime Minister, the hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar, [*Desk thumping*] to deliver water in Mundo Nuevo, in the Mamoral area—that is a village, “I doh even know if dey know where Mamoral is.” I honestly do not believe they know where Mamoral is.

There is a village up there they call Miani Village. Miani Village is a village that is so isolated, when you go in the back in Miani Village—the breeze, you are hearing the birds whistling in your ears. You feel like you are in a different country. They do not even know where that is. Mr. Speaker, that village today has pipe-borne water [*Desk thumping*] and they have paved asphalt roads.

Mr. Speaker, and I start by this just to show you that the type of neglect that they would bring on to their own constituents, and they come into this honourable

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House, every time we sit in this honourable House, is the same speech over and over and over. For four years' it is the same speech regurgitated, "What have you all done for us", but is what you did for yourself and your own constituents when you were in office. That is the question they need to answer. That is the question, Mr. Speaker.

10.15 a.m.

Mr. Speaker, nearly every single road in the constituency that did not have water before—for example, Solozano Road, Lalsingh Avenue, in Paltoo Trace, in the whole of Todd's Road, every single small road that never had water before, has water now; and that is not all.

The persons in my constituency had serious difficulty in manoeuvring, getting in and out of the constituency. Today we have a bus service that actually takes you up from La Horquetta straight into Port of Spain. [*Desk thumping*] From La Horquetta you can take the bus and go straight into town. You can do the same thing from Wallerfield. You can take a bus now from Tamana and go into Arima. That is what delivering to our people is about. When I hear on the other side they ask the question: What are we doing? This is what we are doing.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Education has built, under this administration, two new preschools in La Horquetta; one is being constructed right now, and he just recently completed one in Wallerfield. That one is now populated with children from that area. These are areas that are situated along the East-West Corridor. [*Interruption*] I am coming to that. These are areas that are situated along the East-West Corridor, and it is because they had it so. That is the question. They had it, and they have this place and they have the entire East-West Corridor in the condition that it is in.

Very soon the Minister of Education is going to construct a brand new school in Mundo Nuevo, [*Desk thumping*] and an ECCE centre in Mundo Nuevo. The plans are being drawn up right now for that area. Those are rural areas. That is what this Government is about. That is what our Prime Minister told us on election day. The night of May 24, 2010, she said to all of us: We are in office now, go out and serve your people, serve your people and serve your people. Find out where they are. Every single person in this country, every single constituent of yours needs to have representation of the national Treasury. The money belongs to all of them; they pay their taxes, give them what they deserve. Build the infrastructure; upgrade their lives; build the children, the community life, this is

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what this Government is about. This Government is not about talking. They will talk, they will continue to talk and we will deliver, deliver, deliver. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, I can say much more about my constituency, but I want to turn a little bit to an issue in fisheries. The Fisheries Division was only transferred to me just over a month ago. It actually was transferred to me a couple of days before the first sitting of this House, when the question time for the hon. Prime Minister—actually the historical moment in time of this country when questions were posed to the hon. Prime Minister with respect to what is the current state of events within the Government, within Trinidad and Tobago. The first question came from the Member for Diego Martin West, and the question was: What is the status of the Carenage Fishing Centre?

Mr. Speaker, the Carenage Fishing Centre, the conceptual design—actually the conceptual design and the tendering of the Carenage Fishing Centre was in 2009, and it was done under the Ministry of Community Development. What Community Development knows about fisheries and fishing? That is the problem, when you have Ministries undertaking projects that they know nothing about.

No consultation was done with the Fisheries Division to construct the Carenage Fishing Centre—with the Fisheries Division. So when I came into office—and after listening to the hon. Member for Diego Martin West, where a renewed contract was about to start to complete the centre, and he asked the question, whether any investigation was done to determine what transpired thus far. Having that new portfolio under my Ministry, I immediately contacted my Permanent Secretary, the Chairman of Nipdec and said, “Hold your hands, let me look over what transpired”.

First of all, the Permanent Secretary got a report from the Director of Fisheries, and in the report some \$1.49 million was awarded to a company called K. Jameson & Associates Limited for a conceptual and supervision design, supervisory consultant designs for this particular centre. A sum of \$16.56 million was awarded to one company called Montex Trinidad Limited in December of 2009, for the construction of that said facility. That was in 2009, and the completion of the project was expected to take four months. So the project started and the design was for 108 fishing vessels. So 108 locker rooms were constructed in that particular facility. Today the project remains with just a shell, no roof, no facility around, not even a place that the fishermen could fix their nets or manage the facility.

When I enquired from the Fisheries Division what transpired, they told me that the Ministry of Community Development had no consultation whatsoever on this particular facility with respect to its construction. So they designed, they awarded the contract and all these things, without consultation with the Fisheries Division that is in touch with the fishermen.

When I enquired as to how many fishermen were there, the initial figure I was told was seven fisherfolk, seven vessels actually used that particular centre, because just next door in Cocorite over 130 vessels actually use that particular fishing centre. Just lower down in Carenage another 110-plus vessels actually use that facility. So one wonders what happened. Why is it that this facility started when no work went on in Cocorite and no work went on next door lower down in the Carenage centre?

I wonder why the Member keeps coming here and bullying this Government in a state that we must fix the Carenage Fishing Centre. Why is it that he keeps coming every time after time, after time and raising this Carenage Fishing Centre? I feel for the fishermen; I feel for the fishermen. But what I have done is I have also asked the Ministry of Finance and the Economy to launch an investigation into what transpired. Close to \$19 million was spent on a fishing centre and not even a roof, Mr. Speaker.

So I asked him to review and investigate as to exactly what transpired, because it was not in the Ministry of Food Production, at the time agriculture, the Fisheries Division they had nothing to do with the Carenage Fishing Centre. It was under the Ministry of Community Development at the time. I have asked him to investigate and see what is happening and what transpired during that period.

To the fishermen in Carenage, you will have your fishing centre completed after the investigation has been completed. In the meantime, we have moved on to award contracts for the Cocorite Fishing Centre. Some \$6.2 million will be spent, \$3 million will be spent to upgrade the Cocorite Fishing Centre and the Blanchisseuse Fishing Centre thus far.

We also propose to upgrade fishing centres throughout the entire length and breadth of this country, because one of the revenue sources from the Ministry of Food Production actually comes from fishing.

We propose to look at the Blue River Fishing Centre; the Orange Field Fishing Centre; Brickfield Fishing Centre; the Orange Valley Fishing Centre; the Cumana Fishing Centre; Cacandee in Felicity; La Brea Fishing Centre; the Blanchisseuse Fishing Centre, and Las Cuevas Fishing Centre. As I said, we are

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going to start work very soon on the Carenage Fishing Centre, and for all the other fishing facilities, Cabinet has approved for Nipdec to raise a bond of \$300 million to be spent on the fishing centres over the next two years.

We have started conceptual designs; we have started the consultancies. It is very important that we speak to the fisherfolk, because they would know what they want. We have started that consultancy in almost every fishing centre thus far, to find out exactly what it is that the fishermen would like. When that is completed, then we will start moving to construct and reconstruct all the fishing centres throughout the country. Thus far, we have mapped all the fishing centres on a GIS database, so we know exactly where they are and what is happening at any point in time.

Mr. Speaker, a lot has been said in the media and some news reports with respect to squatter regularization. As a matter of fact, one newspaper carried the Squatter Regularization Programme as the Government trying to buy votes out of squatter regularization. Squatter regularization is not a new concept. This concept started by the enactment of the State Land (Regularisation of Tenure) Act, Chap. 57:05, and that is Act No. 25 of 1998.

We have over 350 squatter sites in this country. These are squatter sites where many of the residents have been living for over 20 and 30 years. Under the State Land (Regularisation of Tenure) Act, they had by September 2000 to apply for regularization on these lands that they would have been living on. Thus far, they have received 23,000 applications for squatter regularization under the State Land (Regularisation of Tenure) Act.

Mr. Speaker, it is also important that when we look at squatter regularization, we look to determine who resides on the land and how long they have been on the land, and an entire investigation has to take place as to these individuals.

When you look at some of these settlements—I will share one with you. There is one in Farm Road in the constituency of St. Joseph. When you go into that little area, they have over 600 residents living in that little block of land; some of them living so close to each other that you can describe it as they are living on top of each other. That is how bad some of these estates are.

There is an estate in the constituency of Chaguanas East that has over 800 residents living on a small plot of land. When you go out in some of these other areas and you see the conditions which people are living under, and you have children running around on muddy roads and on dirty tracks. Some of them do not even have toilet facilities in these areas, and these people are living there for more

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than 15, 20 years. That is how bad it is in some of these areas. For a country that can afford to lift the status of people where they are, this Government felt that it was necessary to continue the work of the 1998 Act.

Under their administration, all they did with the squatters was really play football. When election time come, they would go through every single squatting settlement and promise that they would do every single thing, and did nothing at the end of the day.

10.30 a.m.

Mr. Speaker, you cannot continue to play games with people's lives. The same thing I have said with respect to my constituency of La Horquetta/Talparo, is games, after games, after games, after games, every single election period. That is the only time you saw them. As a matter of fact, there was a representative of my constituency, people who say they never saw him in their entire life, the entire duration of the period he represented. And you go in there and people say that they never see him. They do not know who this person is.

And it is the same thing with respect to the squatting settlements. And it is not about buying votes, and wanting people to vote for you. It is about improving the lives of individuals. It is about lifting the status of individuals from a squatter to a landowner, and that is what we want to give people. Move them out from a state of squatting to being a landowner, being a proud owner of land that they can say that they have a piece of the pie in this country. And that, in itself, will lend pride to individuals.

So no longer will a child being in school—"and where you living?" "Ah living in the squatting settlement down in this particular area or that area." Mr. Speaker, that in itself demoralizes that individual. And what we are doing, we are moving to increase and improve the lives of individuals. And that is what we are doing with the squatter regularization programme. It is not a programme that you play football with, and "who getting vote and who ain't getting vote, and when dey go vote for yuh, and if dey go vote for yuh. If none of them vote for yuh", that is all well and good. The thing is, we have delivered what we promised to them. [*Desk thumping*] That is what we are about. We are about fulfilling the promise that we would have made.

Our Prime Minister went on the campaign in 2010 and promised to improve the lives of every single individual throughout the length and breadth of this country, and that is what we are doing, Mr. Speaker. That is what we are doing, improving the lives through education, through all the delivery programmes. The

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Minister of Works and Infrastructure has been up and down the entire country improving the lives of individuals. The Minister of Housing and Urban Development has been delivering houses throughout. The Minister of Land and Marine Resources has been looking at people in these depressed areas to improve their lives, and that is what we are about, improving the lives of individuals.

Mr. Speaker, thus far, we have surveyed over 100 sites, 100 sites, again in compliance with the State Land (Regularisation of Tenure) Act, that you survey these sites, you have them approved by Town and Country, you complete the planning, and then you can issue leases to individuals, from a 199-year lease to individuals.

Dr. Browne: Out of how many?

Hon. J. Seemungal: Out of 350 that we have recorded so far, we have surveyed 100. We have started the survey and completed the survey over the last few months. [*Desk thumping*]

And, Mr. Speaker, we intend to continue the exercise so that we can survey all the sites. And one only troubling area is that of the private landowners where squatters actually squat on private land. That is an area that does not fall under my purview, but I am looking at it because it was brought to my attention by a lot of the Members of Parliament. That is actually a private matter between the individuals and the landowner. But again, many a time the landowner cannot even afford to regularize people on those areas. So we are looking, we have started a review of the private owner squatter sites, and we will be coming up with a policy very soon to actually make a determination as to how we deal with them. Because we believe that they are people as well, and their lives need to be increased and their lives need to be improved so that they can benefit from the patrimony of this State.

Mr. Speaker, so thus far, we have surveyed over 100 sites, and many of these sites are along the East-West Corridor. So when one wonders, when they say, we are doing nothing in the East-West Corridor, half of these sites are within the East-West Corridor. [*Crosstalk*]

And one of the problems that we will continue to be faced with and we are challenged by, is one of land grabbing. And land grabbing is an issue that we have to deal with. We have started looking, Mr. Speaker, with respect to the persons who we want to regularize on these squatter regularization programmes. And to

our amazement, it is that we are finding persons who own HDC houses, rent out the HDC houses, and go and squat on land that they want to get. Mr. Speaker, we are finding persons renting out their lands along the East-West Corridor, and going and squatting on lands.

Mr. Samuel: Just imagine that.

Hon. J. Seemungal: Just imagine that one person squatting on five lots of land, and they are hoping that they get it. But the programme is not designed, the squatter regularization programme is not designed to enrich individuals, it is designed to create a home or a place for individuals who really do not have, and who are in the most vulnerable state and the most vulnerable end of society. Mr. Speaker, and this is what the programme is designed for.

And with that in mind, I have opened the Land Settlement Agency to every single Member of Parliament. I have issued notices to them. Many of them have had visits from the Land Settlement Agency, but I am still open. Anybody, any Member of this House who would like the Land Settlement Agency officers to visit their office, please do contact me and I will make them available. They are here, we are here to serve every single individual. That is what you do when you come in government. You do not discriminate. You serve every single individual, and that is what this Government is about. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, the issue with land grabbing is something that really did not start now. What I am finding too is that people are taking state land and they are going to sell it. They are exploiting poor people, and it is really something that I am looking at. So what we have done, we have teamed up with the Ministry of National Security. So we have a team between the Land Settlement Agency, the Commissioner of State Lands, and the Ministry of National Security, and we are looking at a plan to start dealing with these people; these people who actually take state land and go and sell it for their own profit, their own benefit.

I am sending a warning to these people that what you are doing is illegal, and is tantamount to fraud on the State, and that is a serious, serious charge. So be very careful when you are doing this, by going and taking a piece of land and selling it to individuals. And you know what is sad, Mr. Speaker? They sell the piece of land, but they have no infrastructure. They do not even have a road. They do not even have a place for toilet facilities, they just do whatever they want. Some of them they just go and show you, this is your boundary, this is your boundary, this is your boundary, when you are at the end of the day, you find yourself in a triangle. So, I am living on a piece of land that is a triangle. So, you literally have no room to manoeuvre.

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Mr. Speaker, we are looking at this very seriously, and over the next few months, we will be engaging in serious consultation as to the revamping of the same State Land (Regularisation of Tenure) Act, so we can deal with those issues as well, plus we have the Ministry of National Security, we have a hotline so that people can go and report these cases. What we are doing, we have one of the most sophisticated GIS mapping systems right now in the country. [*Desk thumping*] To manage state land has always baffled every single government that has come into office. And to manage state land, to manage anything, any of your assets, you need to know where it is. You need to know where your asset is. If you do not know where your asset is, how can you manage it? So what we have done, Mr. Speaker, we have used the technology that has been available for the last 40 years. It is not something that happened now, you know, it is the last 40 years this technology has been available.

What we are doing, we have mapped nearly every single piece of state land. Right now for instance, at least for GPS, GIS mapping, and you go with these devices, and you find your coordinates, you place it on a map system. So for those of you who would like to know what this is about, you go on my Ministry's website, it is the Ministry of Land and Marine Resources, mlmr.gov.tt, and you will see a little map down to the bottom of it, and you click on it, and you could see the stuff, the work that we are doing in the Ministry with respect to mapping these state lands.

Mr. Speaker, as I am on the website, for the Caroni VSEP workers, for instance, the two-acre parcels, we have been hearing complaints, up and down, where people cannot find their land. Today, you can go on my website, the Ministry's website, you can click on the little blue star down to the end where it is marked "Caroni VSEP", you type in your badge number and it will take you straight to your land. You all must try it. Straight to your land. [*Desk thumping*] That is what we are doing with respect to technology, so persons can go with their cell phones and they can download a GPS device, and it can walk them straight onto your particular piece of land.

Mr. Speaker, the squatter regularization programme is one which we are passionate about. It is not about—it has nothing to do with who will vote for who, and what election is about. It is about delivering to the people. And I ask persons not to sensationalize that issue because really, the squatters in most instances, most instances, I will say about 95 per cent of them are really persons who are underprivileged, and they really cannot, in most cases they really cannot do anything else except to squat. And I am talking about these people who have been

there for the last 30 and 40 years. Many of them have tried to improve their lives, but they cannot even get a grant, a state grant, to fix their house. They could not even get electricity in most cases. You have to see children, for instance, living with pitch oil lamps in many cases. So that is what we are about in—
[*Interruption*]

Dr. Browne: The more recent ones.

Hon. J. Seemungal:—and the recent ones, what we are doing with the recent ones, we have started on a programme called the “Village lot regularization programme”. Anything after 2000, we are looking at those. The persons before 2000 will qualify under the Act, once we have done the investigation, but after 2000 we started what we call a village lot regularization programme under the Commissioner of State Lands because the LSA would not have the authority to deal with them. And those are the persons we are investigating to determine whether or not they have a HDC house, and they have a plot of land, or they have a business on the East-West Corridor, and they also have a plot which they have rented out. Under that programme those are the persons we would not be regularizing. But however, once persons qualify after 2000, it means that they would be on the land because they require that piece of land, they have no other property, those persons would also be regularized. That is what we are looking at.

Mr. Speaker, and that is why we are beefing up on this whole patrol system. We have also hired private security to start looking at all the state lands and to manage the state lands. We have over 100 patrol officers going to visit these parcels of state lands on a regular basis. Thus far, we have taken down over 600 buildings that have been going up on state lands which are being occupied illegally. So an exercise is taking place, but very quietly, Mr. Speaker. Because when the media get hold that we are going out to take down these few houses, they would go and interview, not the person who is damaging and destroying the land, not the person who is living on the forest reserve in most cases, they will go and interview the developer who bring a few people there, and crying that their houses are being taken down. That is what happens, we have seen it. But I am not attacking the media in any way. Their job is do their job, we have to do our job, but we are doing our job very sensitively. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, I want to—I see that the time is running out so quickly. The agriculture programme with the regularization of agriculture holding lots—I mean plots—has been really something that we needed to look at very seriously in the Commissioner’s Office. There are over 30,000 farmers on state lands, and many

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of them had leases that are expired. And what we are doing, we have vamped up, beefed up on the site visits, and we have started for instance, looking at state lands in many of the blocks throughout. For example, in the Plum Mitan area, in the Caroni area which is the Carlsen Field areas, in Wallerfield the entire 9,000 acres in the Wallerfield area, Mr. Speaker, and the Platinite area—that is in the Platinite area. So, we have started looking at all the agriculture programmes.

But one of the interesting things is, we have started looking at, how do you manage and continue to manage the agriculture lands and in keeping people into agriculture at the same time? Because many of the agriculture state lands, when you look around, they are abandoned. Many of the persons really want the land, but they want the land for the purpose of a dwelling house. And that is something we are looking at very seriously, in a farmer relocation programme, where can take them out those who want the land mainly for a dwelling purpose, and move them out and put them in a little area that will create a little village for these former farmers. And then we could take the same land and give it out to young people who would like to get into agriculture. There are many young people who want land, and they would like to get into agriculture.

10.45 a.m.

So what we have done is that we have also looked over the entire policy as to how we are managing this portfolio with respect to agricultural state land, and one of the things we have introduced, is that we have introduced a five-year review period so that every five years the farmer has to apply to the commissioner for a review of his programme of development, and they must bring the land up to compliance. By the end of the first five years they must bring the land within 75 per cent of cultivation. And we have said to farmers that apart from planting the vegetables, it is important that you plant fruit trees as well. Mr. Speaker, many of the young people do not even know what a fat pork is about, they do not even know what is a cashew, if you ask them what is a cashew they do not even know what is that.

So, we are asking them now to start planting fruit trees along the boundary lines, at least 5 or 10 per cent of the whole length, to look at planting fruit trees. And the fruit will also create the environment for all of these birds and bats and all of these things to have somewhere to live, because if we take out all the land and take out all the trees then you would find—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Deyalsingh: No birds and bats.

Hon. J. Seemungal:—no birds and bats.

Mr. Deyalsingh: All robin.

Hon. J. Seemungal: We will find them as well, Mr. Speaker. So, this measure is expected to bring the farmer within contact with the commissioner's office. At least once every five years, you must have that visit and that contact between the commissioner and the farmer. So, that five-year review is expected to push the farmer into the direction that he would bring his land within cultivation.

Mr. Speaker, time is running out but I just want to touch a bit on the Caroni VSEP. You would recall that Caroni closed down in 2003, and Act No. 25 of 2005, which is the divestment Act transferred all the lands of the former Caroni Limited and the former Orange Grove Limited unto the State.

Mr. Speaker: The speaking time of the hon. Minister has expired. Are you interested in extending?

Hon. J. Seemungal: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Speaker: The question is that the speaking time of the hon. Minister of Land and Marine Resources be extended by 10 minutes.

Question put and agreed to.

Hon. J. Seemungal: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, thank you my colleagues for the extension of 10 minutes.

So, Mr. Speaker, when Caroni closed down all the lands were divested in the State, and under the agriculture portfolio alone, the VSEP agriculture portfolio, there were some 7,400-plus Caroni VSEP recipients under that, and some 16 blocks of land were allocated for the Caroni VSEP workers. Today, we have issued over 4,500 of these Caroni agriculture VSEP for the agriculture portfolio [*Desk thumping*] under the VSEP package. The problem is that we have just over 900 persons we cannot even locate. What we have done, we have done a website called caronivsep.com, and we started with 1,600 recipients who we could not find. We formulated a site called caronivsep.com where the Caroni workers can go and check the status of their lease. They would put in their badge number and that will help them to check the status of their lease. They will actually be sending emails straight to the Minister and the Permanent Secretary, asking or enquiring about the status of their lease.

And thus far through that little programme we have been able to locate some 700 of them. [*Desk thumping*] So, we have just around 900 more and every day we are actually getting at least three to four persons making enquiries of their

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lease. So, that number keeps dwindling and we expect by the end of this year we would be giving out another 800 of these agricultural leases. The Chief State Solicitor has sent 400-plus leases to our office for the purpose of execution. What we have done, is that we have increased the number of lawyers in the office, because land management is really about law, it is about landlord and tenant situation, it is about the administration of estate, the administration of title, so it is really a lot to do with law and how you manage that portfolio within the framework of the law.

So, thus far, we have increased the number of lawyers to just over 10 lawyers now in the office, so we can help the Chief State Solicitor's office to go out on the field, to go out to the people and take the execution of these agreements and these leases. And we visit most of the constituency offices as well that facilitate that they can come and they will have the persons come there and the lawyers would come and they would execute their lease. We have been working very closely with the Minister of Legal Affairs in having the Registrar General access and register these leases on a timely basis, and I want to congratulate the Minister of Legal Affairs for facilitating us to have this delivery in a more speedy manner, one in which we are very proud, that delivery to the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

That is how Government works for people. Government works together. This is Ministers working together, and that is how we get things done. [*Desk thumping*] Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Education was in my office just last week and we were able to sort out almost all the lands that he requires for the early childhood centres. That is how you run Government. [*Desk thumping*] You do not run Government fighting each other, you do not run Government calling each other raging bull and all these things. [*Laughter*] You run Government by talking to each other, and you speak and you collate information and you manage. That is a partnership. That is true partnership. [*Desk thumping*] So, we are working for the people. They will talk and they will continue to talk and we will deliver, deliver, deliver. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, the remaining agriculture VSEP leases, we expect to deliver at least the majority of them by March of next year, and the remainder of what we cannot find then we will be advertising again in the newspapers so we can have people be alerted. But, for persons who are interested, again, I want them to visit a site called the caronivsep.com and check your status of your lease. This is with respect to the Caroni VSEP two-acre parcels. Very soon, my team is working on the residential portfolio, so we will bring it up to speed with respect to the Caroni agriculture portfolio.

With the residential portfolio, however, Mr. Speaker, there were many challenges that EMBD would have faced over the last few years. As a matter of fact, they inherited such a state of bad work—I would term it—from the former PNM administration. Mr. Speaker, you remember that in the many reports when there were waterlines, sewer line, electricity line, every line running in the same hole, [*Laughter*] they were trying to figure out how on earth you could create a whole development and put the waterline, the electricity line and sewer line in the same drain.

Dr. Moonilal: That is a recipe for disaster.

Hon. J. Seemungal: That is a recipe to kill everybody on the site. And those are things that we have to do over. We inherited those things, and to deliver these residential leases under the agriculture lease you must get full Town and Country Planning approval.

WASA would not go and approve a site where electricity lines are running in the same hole. T&TEC would not go and approve a site for you when you have the T&TEC line and the WASA line running in the same hole. So, the Town and Country Planning requirement, the Director of Surveys, which falls under my portfolio, he would not sign, he would not sign off on these development plans unless the Town and Country Planning has signed off on them. And Town and Country Planning would not sign off unless you have EMA approval.

Mr. Speaker, you recall the Minister of Housing and Urban Development said that it did not even have an estate that had prior approval before houses were given out. So, they were giving out houses left, right and centre and not even approval on one of the sites. It is only under his tenureship the first time they actually had an approved plan before giving out these, and it is the same problem that we are facing with the Caroni VSEP residential portfolio. The Director of Surveys would not sign before the Town and Country Planning and Town and Country Planning would not sign before the regional corporation, WASA, T&TEC, EMA, and all the other authorities would have signed off before they sign off.

That is the problem we are facing, and we inherited these problems. It is not something you can fix overnight. As a matter of fact, the number of overruns you had on these sites, those overruns could have fixed 10 more sites just like those. And, again, we inherited those. We inherited what? Close to \$1 billion in debt for contractors when we came into office.

Hon. Member: Two billion.

Hon. J. Seemungal: Two billion dollars in debt when we came into office.

So, Mr. Speaker, we will continue to face challenges in fixing the bad work that the PNM administration has left us with, we will continue to face challenges in trying to convince people that we are about the people, that is what the legacy that they would have left us in. Because they continue to brainwash people, you know. In my constituency, I was probably the only MP to do so much in the constituency in such a short period of time. [*Desk thumping*] I would have been the only MP to light six recreation grounds so far, [*Desk thumping*] the only MP to upgrade nearly six recreation grounds as well, the only MP to actually build two preschools in La Horquetta when you have over 20,000 children inside there, [*Desk thumping*] the only MP to deliver water in almost the whole length and breadth of the constituency [*Desk thumping*] and still when the next election comes they may not vote for me, but that is okay.

Hon. Member: You are sure right.

Hon. J. Seemungal: That is the legacy that they would have left the people, [*Laughter and crosstalk*] but I will tell them, that legacy is changing. They have younger and brighter people here today. This is a third generation people, it is not a brainwashed generation anymore. [*Desk thumping*]

So, Mr. Speaker, the society is better off today than in 2010, the society is better off today than when they were in office.

Mr. Speaker, with those few words, I thank you very much.

Mr. Terrence Deyalsingh (*St. Joseph*): [*Desk thumping*] Thank you, Mr. Speaker, as I rise to make my maiden contribution in this Chamber on an Appropriation Bill, and I owe that honour to the constituents of St. Joseph who saw it fit to have me here, and I thank them.

Mr. Speaker, in the past two months I have been well pleased with the basic and inherent intelligence of the people of Trinidad and Tobago, for two reasons: one, the maturity displayed by all major groups and sectors of society over the constitutional reform Bill is to be applauded and I congratulate Trinidad and Tobago for that.

I also congratulate the people of Trinidad and Tobago for their studied response to this budget, in that, they did not automatically gravitate to every social programme, but ordinary people in whom I place my trust were asking serious questions about sustainability, et cetera, so I am heartened.

Mr. Speaker, it is my intention to demonstrate to these same people, with whom I put my trust in, the inherent intelligence of the man in the street, the Chambers of Commerce, et cetera, to show that this budget has no structural integrity, and I would demonstrate that. *[Interruption]*

I will demonstrate to the people that some of these measures are so ill-thought-out—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker: Please! Please!

Mr. T. Deyalsingh:—that even the Minister of Finance and the Economy had trouble in explaining some of the measures.

Mr. Speaker, it was interesting to hear every single Member opposite speak about the PNM from 1845 or from the dawn of humanity. *[Interruption]* All the ills, BC, before everything. We were blamed for the extinction of the dinosaurs even. It is blame the PNM for every single ill. We could be blamed for the tsunamis back in 2004, PNM would have caused that. However, what they did not talk about was the basic issue of trust, and in four short years what they have done.

Hon. Member: Tell us.

11.00 a.m.

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: And for a budget to be accepted by the people, trust is important. The trust that exists between a government and the governed. The trust that has been eroded by an unending avalanche of scandals, misapplied policies and cosmetic fixes over four short years.

Mr. Speaker, I am not going to go back to 1845 and the days of Columbus to blame the UNC. I will just remind them of their heritage for four short years. Resmi Ramnarine—*[Interruption]*

Hon. Members: “Ahhh.” Yes.

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: The \$40 million contract at NP for which the Member for San Fernando West was moved, and the investigations stopped. You have heard nothing about that \$40 million contract from NP after the hon. Member for San Fernando West launched her own investigation. This is not 1845, this is 2014. But the Attorney General took over that and you have heard nothing about that.

Mr. Jeffrey: Nothing at all, nothing.

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: Colour Me Orange, nothing. Firing of Ministers, never happened. “Prisongate,” never happened. LifeSport, never happened. Section 34, never happened and the FCB IPO, never happened. But they can see it fit, Mr. Speaker, to make public the findings into the 1990 attempted coup. There was one

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part that the hon. Prime Minister said, release it, fine. We will make public the findings into the HCU collapse, fine. But, Mr. Speaker, what is it about the FCB IPO that cannot be made public up to this day? What is contained in that report that the Government studiously avoids? It never happened. The FCB—but they could release the HCU report. They could release the report into the attempted coup. No problems there.

Mr. Speaker, I started by saying that this budget has absolutely no structural integrity, [*Desk thumping*] and I will say why. The budget has to be based on data, data which must be reliable, accurate, collected in time, unbiased and from an institution in which the public has trust in its methodology and in its institutional capacity. It must be collected by a responsible agency. And I am going to demonstrate why we cannot trust the budget as presented by this Minister of Finance and the Economy, regardless of his clean-cut private sector image. We cannot trust this budget because of a report coming out of something called the IMF, a report which the hon. Member for Tabaquite lauded yesterday, may I add.

There are twins of deception currently parading in Trinidad and Tobago, on our landscape. And those twins of deception are the Ministry of Planning and Sustainable Development and the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago. And I will demonstrate with proof why I call those two agencies the twins of deception.

The first twin is the Ministry of Planning and Sustainable Development which has responsibility for the CSO. Mr. Speaker, it is no secret that the CSO needs overhauling, no secret. In 2005, the last PNM administration would have engaged the firm, Statistics Sweden, to do a diagnostic of the CSO. But, from 2010, the phenomenal decline in capacity at the CSO has only been exceeded by the phenomenal decline in morale amongst the staff of the CSO.

Mr. Speaker, let me just read one extract from the IMF, Article IV Consultation, dated September 2014. That is this month, this month, Mr. Speaker. Page 17:

“Critically, the lack of reliable and timely data is an overarching problem that hampers public and private decision-making...The CSO still has no permanent quarters...”

They are nomads, they are statistical statisticians in a state of running from pillar to post.

Do you know what is happening at the CSO? This Government did not want to finish the Government Campus to spite Trinidad—it was a PNM thing. You now have the CSO, three people working one desk. People working from home doing

data collection. Data shortcomings now severely constrain staff's ability to conduct economic surveillance. Where are the figures coming from? No structural—that is why I said, this budget has absolutely no structural integrity. And this is not a document from Balisier House. This is the IMF, September 2014 document. And why we cannot trust the Ministry of Planning and Sustainable Development over CSO, because of their totally botched attempt to divest Invader's Bay. Trust us we say, [*Desk thumping*] trust us. We cannot trust that Ministry or its leadership. Why can we not trust that other twin of deception, the Central Bank? That same Report speaks about the Central Bank's faux pas in creating an artificial foreign exchange crisis. Trust the Central Bank?

Dr. Rambachan: “Wait nah”, how that come to deal with the data at the Central Bank? How it connect?

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: I will come to that my friend, I will come, relax, hold your fire. So my question is, when this Government speaks of 3.7 per cent unemployment, who is collecting that data? What is the methodology? Is it being collected by the Central Bank, by a defunct CSO? Who is collecting it? What is the methodology?

Hon. Members: Howai.

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: Mr. Speaker, if you go on to the CSO website, they speak about agriculture. Food crop data is only available up to 2012. Labour force statistics only up until the third quarter of 2012. But trust us, unemployment is down to 3.7 per cent.

When our friends opposite were in Opposition they spoke about CEPEP in these terms: they were corbeaux feeding at the trough. Do people remember that?

Dr. Browne: Yes.

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: One of yours called CEPEP workers, corbeaux feeding at the trough. They were vultures. That is on the *Hansard* of this country. Now you have expanded CEPEP by two. But in those days they will always ask: what is the disaggregated figure to get at a true unemployment figure? They will always ask that. My question is, tell us now that you have doubled CEPEP, what is the true unemployment figure without CEPEP?

Dr. Rambachan: Would you close down CEPEP?

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: Tell us, tell us. What is the true unemployment figure when you consider the percentage of the underemployed? And the underemployed

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are those who are working in jobs but they are qualified to do something better for a higher salary. Those were the questions you would ask. We are now asking that, because you see, Mr. Speaker, the IMF Report speaks to that same issue.

Dr. Rambachan: Tell us what you are going to do.

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: Member for Tabaquite, I kept very quiet when you were speaking. Please do the same.

Mr. Speaker: Yes, yes, allow the Member to speak in silence.

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: So we have no trust in the data. Mr. Speaker, when one goes to the *Review of the Economy 2014*, on page 65, GDP figures 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014. From 2010 to 2013, all the figures are revised figures. It speaks to a data lag now which existed before of about two years, but this data lag in providing accurate up-to-date data has now grown to three and four years under this administration. In other words, 2010 figures being quoted in 2014 are still revised figures, not actual figures. And this is the lack of integrity in the budget I am speaking about.

In 2014 we are still relying on 2010 revised figures. And the IMF Report speaks to this increasing data lag. But trust us, trust us. I am sorry, I am sorry. But, Mr. Speaker, the picture I have painted about the CSO, if you think that was bad there is worse to come. When you go to that IMF Report, part II, page 8, and may I re-emphasize, this Report is dated September 2014. And I quote, Mr. Speaker, under:

“Assessment of Data Adequacy for Surveillance.

Data provision has serious shortcomings that significantly hamper surveillance. The most affected areas are:”—

And listen to these areas. I want the national community to listen to the areas that the IMF in 2014 is pointing to having serious difficulties.

“...national accounts, prices, and external sector statistics. Data shortcomings, especially in national accounts and balance of payments data, severely constrain staff’s ability to conduct economic surveillance.”

Mr. Speaker, how is this 2015 budget to be believed when the IMF is saying we cannot trust the figures coming out of the CSO on national accounts, external sector statistics, balance of payments. How?

Mr. Speaker, under this administration, the CSO has been sorely politicized. There has been an almost deliberate decimation of not only systems at the CSO,

but as I said, Mr. Speaker, morale—decimation of morale by buffoonery. That is what is going on by the CSO. But what is the Ministry of Planning and Sustainable Development’s solution? I will tell you what the solution is. They have now signed an MOU with the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago to provide the CSO with statisticians, to provide them with staff.

Now, nothing may be wrong in principle with that, but my information is, those personnel being sent by the Central Bank to the CSO are young graduates from UWI who have absolutely no experience in the field. Mr. Speaker, one of them reported to work at the CSO yesterday. So they reported to work. They ask their personnel, “Where do I sit”? They say look find a chair. So he goes in a chair in a corner. This was reported to me this morning. Find a chair, but the only reason they found a chair was because a CSO employee was ill. That CSO employee is back out to work today. There is no chair for the UWI graduate sent by the Central Bank.

You have three and four persons working on the same desk in CSO. You have some of them working from home, so where is the security of data, where is it? But the Member for Tabaquite was asking me, so what is wrong with the Central Bank doing data collection for the CSO? Well I told him to take his time.

11.15 a.m.

Page nine, Part II of that IMF Report:

“External sector statistics: Official trade data from the CSO are only available up to February 2012...”—official data.

We are now in 2014.

“...while data for the rest of 2012 and up to September 2013 are CBTT estimates...”

CBTT, Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago, using their partner data. So we rely on our trading partners now to give us data. We are not doing that data collection and assimilation. We are not defining the data sets here. Our external partners, like the United States, will tell us what our balance of trade figures are.

“The CSO recently provided some unaudited...data but warned...”

This is the IMF, 2014:

“that these are not yet reliable.”

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That is why, at the beginning I said one of the characteristics of good data is reliability, and that is why this budget has absolutely no structural integrity. [*Desk thumping*]. None! The backbone of this budget is built on jello—yellow jello.

Dr. Rambachan: So you are saying the Central Bank does lie?

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: I am not saying that the Central Bank lies. Hear what the IMF report says:

“The CBTT’s”—that is the Central Bank. Member for Tabaquite, you should not really provoke me:

“The CBTT's estimates for trade data are flawed due to methodological weaknesses.”

Dr. Rowley: Says who?

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: Says the IMF.

Hon. Member: “Ay ya yai.”

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: “The CBTT’s data is flawed”, and they say trust the budget. Member for Tabaquite, you should not really provoke me this morning.

Dr. Rambachan: The IMF could say that a million times.

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: But you quoted this in support of your contribution yesterday. But, Mr. Speaker, it gets worse:

“...in identifying a number of significant shortcomings, such as under-coverage and misclassifications in the goods and services account, particularly in the valuation of imports...”

Mr. Speaker, this is a horror story about data collection, but the budget is predicated on these numbers. The budget is predicated on sound data. You cannot trust this data; you cannot trust the budget. You cannot trust anything, any figure, in this budget.

Hon. Member: We cannot trust you.

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: “Data on external assets and liabilities of mutual funds are not yet available. Incomplete coverage and lack of detail on external assets and liabilities is reflected in a large and unexplained private capital outflow...”

So the IMF is telling us that there is a large capital outflow which they cannot really say why. But this is frightening:

“...equivalent to 11 percent of GDP in 2013.”

If that does not scare the private sector, the chambers of commerce, the planners, the accountants, I do not know what will. The IMF is saying, there is unexplained private capital outflow. You know what private capital outflow is? Money; foreign exchange—*[Interruption]*

Dr. Rowley: Leakage.

Mr. T. Deyalsingh:—leakage, “amounting to 11 percent of GDP in 2013”. And we are being asked: trust us. Trust us. Trust us. We cannot. The Central Bank is in no position to guide the CSO. The Central Bank, by its mucking up of our foreign exchange situation when they boast, “we have all this foreign exchange”, they cannot be trusted—cannot be trusted!

So I want to ask the Minister of Finance and the Economy—and I know now the Minister of Planning and the Economy will make a contribution here now because he has to, because he has to tell us whether the IMF Report holds any water or not. So my questions are: On what statistical basis did you base this \$67 billion budget? What is the true unemployment figure? The true, collected by whom? What is the true national debt? And give us a statement of our trade accounts and account for this 11 per cent leakage of capital outflow—11 per cent of GDP.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance and the Economy or the Minister of Planning and the Economy has to respond to this because this is not a PNM document. I am putting my faith, as I said before, in the inherent intelligence, as displayed in the past two months, of every citizen and organization in Trinidad and Tobago. I am placing my faith in them.

So what is the solution? I would like to engage, through you, Mr. Speaker, the national community in the conversation about what is the role forward in depoliticizing the office of the CSO because, as this country seeks to advance its cause in the regional markets, in the international community, people have to have some faith in what we say and what we do, based on statistics.

We know we cannot trust the CSO; we know we cannot rely on the Central Bank, so what is the solution? It is time to start a conversation in this country, and I am hoping the decision-makers in society, again, like the chambers of commerce, like the Planning Association, like us in this Chamber, start a conversation about legislation to ensure the independence of the CSO. It is something which my political leader advised me to raise in the other place back in 2010/2011. And having looked at two models—the Jamaican model and the UK model—I think there is a very strong case to start that conversation about the independence of the CSO.

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The Jamaican Act, which I looked at—they have their own Act to govern the CSO, but when one looks at the way the Act is drafted, “the Minister can do this; the Minister can do that; the Minister can appoint”, it is what we tend to do here. So the Jamaican Act does not really guarantee the kind of independence that we are looking for so that we could place trust in national figures. This is important because post-independence there will be times and cycles of review of our institutions, our Constitution, but not the way constitutional reform has been foisted on this country. We want real reform. And if I limit my argument to just the CSO alone, I recommend the UK model to look at.

And as we start this conversation about independence of the CSO, it means it is time to curb the powers of the Executive over the CSO, and I recommend to all those independent thinkers to look at the Office for National Statistics out of the UK. I just want to quote one line—Dame Karen Dunnell:

“...the legislation would help improve public trust in official statistics...”

That is what we need now, Member for San Fernando West, through you, Mr. Speaker, because there are still persons of conscience around. If we are to have trust in our statistics, the words of Dame Karen Dunnell are important:

“...legislation would help improve public trust in official statistics...”

Because we on this side, and many persons outside, have no trust in the statistics being put forward—absolutely none. So, Mr. Speaker, as I said, I would demonstrate that this budget has no structural integrity, and I think I have done that.

Mr. Speaker, I refer to the Central Bank as one of the twins of deception, and in the budget presentation, the hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy mentioned the emerging credit union draft Bill. This Government’s attempt at clumsy consultation, as we saw, to the Constitutional Reform Bill, also extends to the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago because the consultations that were taking place between the CC—let me get it right—the Cooperatives Credit Union Movement, the CCUM—and I quote. This is not balisier house propaganda. I quote from the TECU annual general report of 2013. Let me state my source: the TECU annual general report, page 46, in which they say:

“Up to July 17, 2013 discussions with the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago continued, when the Governor of the CBTT”—this is the Governor of the Central Bank—“at a meeting with the CCUM, terminated the discussions prematurely.”

Now, what the report does not say was the arrogance and the dismissive arrogance with which those discussions were abruptly terminated. Those are my words. That is my description—the dismissive arrogance. However, the Governor of the Central Bank simply told them, “Anything you want, refer to us in writing”.

So face to face discussions stopped on September 17, 2013. And I checked. The face to face discussions have not resumed up to 2014. So any Bill you bring here to govern the credit union movement is not going to be based on proper discussions, on proper consultations. They were simply told, “Send in your comments in writing”.

Mr. Speaker, I had absolutely no intention in this budget debate to speak on matters pertaining to energy—absolutely none. However, the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs ill-advisedly came to this House right after the political leader and the Member for Diego Martin West spoke, in an effort to redeem himself, and he drew me into the debate by saying, as far as the Mitsubishi/Massy project is concerned, that the Member for St. Joseph always says, “Not a blade ah grass touch”. Right, Member for La Brea?

Mr. Jeffrey: Yeah.

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: He said that. Up to that time, colleagues, I had no intention—absolutely none—to talk about energy—[*Interruption*]

Miss Hospedales: “Until yuh heard yuh name.

Mr. T. Deyalsingh:—until I was drawn into it, ill-advisedly by the hon. Sen. Kevin Ramnarine.

Hon. Member: Pressed into service.

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: But, you know, the sleight of hand that the Minister sought to pull over this House? He is now saying that that project is a private sector project, as if the Government has no responsibility for it.

Hon. Member: Cop out.

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: Those were his words. He said, “It is now a private sector project”. Let me refresh the population’s mind and the mind of the great historian, Sen. Kevin Ramnarine—historian par excellence—to an article published on Monday, December 10, 2012 in the *Guardian* by Aleem Khan, referring to the Mitsubishi/Neal & Massy deal. This is not a release coming out of the private

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sector, Neal & Massy. I have nothing against Neal & Massy. But in 2012, this is what a public official, a member of the Executive of this Government said, and I quote:

“Ramnarine said: ‘The target start date for the project is the first quarter of 2014. However, we believe that could be reduced to the fourth quarter of 2013.’”

So when he drew me in by saying the Member for St. Joseph is always talking about “not ah blade ah grass turn”, it is not St. Joseph saying that, it is the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs, a member of the Executive, speaking to the media.

11.30 a.m.

But now he seeks to retract, take away himself, by saying it is now a private sector thing. If I am to believe the *Guardian*, this project, the sod should have been turned by either the fourth quarter of 2013 or by the first quarter of 2014.

Mr. Jeffrey: Nothing yet.

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: But, Member for Diego Martin West, it gets worse. In an address, Mr. Speaker, look it here, [*Member shows document*] nice coloured coat of arms. In an:

“ADDRESS BY

SENATOR THE HONOURABLE KEVIN C. RAMNARINE”

—C stands for Christian—

“MINISTER OF ENERGY AND ENERGY AFFAIRS

AT

THE SIGNING OF THE PROJECT DEVELOPMENT AGREEMENT FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF PETROCHEMICAL PLANTS FOR THE PRODUCTION OF METHANOL AND DIMETHYL ETHER (DME), AT UNION INDUSTRIAL ESTATE, LA BREA”—at the

“REGENCY BALLROOM, HYATT REGENCY, PORT OF SPAIN 10 A.M.”

—see I am giving you the time—

“MONDAY 08 APRIL, 2013”

Now, remember in the *Guardian*, he said last quarter of 2013; if we lucky, first quarter of 2014. Hear what he says in an official address on the last page:

“Today’s signing is an achievement for the Government, its agencies, the local private sector through Neal and Massy and the Japanese companies involved. This is not the end of the work. A lot more remains to be done and

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we will be here to assist along the way. If all goes”—according—“to plan we can expect that...”

And this is the keyword. What can we expect?

“...we can expect that construction will commence by the second quarter of 2014.”

Construction, but, Member for Diego Martin West, if you thought that was it, it gets worse.

When one turns to the budget and if I have my budget presentation here, it gets worse. The hon. Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs has spoken to three construction dates but in the budget document on page 34, and let me quote the words of the hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy and when we say we cannot trust you, this is why:

“Mr. Speaker, the proposed US\$850 million Mitsubishi-Massy Methanol to Di-methyl Ether plant...”

Mr. Speaker, listen to these words, eh:

“...is in an advanced stage of technical conceptualization.”

Member for Diego Martin West, we were told it was going to be built, we are now being told in the budget it “is in an advanced stage of technical conceptualization”. Do you know what a concept is? A concept, my dear friends, is an idea.

Dr. Rowley: Where is the gas? Where is the gas coming from?

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: Right, I am coming to that. So, in 2014, we are told—Member for San Fernando West—that it is in a state of technical conceptualization after the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs, on two occasions, spoke about construction.

Dr. Rowley: Dates.

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: And gave dates. And we are told, trust you.

Mr. Jeffrey: Cannot trust them.

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: Trust you. This is your own budget statement which is an indictment, a strong indictment, of our inability to trust you. How could this project, in 2014, be a concept when the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs spoke twice about starting construction? Fourth quarter, 2013; first quarter, 2014,

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and he seeks to deflect all responsibility by saying it is now a private sector initiative. How duplicitous. How duplicitous. You are now putting the blame for your failure on Neal & Massy.

Dr. Browne: Imagine this thing.

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: Imagine that. You are now putting the blame for your incompetence on the private sector.

But, I want to ask the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs a few questions. Given that crude oil production has declined in 2014, over 2013, by 2.6 per cent, given that natural gas production has declined by 2.5 per cent over the same period of 2013, where is the gas for this private sector project coming from? Where is the gas coming from? What price has been negotiated for that price? Because right now, the Point Lisas plants are running on some days and some plants at 70 per cent capacity. And for those plants to be profitable, they have to be running, I am told, at 90 per cent and above. So you have a Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs presiding over a fiasco in gas supply, total fiasco; you cannot supply existing plants with gas but you want to supply this new Mitsubishi-Massy project with gas.

And what is even more duplicitous is the fact that the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs has not entered into any meaningful negotiations for the gas contracts which are coming to an end between 2015 and 2018. The energy sector in this country is in shambles; total mess. But I had no intention of speaking about energy, absolutely none. But when you come here and say “St. Joseph always talking about dis blade ah grass ent turn, I have to respond. I have to respond.

Dr. Rowley: “Not ah blade ah gas.”

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: So that is my little interjection on energy.

But, Mr. Speaker, my last foray into energy is that since the signing of this Loran-Manatee agreement, notice you have heard nothing from the Government about that. Absolutely nothing, especially for section 22 of that agreement which gives each party the right not to monetize that gas. A bad piece of negotiation, if ever there was one, but others will speak at length to that. So, oil production is going down again, energy prices are going down, the only thing that is saving us is, as the Minister of Finance and the Economy will say, the war in Ukraine and wars elsewhere which keep the prices high. That is the Minister of Finance and the Economy’s salvation, that people are dying in Ukraine so our energy prices

could be high. We pat ourselves on the back. [*Crosstalk*] Mr. Speaker, how much more time do I have, please?

Mr. Speaker: Please, please, Member, you will have a chance to speak, let the Member speak. [*Continuous crosstalk*]

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: Mr. Speaker, how much time do I have, please?

Mr. Speaker: Member for Chaguanas East, I know that you will be speaking in the debate, if there are matters that the Member raised that you want to respond to, you will respond when the time comes. Hon. Member, you have until 11.42 original speaking time.

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I have quite enough time. I am getting quite used to 55 minutes, it tends to sharpen the mind.

Mr. Speaker, so I have spoken on why we cannot trust the budget—because there is no structural integrity. I have spoken on energy, and I started my contribution thanking the constituents of St. Joseph who have me in this position and for that, I am eternally grateful. So therefore, it is time that I speak to matters pertaining to my constituency which I have the honour to be their Member of Parliament for. The constituency of St. Joseph, as we all know, is a challenging constituency. The demographics are wide and varied and it possibly represents all of Trinidad and Tobago. All of Trinidad and Tobago regardless of any differences that we might see or differences that we feel.

Mr. Speaker, on November 04, 2014, when the by-election was held, in the two weeks prior to that by-election, you saw an unprecedented level of Government and Executive involvement in the constituency of St. Joseph. There were Ministers in Prados swarming the constituency of St. Joseph, doing things, manning polling stations, even down to places of worship. There was one particular Minister in a place of worship. But, in the two weeks prior to the by-election, the state agencies moved into St. Joseph with a vengeance.

In Maitagual, wheelbarrows were delivered, steel was delivered, concrete blocks delivered, gravel delivered, sand delivered, steel beams to build bridges were delivered. On the morning of November 05, everything stopped. Quarry Drive, which is in the back of Champs Fleurs, these famous “Ian Alleyne projects”—and as I said before, I have nothing against Ian Alleyne. They would have done it regardless of who the candidate was, but the constituents of St. Joseph refer to them lovingly or with hate or dread as the “Ian Alleyne projects”.

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

Therefore, the question is that the speaking time of the hon. Member for St. Joseph be extended by 10 minutes.

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, so URP moved in with a vengeance: 25 projects, 10 days, one great performance. URP started work all over the place. In Quarry Drive, they started to build a road; November 05, they left it. The steel is still there, the URP signs are still there. One of my constituents, because of the state in which it was left, when rain fell, she fell down, broke her leg. That is the legacy of the by-election.

Mr. Speaker, I am glad to hear of all these grounds that are being lit all over Trinidad and Tobago. They moved in with the by-election into Aranguez. They put up lights on the Boundary Road Recreation Ground and Aranguez Sports Club Ground. Moved in. Mr. Speaker, I had to ask a question in this Parliament put to the hon. Member for Naparima: When will those lights be operational? I was told—it is on the *Hansard*—first week, July 2014. Up to today, I cannot get lights in my constituency, which they laid for the by-election, connected; cannot get it.

Mr. Speaker, I am glad that people are getting water but in my constituency of St. Joseph, do you know what people tell me? They used to get water but now they do not get water. So they want to know, all these areas that are now getting water which we have nothing to say about but the water that we used to get, no more water. No more water. But, you see, all these URP projects which were hurriedly started for the by-election, I now have to reapply to URP to get them done. Why? Why? Why should I have to reapply for URP projects which you started and you stopped? Why? Why? And you all use the word “discrimination”. You all use the word “discrimination”.

11.45 a.m.

You started the projects but on November 5 you stopped them.

Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, Standing Order 48(6), and while I am on my legs, Standing Order 53(1)(m) too.

Miss Mc Donald: You are allowed ethnic wear here.

Dr. Moonilal: That is a shirt and pants.

Miss Mc Donald: When the Member for Lopinot/Bon Air wearing ethnic wear—*[Interruption]*

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Dr. Moonilal: But that is not Indian wear, that is a shirt and pants.

Miss Mc Donald:—why do you not object? He can wear ethnic wear.

Mr. Speaker: Yes.

Dr. Moonilal: You cannot come to Parliament in a shirt and pants.

Miss Mc Donald: What? With hat on head too.

Mr. Speaker: Please, please. Member, please. Your first point of order, 48(6)? Is it 48(6)?

Dr. Moonilal: Standing Order 48(6), he was forcefully discriminating against people, and so on.

Mr. Speaker: Yeah. Well, in terms of 48(6), I would ask the hon. Member to—*[Interruption]*

Dr. Rowley: To continue.

Mr. Speaker: No, to be very careful in your language.

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: What am I saying?

Mr. Speaker: No, you were saying “you discriminate”. So you are saying Members of this honourable House.

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: So when they say it—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker: No, no, I am saying that you can object, as they have objected. So I am saying be careful with your language. As it relates to Standing Order 53(1)(m), for purposes of this matter before us, I would overrule that. Continue, hon. Member.

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is passing strange that when they accuse us of discrimination, we do not raise anything, you know, but I still say the people of St. Joseph have been discriminated against since November 05. *[Desk thumping and crosstalk]* Fact! I have to submit new requests to URP to continue the work they started with no estimates. *[Desk thumping]* No estimates! *[Desk thumping]* But I have to submit it and not get one. None!

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Tabaquite yesterday made a most startling revelation when he spoke about his constituents getting titanium prosthetic legs. I have been begging. I had no intention of going there today. I have been pleading with the Minister of Health, since December, for three prosthetic legs, one for a person in Farm Road, Bangladesh; one for a person in Aranguéz; and one for a

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person in Mount Hope. I am told all the time a policy is being drafted, wait hold on, it is an interagency thing, and I have to hear yesterday that the Member for Tabaquite got prosthetic legs, and titanium prosthetic legs. He could get. Where is this magic application form, Mr. Speaker? Where is the magic application form that I could get titanium prosthetic legs for the members of St. Joseph? The Member for Tabaquite could get it, but I have to be asking the Minister of Health, eight months now, cannot get it. That is discrimination. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, there is one Member opposite who likes to call me the hitman. He says I like to hit people of a certain—forget that. Let me hit Adolphus Daniell this morning. Call me the hitman. Adolphus Daniell get \$40 million. To do what? But I have a constituency that we cannot get sprayed because they have no foggers. The \$40 million you paid to Adolphus Daniell could have bought 634 foggers. The \$400 million in LifeSport could have bought 6,340 foggers, so I am the hitman. “Ah” hitting Adolphus Daniell today. This Government spent \$400 million on LifeSport but I have a CHIKV infestation in Maitagual, in Quarry Road and we cannot get it sprayed. Explain that! Or should I ask the real Minister of Health, who is the hon. Vasant Bharath, the real Minister of Health?

To whom do I go for my titanium legs now, the Member for Barataria/San Juan or Sen. Vasant Bharath? Could I get this magic form to apply for my three titanium legs for my three constituents: Farm Road, listen to where it is, eh, Farm Road—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Address the Chair.

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: Aranguez and Mount Hope? Whether they vote for me or not is irrelevant. I represent everybody in St. Joseph. [*Desk thumping*] I want my lights in the Aranguez Sports Ground. I want my lights in Boundary Road. I want Maitagual sprayed. I want all the projects you started back in Maitagual to be recommenced. I want the road in Quarry Drive done. I want Quarry Road, which is at the back of San Juan Hill, sprayed. “And doh tell me you doh have money” because you gave Adolphus Daniell \$40 million to do nothing.

Dr. Browne: The Cabinet did that.

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: With full Cabinet approval.

There is a film called, what, “Eyes Wide Shut”? That is what they did with LifeSport; eyes wide shut.

Mr. Speaker, this budget, as I said, has absolutely no structural integrity. It is a fabrication and we reject it totally. Mr. Speaker, with those few words, I thank

you. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of Transport (Hon. Stephen Cadiz): Mr. Speaker, I thank you for this opportunity here to comment on this year's budget and I think we might have to get the real Minister of Health to attend to the Member for St. Joseph, because he seems to be extremely disturbed today. And he should be disturbed, because I think finally somebody on the other side is understanding what "donkey years" of PNM neglect has brought this country. [*Desk thumping*]

Because every single thing, every single speaker bar none, in fact, I would not tell you which constituency she represents, but she came to me yesterday evening asking me for help because there was a situation outside of her house where the road was dug up by WASA because of a failed water line and she could not get home, and I sent the Minister of the Environment and Water Resources a neat little note and this morning I learnt that it was actually fixed last night. [*Desk thumping*] Okay? It was fixed last night. What I am saying is that is what this Government is constantly doing, constantly fixing.

Because, I will deal with the Member for St. Joseph shortly, because really and truly the Member for St. Joseph went all around saying absolutely nothing. [*Desk thumping*] Okay? He could have come early in the game and asked the Minister of Health for the prosthetic leg and then he could have sat down and that would have been a great contribution, looking after his constituents. But carrying this country all around—[*Continuous interruption and crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Please, please. Members, please allow the Minister to speak in complete silence. He has my complete protection. Continue, hon. Member.

Hon. S. Cadiz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, he carried us all around with IMF and of course, typical of the Members for St. Joseph and Diego Martin North/East and more so, which is quite frightening because when the Leader of the Opposition, the Member for Diego Martin West, decides to pick a little figure here and pick out a little word here from a report and want to bring it to this House and then to discredit this entire budget, I mean you really and truly have to wonder and I looked at it and I listened and I say: "buh wait nah, where we going wit dis budget?" We going after the Minister of Finance and the Economy? "For what? What we going after the Minister of Finance and the Economy for?" And then every single Member that has spoken, bar none, including the Member for Chaguanas West, goes after the Minister of Finance and the Economy: IPO, FCB, all that talk, and all of that is public knowledge as to exactly what went on there, and it was dealt with. But they still want to harp on it.

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And then the next one that they want to go after is the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs, the two people. Not one single one of them has said anything about the Constituency Fund—“not a man, not a woman”. And you wonder, here it is “dat dey bawling and screaming for prosthetic leg and dey claim dat dey cannot get drain clean and dey cannot get fogger working and what have you,” and here it is, we come with a Constituency Fund, that every single Member of Parliament has been asking for and not one of them would say anything, “not even La Brea who comes here every single week bawling and screaming about who cutting grass in the Pitch Lake and what have you”.

Mr. Speaker: Look, Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West, could you observe the Standing Orders by remaining silent? You spoke yesterday. The hon. Member is speaking now. You cannot have a running commentary whilst he is speaking. That is not permissible, and if you continue how you are going, I would have to invoke the Standing Orders. Continue hon. Minister, please.

Hon. S. Cadiz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, they do not like to hear the truth. That is the little problem they have with next door. Because when I listened to the Member of Parliament for Diego Martin West, the so-called leader—now I see everybody—this is a hug and kiss-up season because “ah seeing everybody hugging up and kissing up. Whoever was vex, everybody coming together now, and what have you.” But anyway, I would leave him with that because he will know, with all that hugging and kissing, how many daggers they have to come out at the end of the day. All right?

But the Member, in his contribution, which irks me a little bit, goes on and on and on about PNM’s fiscal performance, their economic performance in the years 2004 to 2009, about how much surplus they had. Everything—boasting about the surplus. And here it is, today the Member for St. Joseph is coming here, after four years of the People’s Partnership coming into office, still complaining about major issues in his constituency. Why is it that these were not done between 2004 and 2009? Why is it, when I got elected for Chaguanas East, I am the one now who had to go and fix Chaguanas East? That was their own, you know. Chaguanas East was a PNM seat. What is his name, Hamid?

Mr. Indarsingh: Mustapha Abdul-Hamid.

Hon. S. Cadiz: Yes, Mr. Abdul-Hamid. What did he do in Chaguanas East? Why is it that you always have to wait for a change of government for the new government to come in now and start to fix the infrastructure and fix everything? Here it is that they are complaining about—

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Well, Member for La Brea “you doh even start, because La Brea has never, ever changed as far as I am aware. Maybe once La Brea changed.” Okay? And La Brea has been a stronghold of the balisier brigade forever, as is Port of Spain North, Laventille West, Laventille East and Port of Spain South. Okay? Strongholds! And yet still you are boasting how you had \$12 billion in surplus. And you could not fix anything in these constituencies? Mr. Speaker, they should be ashamed of themselves to come here and debate a budget, absolutely ashamed. And you want to come here and bad talk my Minister of Finance and the Economy? The same Minister of Finance and the Economy who took four failed banks under the PNM and built one of the strongest local banking systems here in Trinidad, First Citizens. Strongest. And you want to take a turn behind him, for what?

Dr. Griffith: That is the PNM style.

Hon. S. Cadiz: But that is the PNM style. So we would leave them with that.

Mr. Speaker, going on now. Yesterday we heard the Member of Parliament for Diego Martin North/East—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: Your MP.

Hon. S. Cadiz: Yes, My MP.

Dr. Griffith: Poor you.

Hon. S. Cadiz: Thanks. Thank you for that, eh “poor me in truth”—going on and on and on. Half of his contribution actually was on this source. Now, I do not know if he got it from Pepper Sauce Junction in Endeavour. I do not know if is Saucy Wow he get it from. I have no idea what the source is, but reading from a source, a so-called source, from some agency, but refused point blank to say who the source was, talking about how the international oil companies feel about Trinidad and Tobago and how they feel about this Government. What reckless kind of statement is that? You have no source. “You cyah quote de source, but yuh coming here in dis Parliament because you have parliamentary privilege, to quote de source.”

Miss Mc Donald: He had a source.

Hon. S. Cadiz: No! There was no source quoted. He said from an unknown source. Okay?

12.00 noon

The unknown source obviously had Balisier “in he ears” from the way in which the source was being quoted, okay. And yet still, when you look, Mr. Speaker, at the glowing tributes from bpTT, and this is August 13, 2014. “Wait

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nah, dah was just de udder day”, Member for Pointe-a-Pierre? BPTT Regional President Norman Christie said:

“Juniper demonstrates bpTT’s commitment to Trinidad and Tobago over the long-term...”

This development is an important part of the future for bpTT because it will assist the company in meeting its natural gas commitments to the market. It is also an important step change for bpTT as it introduces subsea infrastructure to continue the development of its resources in the Columbus Basin.”

This is a company investing billions of dollars into Trinidad and Tobago, billions of dollars. I will not go through all the quotes, but there are a number of them. BHP Billiton, this is Mr. Tim Cutt, President Petroleum and Potash section, September 02, 2014:

- We have an established operational presence in Trinidad and Tobago with our shallow water Angostura asset
- The deepwater is largely untested and has Tier 1 oil potential
 - world class source rock
 - giant Orinoco River system
 - large traps
 - acceptable fiscal terms”

And they want to come here and quote the—I have my source. I am quoting who it is, but you want to come and say an unknown source saying that they are waiting for this Government to go? And these are what these international companies are saying at international fora. Mr. Steve Pastor, Asset President Conventional, BHP Billiton:

- Trinidad has the potential to become a third core region for our Petroleum business
 - plans to extend production plateau at Angostura
 - exploration focused on highly prospective deepwater acreage
- Non-operated ROD asset in Algeria...”

That is about Algeria, [*Laughter*] but this is what they are quoting—no. What he is talking about, no, the Angostura, as you well know, the Angostura platform is right here.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: What is the date of that?

Hon. S. Cadiz: Do you want the date? December 13.

Hon. Member: What is the source of that?

Hon. S. Cadiz: This is a BHP Billiton source, this is not any nondescript agency out of Russia trying to tell Trinidad and Tobago anything. You know, when I heard that yesterday, I thought, “buh wait nah”, the Member of Parliament for Diego Martin West was traversing the world the other day, and he went to Dubai and went to London. I do not know if he passed through Russia, and if he was the one who went and gave the interview to this particular agency. But if they do not have the presence of mind to quote the source, they should not be quoting any source, very, very, sorry for that.

And all throughout, BHP, bp, BG, all of them are talking about the wonderful opportunities that we have here in Trinidad and Tobago. So I would tell the Member of Parliament for Diego Martin North/East, that the statements that he made yesterday, Trinidad and Tobago, forget that, because that is totally erroneous.

Then we go to deal with the Member of Parliament for St. Joseph, and again, going on about statistics and CSO. And, Mr. Speaker, again, when we talk about the condition of the public service in Trinidad, the condition of the public service in Trinidad has nothing to do with May 2010, absolutely nothing to do with it. Do you know what is the biggest problem in May 2010, Mr. Speaker? This next section over there, the Balisier section and the additional one to the Balisier section.

You know what they are vex about, Mr. Speaker? They are vex that we are taking so long to fix the mess that they have left Trinidad and Tobago in, [*Desk thumping*] that is what they are vex about. Because when you think of the same CSO, CSO did not happen yesterday, and it did not happen on May 25, 2010. It is the regime that was there that allowed CSO to go down and down, like every other Ministry in this country, okay; every single Ministry in this country.

That is why when in my own licensing office, and not that I have any great love for Mr. Duke, okay, but when Mr. Duke goes and looks at some of the buildings that these people—that those on the other side left us, the fix that had to be done is unbelievable. Every single solitary Ministry had to be fixed. And they want to come here “an dey bawling what? Look at de building yuh in. If it was not for we”, we would not be here in this building. And I agree with them, because

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they did not spend one cent on the Red House, Mr. Speaker. Look at how they allowed that historic building like the Red House to end up in the disrepair that it ended up in. And they want to boast that they are the ones who built this building. Yes, you built this building, but why you did not fix the Red House at the same time, a historical building like that? So much history there in the Red House, and look at where we have to come. Agreed, it is comfortable, but the Parliament is supposed to be at the seat of Parliament in the Red House. Not here. But again, that was a whole other story with the then leader of the “Balisier Brigade”, with whether or not they should be using the Red House as the office for the Prime Minister or it should remain the Parliament.

Mr. Indarsingh: Let us hear more about the “Balisier Brigade”.

Hon. S. Cadiz: I am not talking about the “Balisier Brigade” again. But coming to the Member for St. Joseph, and I want to read. This is an article written by Carla Bridglal entitled:

“IMF: T&T experiencing robust growth”

And the date is April 03, 2014:

“Trinidad and Tobago is experiencing more robust growth after several years of sub-par performance, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has said.

‘With the end of maintenance-related outages in the energy sector, we project the economy will grow around 2.5 per cent in 2014, after growing around 1.5 per cent in 2013. The non-energy sector was fairly buoyant in 2013, which we anticipate will continue to be the case in 2014’...

So, you come in here with all this old talk about IMF and CSO, but not realising at any one time what the truth is. The truth is that this country through the astute leadership of the Member for Siparia, the hon. Prime Minister, an entire Cabinet, the Minister of Finance and the Economy, the Minister of Planning and Sustainable Development, the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs are all, okay, making it happen.

So, Mr. Speaker, I am not—and again I am—you know, the Member for St. Joseph again, not one single word about the budget. Not one single word about the social programmes in the budget, because you know why? They cannot talk about it. The other side cannot make one single mention about the social programmes that we have. I wonder how many of them actually go and sit with their constituents to understand when the single mother comes into your office, when she comes into the office with the child, what do you tell this lady? And you

hear them talking, you hear the armchair politicians commenting, “well, she should never have had the child”, and those are the statements that are being made. “They should know better. If you cannot afford a child, you should not have a child.” Those are the kind of statements that are being made.

But when this mother comes in there with that child, and the father disappears. Okay, the father disappears, the parents no longer want that daughter there and what have you. What are you going to tell this daughter? What are you going to tell this lady? And here it is that for \$500, okay, a \$500 grant per month, and they will not talk about that, because maybe it is that they do not want it, they will not be accepting it. I do not know if that is what they want to do.

House grant: How many people come to the office to ask about the house grant, whether it is a roof grant, whether it is plumbing, whether it is electrical grant, okay. They probably do not go in the office, but these are things that are very, very real, and not everybody in Trinidad and Tobago is as fortunate as some of us, not everybody. There are people outside there that are under severe pressure. Okay. And to me it is absolutely no problem that the wealth of this country can be distributed in a manner where we can help those who are less fortunate than others. The others who are fortunate, they have the ways and means of making their own money. They have the ways and means of dealing with other situations, but there are people in this country who are under severe pressure. And you have—where it has reached now, it is parents throwing children out. It is children throwing parents out, and I mean it is not an easy time outside there.

So here it is that this Government comes in and you know, when you look at the cost of these grants as compared to the help and the assistance that you are going to be giving to people, it is a minuscule amount, but not one of them would talk about it. They want to talk about Howai and Ramnarine. Those are whom they want to talk about. Mr. Speaker, “ah getting vex with de other side here, man”.

Mr. De Coteau: “Doh geh vex, man. Doh get vex.”

Hon. S. Cadiz: No, because they have a nerve, they have a nerve to come to this country every Friday, and take a turn behind this Government for doing the right thing, for the right reason, and they have a nerve to come here and talk about that. [*Interruption*]

So, I will then go into my Ministry. Mr. Speaker, under the Ministry of Transport, we have roughly 10 agencies that come under my responsibility, from the Port Authority, Airports Authority, PLIPDECO, PTSC, National Helicopter, VMCOTT, Maritime Services, Water Taxi and the Licensing Division.

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Mr. Speaker, under the Port Authority, the Port Authority has its regular commercial business and then it has the ferry business. The ferry business again, I heard the other day the Member for Diego Martin West who has a slight problem with Tobago, and I do not know what it is that he has with Tobago, but every single time this Government has done something positive for Tobago, he has a problem with it.

I remember in the earlies when we came here, I think it was in 2011, when we were going ahead with the Magdalena Hotel, he, in a budget speech, stood there and made the most horrible remarks, about how we could call the hotel, the Magdalena, and that was an old boat that he was sailing in and what have you. The Magdalena right now is the gem in Tobago, Mr. Speaker. [*Desk thumping*] It is the hotel, in Tobago. After two years of that hotel being set up by this Government, in five months which they said it could not be done. The hotel now is no longer dependent on the State for any funding whatsoever, okay, after two years of operation.

So we come now to the Tobago ferries, and he stood there the other day and made the statement that how this ferry came in the dead of night. It reminds me of the Member for Diego Martin North/East going in the dead of night to take the sea serpent off the Red House. You know, “dey like to jumbie people”, and they like to come with all this nonsense. Imagine he is the Member of Parliament—Carenage falls under him, and “he cyar even see ah ship” in Carenage. You know, that is to show the extent of his representation.

But, Mr. Speaker, we brought the *Galicia* here. Do you know why we brought the *Galicia* in? Because the then administration in 2006, went and leased a boat that was 26 years old, and you are now bringing that boat into Trinidad and Tobago, but that boat has all kinds of questions about it, which I would not go into today. All right. We will deal with that at another time.

The boat lost an engine in December, so that was when I started to dig up in this boat. What really and truly is this boat? What really and truly is this contract? Mr. Speaker, that boat came out here, and was on a six-month rotation—the contact was on a six-month cycle. Somebody on the port, just weeks with this administration coming in, there was no board at the port. The then executive of the port went and signed this 26-year-old boat for now a three-year contract, 26 years old, three-year contract, with a renewable for another three years. And the hurtful part about it is there is no exit clause in the contact, Mr. Speaker, none whatsoever; no exit clause. It has me—I do not know what to believe, but there is

something very, very wrong with that contact, but anyway that is the *Warrior Spirit*. We are still trying to track down exactly what went on there.

We brought the *Super Fast Galicia* which, of course, the Member for Diego Martin—was scoffing at. Well, the *Super Fast Galicia* is a vessel that is 11 years old. And, Mr. Speaker, when you look at the figures, the *Super Fast Galicia* per ton, carrying ton, works out to US \$2.60 per ton, and the *Warrior Spirit* which is now 34 years old, is \$4.4 per ton, nearly twice the price. So when they are talking about value for money, and when the Member for St. Joseph is talking about statistics, and what we are doing, and how we are managing the economy, and what have you, that is management. We looked, we went out, we sourced this vessel, we went through all the processes and procedures.

When the *Warrior Spirit* came here, they rented “cat-in-bag”; the *Warrior Spirit* came down here it was called the *Malta Express*, it came down here, nobody had ever seen the vessel. They did the surveys down here. It took them nearly four months to get the vessel on the run, because they could not get the survey passed, because of problems with the vessel. Okay, and that is what they rented, and they want to come and tell me, and tell this Government about value for money?

So anyway, Member for Mayaro, the *Super Fast Galicia* is on the run. Okay? And what we are doing now with that, Mr. Speaker, is that we have an ad hoc committee looking at exactly what the requirements for the Tobago ferry is going to be, both the cargo ferry and the passenger ferry. And, again not like that other section over there, they hear somebody has a boat, they run and they rent the boat and bring it down here, okay.

12.15 p.m.

A proper assessment will be done and the ad hoc committee is made up of not only the Chamber of Industry and Commerce, not only the port, not only the truck drivers, not only the shippers, the passengers—we are getting a proper committee set up to determine exactly what this Tobago run should be and we would be able to determine the type of vessel that we should be using.

On the port, of course, we may have read the other day where we actually commissioned the scanner. First time, first scanner ever in Trinidad and Tobago, a container scanner, is being operated. The body scanner, when you walk through the airport, is not a container scanner. [Laughter] No, it is the first container scanner ever and it has been—[Interruption]

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Mr. Speaker: Take notes and you will get your chance to speak.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: He knows exactly what I am saying.

Mr. Speaker: No, I am saying you will get your chance to speak. You cannot be speaking while he is speaking. Just take notes, please. Continue hon. Minister, please.

Hon. S. Cadiz: So, the first container scanner is installed and, of course, that will go a long way, as far as security is concerned and also, it is not only about guns and illegal drugs coming in. You have importers that would bring in washing machines and class it as paper or something like that. Therefore, the scanner will make the customs job a lot easier and, of course, far more efficient than what is going on now. That scanner will actually scan about 15 containers per hour, so the port will become far more efficient than what it is now.

Another area on the port, Mr. Speaker—and I will tell you one thing with the port—we are getting the port into a position whereby it will actually be self-sufficient and that is the challenge that we have, but a commercial port is a commercial port and should not be relying on any subvention.

Of course, Mr. Speaker, you know the Port of Port of Spain has been considered Party Group No. 1 for many, many years.

Mr. De Coteau: PNM party group.

Hon. S. Cadiz: Sorry, I did not say that.

Mr. De Coteau: No, you said party group.

Hon. S. Cadiz: I do not say that word at all. The Balisier party group No. 1. And every year, all they did was say what time is the cheque coming and that is how the port operated. We are changing that around.

The port has to become a viable port and that is what we are working towards. We will be increasing the efficiencies. We are looking at new equipment coming in to the port, new ship-to-shore cranes, new ground handling equipment.

You know, of interest, Mr. Speaker, transshipment of vehicles, we now have four car ferries that arrive here every two weeks and the transshipment of vehicles on the port is a whole new business. In 2013, there were over 18,000 vehicles that actually arrived here that had to be transhipped to Suriname, Guyana and other parts of the Caribbean and, therefore, that has become quite a big business and we will be putting more investment into that to encourage more of those calls.

Again, I want to harp on the fact that those on the other side, all they want to talk about is whether Resmi Ramnarine and what-have-you. As far as I am concerned, that is done, gone, finished. Let us concentrate on real building Trinidad and Tobago.

Again, when I say that the Member for Diego Martin West, every time he hears about Tobago, he gets vex because they have left Tobago—Tobago is supposed to be the jewel in the crown for the “Balisier Brigade” and look at how they have left Tobago—old boats running to Tobago. Look at the condition down at the port. For any of us who travel on that ferry to go back and forth from Tobago, we know the hassle and the horror it is to park to get on to the vessel. It is really terrible that that is how they left it.

The old rum bond that burnt down, I believe, in the late '50s, early '60s, that is the jetty that they were using, that old wooden jetty. Anyway, all of that is being repaired and finished. We are dredging, so soon the Tobago ferry service will be really and truly up and running at an optimum level.

The Airports Authority: again, we are taking the Airports Authority from under the PSIP and bringing it where the airport will actually be running as a commercial entity. Airports worldwide, it is no longer a case of people arriving on a plane and people jumping on a plane to leave. Airports worldwide have become a major commercial business and that is the intention.

We already have the aero park up and running. We are going to be taking the old Piarco terminal building and a complete refurbishment of that—new restaurants, new retail facilities, a whole new way in which you are going to be going through the airport. We are looking at putting in covered car park. Imagine, in this day and age, for Trinidad and Tobago that has rain eight, 10 months of the year, if you go to Piarco and it is pouring rain, your flight is ready to go, you get stuck in the car park there, you cannot leave because it is all open.

We will be making arrangements, PPP arrangements, to put in covered car park, a lot more car parking than what is there now. As you know, on long weekends, if you go out to the airport, they are using temporary facilities off site to park vehicles. So all of that is in tow.

Tobago, the same thing, and we are looking after Tobago just as we are looking after Trinidad, unlike the other side which will discriminate against Tobago. So the ANR Robinson International Airport, that is coming up for a complete refurbishment. Of course, we are looking at going ahead with the new international arrival hall in Tobago because right now it is totally inadequate.

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I am not even worrying about how long PNM takes to do anything in Tobago, you know. Between the library, the financial centre, the hospital, their track record is just unbelievable. That they could sit there and want to criticize this Government, they have no shame in truth, you know.

PLIPDECO is moving along very, very nicely. Again, it is a company that is in profit and we are taking those profits and reinvesting those profits into the company. And, again, to increase the level of service, et cetera, that we have at PLIPDECO.

PTSC, still very much a challenge, but, you know, with PTSC still being a challenge and the reason it is a challenge, again, and the other side there will have to take ownership of it. They have to take ownership of the mess that they left PTSC in.

One in 15 buses is a different make and model; one in 15. So, you have a run-out of 300 buses on any time of the day and you have what? Twenty different makes and models, it is impossible to service a fleet like that. How many different wiper blades and brake pads you have to buy for that? There are fleets in India, 5,000 buses, the same type of bus, one bus.

All over the world there is a rationalization. We have a committee that is sitting now and will be presenting its report very soon on the rationalization of the PTSC fleet, whereby the buses that we will buy will be the correct buses, not buses that looking good; but that is how the other side used to buy buses. If it is looking good, you buy that. The bus that is looking good for Trinidad is not the same bus, again, for Tobago. It is a different territory, a different type of bus and that is what we are looking at now.

Even so, even with a reduced fleet, in 2011, we moved 14 million people on PTSC and, for 2014, we are right on target to move about the same number. Every day it is a challenge with PTSC to keep those buses on the road because the average age of the buses is now about 15 years. The natural life of a commercial bus is about five years and we do not have a single bus, other than the Eldamo buses, that is under five years. Everything is aged, and again, that is a result of them. So when they come and they are talking about billion-dollar surpluses, why did they not put the billion-dollar surpluses into PTSC?

Dr. Gopeesingh: And that was wrong. It was not surplus. It was deficit.

Hon. S. Cadiz: That is what the Member for Diego Martin West comes to the House and telling us.

Dr. Gopeesingh: The untruth.

Hon. S. Cadiz: The other thing is, the number of people that I meet and telling me the new service that you have from Montrose to Port of Spain, we need two more buses. I met a lady the other day from Princes Town; she is working right here in the Parliament. She said, “If I miss that Princes Town bus in the morning, it is real pressure. We need to get at least one or two more buses.”

We have increased the number of routes from—well, I will give you what the total is now. We have 153 routes and you hear people complimenting us that we have finally—the Member for La Horquetta/Talparo talking about the bus service in La Horquetta/Talparo, never seen before, and Piparo and Sisters Road. So here it is that the PTSC that is under serious challenge as far as maintenance and fleet are concerned, that we are actually getting this thing to work properly and for it to run properly.

Mr. Speaker, the rebate to the maxi-taxi owners: since 2005—I am not too sure who was the Minister of Works at the time—the rebate was committed and promised to the maxi-taxi owners that if they change their fleet to 25-seaters, that they would get a rebate on taxes and what have you. Since 2005; it has taken this Government, the same Minister of Finance and the Economy that they are berating and saying he “doh know nutten” and the Member for Diego Martin North/East saying that he is a political and an economic fraud.

The Member for Diego Martin North/East was the Minister in 2005, my MP, who refused to give the maxi-taxi drivers their rebate, after making a commitment. He, the Member for Diego Martin North/East sat there and referred to the Minister of Finance and the Economy as a political and economic fraud. That was done. Bring the *Hansard*.

Miss Mc Donald: Mr. Speaker, 48(6), please.

Mr. Speaker: I did in fact see that in the *Guardian* this morning and when I checked the record, it was misreported. He did not refer to—he was talking about the data. I saw that and I thought: How could that have missed me? That would not have missed me. So I did the research. It was a misreporting coming from the *Guardian*.

Hon. S. Cadiz: I withdraw that then but, still, every man Jack, every single Member on the other side talked about how the Minister of Finance and the Economy, in other words, does not know what he is doing and this Minister of Finance and the Economy is the one to come and give the maxi-taxi drivers their rebate.

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Mr. Speaker, this was from today's *Guardian*, which I am not too sure if it is also misquoted about the maxi-taxi owners wary of the rapid rail plan. Here it is that the Member of Parliament for Diego Martin West—again, we are coming back to rapid rail, and again, you know what is the hurtful part? He is going to engage a study. They just spent \$480 million on a study that was totally worthless—\$480 million, totally worthless, but when he comes into office, he is going to engage yet another study.

So what is he doing with the \$480 million study then? I remember the then Minister of Works and Infrastructure, the Member for Chaguanas West saying he should use it as a foot stool. But the maxi-taxi owners are very, very concerned about this and they should be because there are nearly 20,000 people in this country dependent on the maxi-taxis: operators and families. What are you going to do with all these people? Because you cannot run a maxi-taxi service like what is being run now on the PBR, and also run a rapid rail. You cannot do the two. So the Member for Diego Martin West has to tell the maxi-taxi owners whether or not they are going to be train drivers or, I do not know, loaders or some kind of thing. I do not know what they are going to do with all these maxi-taxis.

Again, you come in here and you bawling, yes, we need a mass transit system, but this is the mass transit system you are going to do, which is the same mistake that the Member for Diego Martin North/East made.

The Member for Diego Martin North/East hired a consultant company and said, "I want you to do a consultancy on rapid rail." It was not a consultancy to see what was the right mass transit system we should be using. He predetermined what he wanted and that is how we ended up with this rapid rail nonsense that was going to cost the country \$22 billion capital expenditure. And you know the "Balisier Brigade", when they tell you \$22 billion, it is how much? It is \$44 billion, \$50 billion we would have ended up with. And I could say that because every single solitary capital project that they embarked on, not one single one came in on time or within budget; not a single project.

So here it is that you are talking about \$22 billion. It would have ended up \$50 billion/\$60 billion. They would have bankrupt this country for generations and here it is, they are coming back again, the 2030 vision. Imagine the vision. Their vision is to change the two to a three. That is the vision.

Hon. Member: I like that phrase, the "Balisier Brigade".

12.30 p.m.

Hon. S. Cadiz: So, Mr. Speaker, what we are doing, we already have a team that is working on the mass transit system and they are going to be doing an alternative analysis of the mass transit system, which is basically to look at what really and truly is required and also, how do we work a public/private partnership with the maxi owners; how do we engage maxi owners for them to be part and parcel of it. Mr. Speaker, in case this House is not aware, the maxi-taxis move upward of 190,000 people per day, and not one single cent to the Government other than the subsidized fuel cost.

Of interest also, is the preservation of the South Quay Terminal. We are, in fact, engaging the national trust to talk about keeping that, without a doubt, as a heritage building. Of course, we have the transit authority, which Cabinet has approved and that transit authority will bring together all means of public transport, whether it is the water-taxis; whether it is the Tobago ferries, the bus service, the mass transit system that may be and, therefore, they will all come under one transit authority, and it will have proper management of the whole thing.

Another success story is the National Helicopter Company. The National Helicopter Company is, again, in profit like PLIPDECO and, again, we are going to be reinvesting those profits from the National Helicopter Company. Of interest for the National Helicopter Company, soon, before the end of the year, the National Helicopter Company will be signing its first foreign contract. So, here it is, we are building a 100 per cent locally grown company that would actually be competing against the multinationals in other jurisdictions and we are very, very proud of that, Mr. Speaker.

VMCOTT is also a bit of a challenge and, again, VMCOTT is carded—we are looking for a private partnership to help us operate VMCOTT. Of interest, however, is the reduction in the losses down to \$13 million per year and that we hope to eliminate in this coming year.

Mr. Speaker one of the issues, again, that we inherited—Member for Port of Spain South, I am sorry to be talking about the inheritance of this administration, but it is a fact.

Miss Mc Donald: “Ah want yuh to talk about de budget.”

Hon. S. Cadiz: It is a fact. All of this is budget proposals that we are talking about here. Every single thing that we are talking about is budget proposals. Here

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it is, we came into office in 2010 and we inherited in excess of 56 wrecks in the harbour. How could you possibly run a maritime services division? How could you possibly want to run a harbour?

The Port of Spain Harbour was built in 1936, and the whole harbour is strewn with wrecks and nobody—well, again, like the Member for Diego Martin West fighting about who is responsible for the apartments that fall down up the road, nobody was in charge; nobody was on watch; it was not me; it was not this one. Nobody was in charge, the same thing. How could you possibly have a harbour like that, 56-plus wrecks in the harbour creating all kinds of danger to navigation; encouraging people to smuggle and to run contraband on the wrecks and all this sort of thing, and nobody saw it?

The same towers that they talk about—these towers that they built here—nobody could have looked down from the tower to see what was going on. You know, that shows the level of management and the style of management of the “Balisier Brigade”; it is non-existent—if it happens it happens and if it does not happen, well too bad. That is how they operate—no future no vision whatsoever for them—otherwise they would have never allowed that to happen. Well, I am glad to report that half the wrecks have gone, have disappeared.—we moved them, okay—and the other half now, there is a tender that is out to go ahead and move the rest.

In addition to that, we will be amending—not amending, we are going to be bringing a new Bill to this Parliament which is going to be the new Shipping Bill which is going to take care and give the harbour master full authority to deal with those wrecks. That Shipping Act is from 1868 or something. The King of England, I believe, is the one who signed off on that and they never changed it. They never thought it wise to sit down and really and truly bring a proper Shipping Act. I mean, 15,000 vessels move in this country every year; 15,000, nearly as much or more than what happens at the airport, and we have a Harbours Act dating back to vessels also propelled by oars. Nonsense. No vision, absolutely no vision whatsoever on the other side.

We are bringing the vessel traffic management system and we are working with the Ministry of National Security on that. So we do not have to go and expend \$50 million to go and buy our own vessel tracking management system. We will work with the Ministry of National Security using their system that already exists and run the commercial side of it off the national security side.

Water-taxis service: well, Lord, ‘ah sorry the Member for Diego Martin North/East is not here, because when I ah talking about boat’, I like for the

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Member for Diego Martin North/East to be here. Mr. Speaker, the *MV Su*—and I do not care what they say, and I will never stop talking about it. The *MV Su* was a boat—[*Interruption*]

Miss Mc Donald: You just say you forget the past, so you are moving on.

Hon. S. Cadiz: Yes, I am moving on. I am going back to the future with you.

Miss Mc Donald: You are going back to the future with me?

Hon. S. Cadiz: Yes.

Miss Mc Donald: Be careful.

Hon. S. Cadiz: Mr. Speaker, the *MV Su* was a boat built in Turkey. Now, when you are building a boat for passenger use, you have to have it where every single weld, every single joint is examined, is X-rayed. It is a process by which you do it. So when the vessel is finished, you are in a position to go to Lloyds or Varitas or any one of them to get the vessel certified. They go to Turkey—they send a team to Turkey to go and buy this vessel.

Mr. Speaker: The speaking time of the hon. Member has expired. Would you be interested in an extension?

Hon. S. Cadiz: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the question is that the speaking time of the hon. Minister of Transport be extended by 10 minutes.

Question put and agreed to.

Hon. S. Cadiz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. They go and buy this vessel, the *MV Su*. Mr. Speaker, the vessel has no certification for passengers, none. They bring it down here and take it to Curacao and put it on dry-dock in Curacao and they tried to fix it. That boat was towed from Curacao into the first bocas, when it reached the first bocas, it had one engine working, and in order not to embarrass the then “Balisier Brigade”, they start up the engine and they, “putt-putt, putt” and they come inside. And that is a fact, Mr. Speaker. That is what the Member for Diego Martin North/East would sit down here and berate the Minister of Finance and the Economy for bringing a proper budget and proper management of this economy! That is what they stood for.

You know what he tells me every now and again? He said, it was not me. Just like the Member for Diego Martin West; it was not me, it was somebody else who

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did it. It was under your watch, and once it was under your watch you have to be held responsible for it. I do not care what you sign and what you did not sign.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Roger Joseph.

Hon. S. Cadiz: Finally, the water-taxis are working. The water-taxi service, again, we have seen we have a ridership of nearly 440,000 using the water-taxi every year now, and we are looking at increasing that.

I have to go quickly now, because I know the 10 minutes is going to run. The Motor Vehicle Authority: the Motor Vehicle Authority is well on the way to being completed, and the Frederick Settlement site, I was there the other day, and the Frederick Settlement site is very, very, impressive. I think Trinidad and Tobago will be extremely pleased with what we are doing with the Motor Vehicle Authority, and not like the “Balisier Brigade” having people going in a 1951 building down on Wrightson Road with the ceiling falling in and what have you. Okay. That is what they do. So the Licensing Division with the new Motor Vehicle Authority, that Bill will be coming to the Parliament very soon, and I think people are going to be extremely pleased.

In 1962 we became independent, the diplomat corps asked for diplomat plates for their vehicles, like in any other country, any other developed country in the world, since 1962, Mr. Speaker. This administration is about to issue its first diplomatic plate. Since 1962 they cannot do it, and you really wonder when they talk about management and vision and value for money and what have you, they do not have a clue what they are talking about. These are small minor things. This is how you develop a country. It is those little things that you need to do to make sure that you are keeping at world standard when you are dealing with things like that.

The speed measuring devices: again, how long it took for this thing to come? Years! Decades! They have people jumping out from behind mango tree with gazette paper; “donkey years” and they would not bring it. And here it is that this Government, in order to save lives on the road, we bring the speed measuring devices. Look at the ad—[*Newspaper in hand*]

Miss Mc Donald: Did we not support you Member for Chaguanas East? Did we not support you?

Hon. S. Cadiz:—September 15, 2014, the ad is in the newspaper for the speed measuring devices. Yes, and I thank you for the support. My point is, all of that should have been done 30 years ago.

Miss Mc Donald: But you are doing it now. You are there now. The theme of your budget is to blame the PNM. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Lunch will be served shortly. [*Laughter*] Please.

Hon. S. Cadiz: And so, Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, my simple point on this budget is, there is a Government in place that understands the needs of the people; it understands the needs of those less fortunate, number one, which apparently they do not understand. I fully support the constituency fund. I am looking forward to the constituency fund where I do not have to go cap-in-hand to any other Ministry to ask for things to be done. You have your own power now to be able to do that. Okay?

I look forward to the various grants, the increases in the grants. My constituents, on Saturday, they already told me how pleased they are about the new amounts coming in and, all in all, this economy is in good hands. We are continuing to fix the mess that the “Balisier Brigade” left us in and, Mr. Speaker, I really and truly want to again thank—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: You have until 12.46 p.m.

Hon. S. Cadiz: I do not think the Member for Port of Spain South wants me to speak until 12.46.

Mr. Speaker: You have my protection. I have a place for the Member for Port of Spain South. [*Laughter*]

Hon. S. Cadiz: So, really and truly, when you look at it and you look at the value for money—look a simple little thing, driving home the other evening going into Maraval, driving past the home of the Member for Diego Martin North/East, Maraval Health Centre—Monday to Friday: 8.00 a.m. to 8.00 p.m.; [*Desk thumping*] Saturday: 8.00 a.m. to 9.00 p.m.; [*Desk thumping*] soon, Sunday, all day on Sunday. Thank you, Minister of Health. [*Desk thumping*] These are simple little things, Mr. Speaker, simple value for money.

They will always say: “Well, we were going to do that.” Should have, would have, and could have; that is that whole theme on that side—we intend on doing it; we were going to build the Diego Martin thing; we were going to build this; we were going to do that, and all this sort of nonsense. The fact of the matter is that this Government, in the short time that it has been here, in how much? Mr. Speaker, 45 months? In 45 months what this Government has achieved is unparalleled.

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I saw a news item on the TV the other day where a tank wagon crashed in Princes Town, ran off the road, and the interviewer interviewing this old lady who lives next door to where the crash was, and the old lady say: “Bu yuh know, de road too smooth and dais why de tanker crash.” That is where we reach now, not that it has potholes and the road mash up and what have you. They are not complaining about that now, you know, they are complaining about how the road is too smooth, and that is how the tank wagon ran off the road.

Mr. Speaker, all of that are all the signs; all of these are the signals that you are seeing—a strong economy, a Government in control, a Prime Minister in control of her Cabinet, in control of the parliamentarians. I just want to say I want to thank my Prime Minister for giving me this opportunity to be the Minister of Transport and the Member of Parliament for Chaguanas East, and all I could say is next year is blows.

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

Mr. Speaker: Hon Members, I think it is a good time for us to pause and have lunch. This sitting is now suspended until 2.00 p.m.

12.43 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

2.00 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Laventille West. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. NiLeung Hypolite (*Laventille West*): Thank you kindly, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the opportunity to contribute in the debate on the 2015 budget presented by the Minister of Finance and the Economy on behalf of the People’s Partnership Government. I also wish to acknowledge and thank my constituents of Laventille West who have endured yet another year along with many citizens of this strategic camouflaged governance by this UNC Government.

Mr. Speaker, stability starts with trust and not everything that glitters is gold. This fiscal package identifies with a number of PNM policies that would have been written in the Vision 2020 documents. What we would have seen, what we would have heard is a rehash of PNM policies coming from the Government side throughout this entire budget presentation, thus far.

Mr. Speaker, I sat and I listened to the Member for Chaguanas East, the Minister of Transport, and he would have spoken about the Member for Diego Martin North/East, making mention of a number of issues, and he also indicated that the Member for Diego Martin North/East would have quoted from some

unknown document. Mr. Speaker, maybe the Member for Chaguanas East was not listening when the Member for Diego Martin North/East was speaking, but just to remind him, that document that the Member for Diego Martin North/East quoted from would have been Interfax, and that of the *Natural Gas Daily*, dated April 14, 2014.

Also, Mr. Speaker, the Member for Chaguanas East would have made mention of some issues down at Point Lisas, but let me also remind him that it was the Member for Chaguanas West that would have spoken about a couple of letters—I think it was three letters—that he would have received from the CEOs of the various companies down at Point Lisas, identifying with the distress in the gas containment down there. Let me also indicate that according to the Global Competitiveness Index of 2014—2015, out of 144 countries, Trinidad and Tobago stands at 127 when you look at the burden of customer's procedures.

So it means therefore, Mr. Speaker, that between 2014 to 2015 nothing significant would have been done on the Port by this Government to really and truly deal with the customer's relationship down there. Again, the Member for Chaguanas East stood there and he started off by asking a question and he ended by asking a question about the whole question of the Constituency Fund. We said last year, and we will again indicate, that our position has been very, very clear on the Constituency Fund. Mr. Speaker, with a very new initiative one will need to look at structure, proper structure, proper systems, proper processes for accountability and transparency before any kind of consideration can be given to the Constituency Fund.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to all of that we also indicated last year that one would have preferred to have the Constituency Fund administered by the Ministry of Local Government and, more so, have in place proper technocrats to assist with the whole management of that particular Constituency Fund. It was the Minister of Finance and the Economy last year that indicated that he will not move ahead with the Constituency Fund. It is the Minister of Finance and the Economy in this budget that would have indicated that it will not be implemented until most of those things I just made mention of are put in place, especially the systems of control.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Chaguanas East stood there and spoke for 55 minutes, and as the Minister of Transport one would have thought that he would have made mention of his plans to deal with the traffic situation, that gridlock you get outside there on our nation's roads, or even explained to us his intentions of dealing with the 730,000-plus vehicles on our nation's roads that are contributing

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to the amount of traffic it has outside there. But, Mr. Speaker, instead, what would have happened, is he spoke about all kinds of things other than how he will deal with the traffic situation outside there. He even made mention—and it is in the budget document—about a rapid bus system. They made mention of it in 2013, they made mention of it in 2012, and they made mention of it in 2011 and 2010—a rapid bus system.

Mr. Speaker, they indicated that to make that rapid bus system work efficiently they need to get some 100 new buses on our nation's already congested roads. I am of the belief that it is time for us to really and truly sit and look at this whole question of the road networks and the whole question of a mass transport system. Yes, Mr. Speaker, it was the People's National Movement that introduced the whole question of a rapid rail system. I am not saying no, the entire Trinidad and Tobago knows about that. We spoke about it right up to 2010, and immediately after 2010, it is this Government, this UNC Government, that came with a similar proposal, and that is why I spoke about a "strategic camouflaged governance". It is this Government.

Mr. Speaker, it was Devant Maharaj, the Minister of Transport then, in 2012, who—and I quote from the *Trinidad Express*, dated January 28, 2012:

"Devant: Govt seeks investors for \$b light transit"

And he says:

"GOVERNMENT is seeking an investment of possibly \$1 billion to construct and operate a light transit system from Port of Spain to Arima..."

He also went on to say:

"...the Transport Ministry invited expressions of interest for the design, financing, construction, operation and maintenance of a light transit system from Port of Spain to Arima to be constructed approximately 4.2 metres above the Bus Route."

Mr. Speaker, the People's National Movement had the right intent, which was simply to look at a mass transit system. We realized that no matter how much we try to widen the roads of Trinidad and Tobago, there will not be sufficient land space to have the number of roads to accommodate the number of vehicles on our nation's roads. That is why we looked at the rapid rail system, and if it is a question of whether or not the rapid rail system was a good initiative or whether or not the \$22 billion is the question, then I am certain that by the fact that the

Government looked at a light transit system it means that the whole idea of having a mass transportation system, and more so something similar to, if not, the rapid rail system was the way to go.

Mr. Speaker, we heard all kinds of stories about—well, the Member for Chaguanas East made mention about the maxi-taxi drivers having an issue with respect to the rapid rail system. The Ministry of Works and Infrastructure at that point in time was the Ministry of Works and Transportation, headed by the then Minister, Colm Imbert, sat as a committee with other Ministers on a regular basis to have oversight on this whole question of the rapid rail system, and it was not just a question of just coming up with an idea and sourcing an individual to look at doing some kind of feasibility study, but we did a very in-depth feasibility study on that whole question of a rapid rail system. We looked at the feeder system which included buses, which also included maxi-taxis, it included the conventional taxis, and it also included the PH taxi drivers.

It is a very comprehensive programme. I have in my hands the document that spoke about that rapid rail system, the design, the realignment, where each station would have been placed, the project organizational structure, a schedule from time of the commencement of the feasibility study right down to the 15-year exposure, because it was a three-phase project: phase I, phase II, phase III. Mr. Speaker, it is all here. It is all here. But if it is that there is a question of whether or not the idea was a good idea or whether or not it is the cost factor, then the Government should be looking at something like that and not talking about getting 100 to 300 buses to put on the nation's roads to talk about a rapid bus system.

Mr. Speaker, strategic camouflaged governance. [*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: What is a rapid bus? A fast bus?

Mr. N. Hypolite: A rapid bus got to be a fast bus.

Mr. Speaker, October 2010 to September 2011, the Government expenditure, \$51 billion; October 2011 to October 2012, \$52 billion; October 2012 to September 2013, \$57 billion; October 2013 to September 2014, \$65 billion; October 2014 to 2015, we are looking at yet another \$64 billion, and what do we have to show for that? What do we have to show for that? Box drains, houses, roads, 100 buses to put on the nation's roads?

2.15 p.m.

Houses—I asked a question in the House somewhere in January of this year, and the Minister of Housing and Urban Development answered indicating that they would have built some 4,700 houses since they have come into office. Let

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me say to you, Mr. Speaker—because I am speaking to you—that under the People’s National Movement, between 2002 and 2010, we would have built some 32,000 houses—32,000 houses. This is what the Minister of Finance and the Economy would have said in his presentation. He would have indicated that they would have increased the value of the houses from \$600,000 to \$850,000. Mr. Speaker, strategic camouflage governance.

It is under the People’s National Movement that we would have increased the value or, I should say, in our 2007 budget presentation, which would have been the 2010 Budget Statement, the then Minister would have stated, and I quote:

“Under the Approved Mortgage Company Programme, finance companies are exempt from taxation on income derived from mortgages for financing the construction or purchase of homes costing up to a maximum of \$450,000. First-time home owners for homes valued at no more than \$450,000, benefit from preferential mortgage rates of between 6 percent and 8 percent. Mr. Speaker, in the new fiscal year we propose to increase this amount to \$850,000.”

There is nothing new with respect to the entire question of the Ministry of Housing that would have been presented in this budget, that was not put on the table by the People’s National Movement that is here today: One: 32,000 houses. How many? The Minister of Housing and Urban Development said 4,700, but the Minister of Finance and the Economy in his presentation said 3,000. What is the correct figure? Mr. Speaker, housing in this country is a very important issue. Many of the persons in Trinidad and Tobago need houses—they need houses.

But more so, we have also the question of taxes, because you have property, you have land, you have buildings. This Government indicated that they will not be entertaining any new taxes, but when we look at the *Draft Estimates of Revenue* for fiscal year 2015 and you look at page 2, we see “Lands and Buildings Taxes” and you look at the 2015 Estimates column, we see some \$3 million. But then throughout the entire world, be it in the UK, be it in the States, you pay taxes on your land and on your buildings.

Mr. Speaker, in the budget statement of 2011, the Minister of Finance and the Economy indicated, and I quote:

“Mr. Speaker, I turn now to the issue of the Property Tax. We will ‘Axe the Tax’. The Property Tax will be replaced by the old Lands and Buildings Taxes regime at the old rates and old values. There will be a waiver of lands and buildings tax for the year 2010.”—hip hip hooray.

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Budget Statement 2014, the Minister indicated in his budget statement, on page 29 of that statement:

“In phase 1 and effective immediately, we shall commence valuations of all industrial land, including plant and machinery, whether housed or unhoused, with a view to implement this tax by July 1, 2014.”—

“whether housed or unhoused with a view to implement this tax by July 1, 2014.”

What tax is he referring to? He is referring to the lands and buildings tax. The lands and building tax which was supposed to come back, which was supposed to replace the property tax, and it is a name replacement. The People’s National Movement referred to it as “property tax”, the UNC Government would have referred to it as the “land and building tax”.

It went on to state that:

“In phase 2, we will impose a tax on commercial properties and in phase 3, we will impose a tax on agricultural lands and on residential properties with a deductible allowance to provide relief to certain agricultural land owners and low-income owners.”

Mr. Speaker, while they would have said in their 2011 Budget Statement: No tax. There will be a waiver of lands and buildings taxes; they will be axing the tax. In 2014, they came back to indicate to this country that they will be coming with the land and building tax.

A newspaper article dated October 2012, *Trinidad Guardian*:

“The return of the land and building tax...”

Name change: property tax, land and building tax:

“Howai, who was speaking to Guardian Media Ltd during the lunch break of the sitting of the Senate on Monday, had signalled in his budget presentation on October 1 the intention to bring back property taxes”.

Well, Mr. Speaker, it did come back.

Let me just remind you that in 2011 a Bill was laid in the House, and I will read the Bill:

“An Act to repeal the Property Tax Act, 2009...to re-enact the Lands and Buildings Taxes Act...”

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And it went on to speak about the lands and buildings taxes. [*Interruption*] I am getting a very annoying sound behind me: right, right, right; all right. Mr. Speaker, I continue. On page 3 of that Bill that was laid, under section 3(b), it reads:

“on every building the annual taxable value of which does not exceed twenty-four dollars an annual tax of ninety-six cents; and on every building the annual taxable value of which exceeds twenty-four dollars, an annual tax of seven and one-half per cent of such taxable value.”

What are they speaking about? They are speaking about the calculation of the payment, or the calculation on the lands and buildings taxes that you are supposed to pay. What they were speaking about is seven and a half per cent of taxable value.

So we did a calculation, and I want to share with you a couple of figures: annual taxable value—so we are looking at an annual taxable value of \$16,200. We will also want to look at one being \$32,400 and we will also want to look at one being \$54,000, talking about the annual taxable value.

Under the People’s National Movement property tax, for the annual taxable value of \$16,200, the annual property tax that an individual would have had to pay would have been \$486. At an annual taxable value of \$32,400, the annual taxable value under the People’s National Movement would have been \$972. The annual taxable value of \$54,000, People’s National Movement, annual property tax, \$1,620. Mr. Speaker, by reverting to the lands and buildings taxes at that seven and a half per cent of the annual taxable value, that same \$16,200, under the People’s National Movement you would have had to pay \$486. Under that new system that was laid in the House by this Government, it would have been \$1,215 that you would have had to pay.

If your annual taxable value was \$32,400, under the People’s National Movement you would have paid \$972, but under the same lands and buildings taxes that this Government would have introduced to the House, you would have now ended up paying \$2,430.

If the annual taxable value was \$54,000, then under the People’s National Movement property tax, you would have been paying \$1,620, while under this Government Lands and Buildings Taxes Bill you would have been paying \$4,050.

Mr. Speaker, I said, and I would say again: very nice strategy; camouflage, yes. You have to be very careful with the Government, because we are seeing that

they did not want the rapid rail system, but they are going with a light rail. They did not want the property tax, but they came with the lands and buildings taxes at a much higher value. I stop there for now on that.

Let us look at the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure, and let us speak again about the 2015 budget. In the 2015 Budget, the Minister said: We have already completed the designs for three new highways—three new highways, and he quoted the Princes Town/Mayaro Highway; the San Fernando to Princes Town Highway and the Wallerfield/Manzanilla Highway. But, again, if you go back to the 2010 Budget Statement, which would have been read by the People’s National Movement, you would realize that a number of highways—it would have been five highways and a causeway, is what we were looking at. Yes, I say it is what we were looking at.

Yes, come 2010, there was a pause and a new government came in. Therefore, the People’s National Movement would not have had the opportunity to complete the things that they would have put on the table up until 2010.

2.30 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, that is understood, that if you are doing something and you stop, and someone else takes up the mantel, all right, you who were carrying the mantel—a relay, let us look at a relay. You are running a relay. The person who has to run the first leg will hand over the baton to the person who will run the second leg. And therefore, Mr. Speaker, the person who would have ran the first leg will sit and relax and let the person who has the baton to run the second leg, run the second leg. And that is what would have happened. That is what is happening, but we would have looked at those highways since 2010. The 2010 Budget Statement would have read accordingly:

“This process of modernization of our highway infrastructure through the construction of flyovers and interchanges will continue east along the Churchill Roosevelt Highway to Trincity and beyond. In addition contracts have already been awarded for the continuation of the widening and upgrading of our major highways. In fiscal 2010, we expect to complete the addition of a third lane on the Uriah Butler Highway...”

Mr. Speaker, we were looking at the widening of all those highways, and most of our roads long time. So it is not something new that this Government came in and said they intend to do.

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When you look at the PSIP 2015, page 61 and you look at some of the major projects completed, you would realize that none would have been done again in the constituencies of the Members on the opposite side. [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. Gopeesingh: Just read out all the schools.

Mr. N. Hypolite: Mr. Speaker, you have—I come to the schools just now also. You have works completed at 220 locations. I am reading now from PSIP 2015. Hear some of the roads:

Todds Station Road off Talparo Road

That is not in one of the PNM's constituencies.

Arima Old Road off the Eastern Main Road

PNM, no.

Tabaquite/Rio Claro Road

PNM? No.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Not yet.

Mr. N. Hypolite: Sixth Company Circular off Sixth Company Road, New Grant.

PNM?

Hon. Member: Soon.

Mr. N. Hypolite: Soon. Thank you. Soon. Soon.

Sobo Road extension, La Brea.

That is yours. [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Member: PNM have any road?

Mr. N. Hypolite: Calcutta Road, No. three. [*Crosstalk*]

Chin Chin Road, Cunupia

Caroni South Bank Road.

Mr. Speaker, we are looking at the roads. We are looking at some major construction projects throughout Trinidad and Tobago of which out of one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight I just called, one would have been in one of the constituencies under the People's National Movement.

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I would have been requesting the Old St. Joseph Road better known as the back road, recently known as Bertie Marshall Road which runs from the Old St. Joseph Road by the Success Secondary School, right up to just opposite Angostura. We have asked for that road to be paved. In fact, it was renamed the Bertie Marshall Road. And at that ceremony we requested for that road to be fixed because you are renaming the road after a pioneer. And yet, you have potholes all over. That was not included here. It was not included here.

And my good friend spoke about schools. Mr. Speaker, we just came out from the August vacation.

Dr. Gopeesingh: From school. You just came out from school.

Mr. N. Hypolite: Two secondary schools. [*Crosstalk*] Yes. And you were in the lower form. [*Desk thumping*] Two secondary schools: Success Laventille Composite School and Morvant/Laventille Composite School. Those two schools, absolutely nothing would have been done to those two schools over the August vacation.

We also have the Chinapoo Primary School, Our Lady of Laventille Primary School, Laventille Boys', Laventille Girls', Escalier, Beetham, and St. Barbs Primary Schools. Seven schools. Out of those seven schools, I am aware of only St. Barbs Primary School of some kind of work that should have been done at that school. It has been quite a while, over two years, that the other schools would have been asking for some assistance in either having the school repainted or having the toilets fixed, electricals fixed or plumbing. I am also aware that Bishop Anstey High School would have just spent, out of their own coffers, because they would have been raising funds for quite a while, some \$700,000 to get the roof of the school fixed. In fact—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Gopeesingh: Mr. Speaker, 44(a).

Mr. Speaker: Continue.

Mr. N. Hypolite: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, the Bishop Anstey High School just recently spent over \$700,000 of raising funds, all right, to get some repairs to their school. And they indicated that it has been a while they would have been asking the Ministry for some help and assistance. Laventille Girls', Laventille Boys', pigeons in the roof, toilets need fixing, and the Minister will stand up and say, "yes!", he did all of those things. That was part of the 300-plus schools that he would have fixed. Mr. Speaker, strategic camouflaged governance.

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Mr. Speaker, under the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme 2015*—
[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: Rowley not running you back in the seat. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. N. Hypolite:—you would have had, Mr. Speaker, under the Port of Spain Corporation [*Crosstalk*] the development programme \$20 million in 2014; 2015, \$24 million. Arima, \$15 million 2014, 2016 and 2015. San Fernando, \$20 million in 2014; \$18 million in 2015. Point Fortin, \$13 million in 2014; \$17 million in 2015. Chaguanas, \$20 million in 2014; \$32 million, Mr. Speaker, in 2015. Diego Martin \$20 million 2014, \$20,200,000 in 2015. San Juan/Laventille, \$16 million in 2014, \$17 million in 2015. Tunapuna, \$25 million in 2014; \$20 million in 2015. Sangre Grande \$22 million in 2014; \$22 million in 2015. Couva; \$25 million in 2014; \$20 million in 2015. Mayaro, \$21 million in 2014; \$17 million in 2015. Siparia, \$28 million in 2014; \$22 million in 2015. Penal/Debe, \$23 million in 2014; \$19 million in 2015. Princes Town, \$20 million in 2014; \$16 million in 2015. Point to note, in Chaguanas \$20 million 2014; but \$32 million in 2015.

While all the other corporations would have had a one to three million dollars either increased or decreased, you have Chaguanas moving from \$20 million to \$32 million. One has to ask the question: why? I am hoping that the Minister of Local Government will indicate what would have caused that high increase.

Mr. Speaker, you have a case where the Mayor of Port of Spain would have asked for \$211 million to fix the issues throughout the city of Port of Spain—\$211 million. But here it is under the *Draft Estimates of the Development Programme 2015*, we are seeing \$24 million. When you have 10 to 15 councillors, which means that you have about 10 to 15 electoral districts, and you take that development fund and you split it amongst the various councillors, you are actually looking at approximately \$1.5 million for a councillor to really and truly go into his electoral district, and try to develop or try to do something; to try and do something. One point five million dollars cannot do anything at all. In fact, you have a situation where you have some 52 URP contractors who would have been fighting to get \$113 million worth of work on some roads that they would have done, Mr. Speaker. You have a situation where they would have gotten an audit done on the work that they indicated that were completed.

Mr. Speaker, you have a situation where the auditors said, “Go ahead and pay”. In fact, the recommendations are here, and this is the Ministry of Finance and the Economy Investments Division Unit, Central Audit Unit, approximately 52 contractors looking for their payment which is approximately \$113 million.

Recommendations: In the circumstance and given the unique nature of this exercise, Central Audit recommends that payment be made in full for works done at all sites apart from four sites for which payments have already been made.

Mr. Speaker, these contractors, even though the Auditor General said, well the Central Audit Unit made a recommendation to go ahead and pay these individuals, these individuals are still or most of them, awaiting their payment.

Mr. Speaker, it is quite unfair, very, very unfair for these individuals, these contractors, and they are all here, all the work that they would have done. And I am asking the Minister of Works and Infrastructure to again step in and give—you see some of those contractors are their own supporters. Do not treat your supporters like that. Give them a helping hand also. Pay them some moneys. They need it. And \$90 million was approved for them to get paid, you know.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the question is that the speaking time of the hon. Member for Laventille West, be extended by 10 minutes.

Question put and agreed to.

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

2.45 p.m.

Mr. N. Hypolite: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Thank you kindly Members, all. Mr. Speaker, here is an official document from the Office of the Prime Minister Unemployment Relief Programme, head office scope of works. This is a piece of correspondence signed by a number of officials; permanent secretary responsible for URP, the coordinator of agriculture, the Ministry of Food Production, the Minister of Agriculture, I am seeing Reynold Cooper's signature. I am seeing six signatures, all indicating to go ahead and pay these contractors of which, I am advised, a warrant for \$90 million was signed and sent out and yet, these contractors are still requesting that they be paid, and more so, based on the recommendation that would have come out from the Central Audit Unit.

Mr. Speaker, in the budget statements of 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014 and now 2015.

Dr. Rambachan: Mr. Speaker, a point of order, 44(8). [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Please! Please! Please! All right, after the Member has spoken.

Mr. N. Hypolite: Thank you kindly, Mr. Speaker. I want to look at the growth poles, because from 2010 right on to this 2015 budget, all you are hearing

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about is growth poles, growth poles. With respect to this growth pole, we are seeing absolutely nothing being done with respect to this growth pole, which means once again, is talk, talk and more talk; nothing else happening.

I want to go back also to the year 2010 where \$300 million was approved by the Cabinet to have an accelerated development programme for Laventille, we have not heard anything about that. All you are hearing about these days is this cable car for Laventille. Cable car for Laventille? Mr. Speaker, Laventille does not need that cable car at this point in time. What we want is proper development. In fact, we have the whole question of community centres. I remember a Minister, the Minister of Community Development, standing in this House, indicating and beating his chest that the Beetham community centre will start in the month of May and it will end on December 7, 2014. Nothing! Absolutely nothing. It is just talk, it is just about trying to fool the people. One of the Members on that side spoke about brainwash, they are trying to brainwash the people of Trinidad and Tobago. It will not work.

Mr. Speaker, if you really want to see some kind of development taking place in Laventille—a number of things can take place. We have one such programme called the Trinidad Dry Dock, this Trinidad Dry Dock can create employment for over 3,000 persons. It consists of a number of things, a multi-storey condominium building—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: A what kind of building?

Mr. N. Hypolite: Condominium.

Hon. Member: Pandemonium?

Mr. N. Hypolite: Condominium—900 hotel rooms, high-rise offices, and the thing about it, Mr. Speaker, it would cost US \$1.2 billion, none of that money coming from the Government. All that these people need is the memorandum of agreement to be signed.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Laventille want their community centre, Mr. Mayaro.

Mr. Peters: “When ah finish build the police post.”

Mr. N. Hypolite: They want their roads fixed, over 150 roads; they want their schools fixed; they want the drains fixed; they want retaining walls. Mr. Speaker, they are supposed to be a Government for all the people and not a Government only for the people that they represent.

The people of Laventille are people also, the people of Diego Martin are people also, [*Desk thumping*] the people of Point Fortin, La Brea, Arouca, San Fernando are people also. [*Desk thumping*] This Government continues to try to—and I am using the word from my colleague across there—brainwash the people of Trinidad and Tobago. The people of Trinidad are much brighter than that, the people of Trinidad and Tobago are just waiting on the opportunity to come out very early on that day, that election day and do what they want to do, which is to vote and to vote—

Mr. Peters: For PNM.

Mr. N. Hypolite: Yes, for the PNM, [*Desk thumping*] so as to get this Government out. The people of Trinidad and Tobago are tired.

Mr. Peters: “You ain’t shame?”

Mr. Speaker: Please! Please! Please!

Mr. N. Hypolite: I am ashamed of you my dear friend. [*Desk thumping and laughter*] Because you have done nothing, absolutely nothing. You cannot even deliver a community centre.

Mr. Speaker: Please address the Chair.

Mr. N. Hypolite: He cannot even deliver a community centre, a community centre that he received when he came into office that was 80 per cent completed. [*Continuous desk thumping*]

Mr. Peters: And they “tief” out everything.

Mr. Speaker: Please! Please, hon. Member.

Mr. N. Hypolite: Mr. Speaker, he is a total failure. [*Desk thumping*] The people of Trinidad and Tobago want to see once again, good governance in Trinidad and Tobago. They are tired of the betrayal, they are tired of the “mamaguism” that is given on a daily basis, the kind of brainwashing that takes place. The people of Trinidad and Tobago, right now, they are fed up, they want an election and they want an election to do the right thing, which is, to cast their vote for a party that has a vision, a party that will continue to have a vision to lead this country, the only political organization, the only political party in this country that has the ability, because I would have pointed out where they are using all our policies, tweaking them a bit and implementing them. Mr. Speaker, the people of this country want to see yet another People's National Movement Government to lead this country.

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

Mr. Speaker: Now, two Members have sought leave to invoke Standing Order 44(8). Now, it must be that a material part of your contribution was misrepresented by the speaker who just spoke. It has nothing to do with elucidation of points. So, in case of the hon. Member for Caroni East, could you explain to the Speaker what material part of his speech misrepresented your—

Dr. Gopeesingh: Mr. Speaker, he was speaking about no work being done on his schools in the constituency. He enumerated the schools and I just want to clarify what work we did in his schools. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: No, but—[*Crosstalk*]—wait, wait, please! Please! Please! In your contribution, did you elaborate on work that was done at the school that the hon. Member made mention of?

Hon. Member: No.

Mr. Speaker: Because if that was not done then it would not really represent a misrepresentation of a material part of your speech, and I do not want this particular Standing Order to be misrepresented. [*Crosstalk*] Please! Please! Please! I do not want this part to be misrepresented.

It must have been a statement you made, hon. Minister of Education, that the Member misrepresented during his contribution. A material part has been misrepresented, otherwise this particular Standing Order can become, you know—

Hon. Member: Can be abused.

Mr. Speaker: And I do not want that to take place. So, that is why I asked specifically if you can identify whether a material part of the contribution you made would have been misrepresented by the Member for Laventille West. That is the point I am making.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes, Mr. Speaker, in my contribution I mentioned the work that I did in the various constituencies and in his presentation he is misrepresenting that I did no work in his constituency on his schools. That is very clear.

Mr. Speaker: So, you would like to elaborate for two minutes the fact that in your statement to this House you mentioned that work was done at a school in the hon. Member's constituency that he did not properly represent, and you would like to clarify that?

Miss Cox: What rights do we have for redress?

Mr. Speaker: Please! Please! Please!

Dr. Gopeesingh: I gave broad statement of the work that I did in his constituency, which included all his schools [*Interruption*] and he is saying that I did not do work on his schools.

Mr. Speaker: Please! Please! All right, I will come back to that particular point. Hon. Member for Tabaquite, you wanted to—could you, again, indicate to this House what particular part.

Dr. Rambachan: Mr. Speaker, I will withdraw at this point and I would make a statement further on.

Mr. Speaker: All right, cool. Please! Please! So, hon. Minister of Education, what I would do in order to avoid any misrepresentation, I am going to get the *Hansard* of both statements, and before the end of the sitting I will give you the opportunity, because we will speak as to the material part that was misrepresented and you will get the opportunity to address that.

The hon. Minister of National Security.

The Minister of National Security (Sen. The Hon. Gary Griffith): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to express my gratitude to you and hon. Members for the opportunity to address this Chamber and to participate in the fiscal budget debate, and in particular with respect to issues relating to national security. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Please! Please! Please.

Dr. Khan: That was an aside.

Mr. Speaker: No, no. Please! Wait! Member. [*Interruption*] Member for Laventille West! Member for Caroni East, if you did say what was said, I do not think that we should go there. [*Interruption*] No, and even if a Member is not on his legs, you cannot make these remarks that are insulting or that can bring the House into disrepute. So, if you did in fact say what you said, I would ask you to withdraw it and let us move on.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Withdrawn, withdrawn.

Mr. Speaker: Right. And Members, whether you are on your legs or you are not on your legs, you are not supposed to make statements that are derogatory, that are designed to bring some degree of disrespect or generate some indignity to this honourable House. This will not be permitted by this Chair. So, please be

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guided accordingly. And no further crosstalk between the Member for Laventille West and the Member for Caroni East. It is ended now. If you need to talk further, leave the Chamber.

The hon. Minister of National Security. [*Desk thumping*]

3.00 p.m.

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am behaving myself. [*Laughter*] Before I deal—I will go into matters with national security. I just want to draw reference—[*Interruption*]

Miss Cox: To deal with me.

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: Not at all. I draw reference to a statement made by the Member of Parliament for Diego Martin West in 2009, as it refers to the Property Tax Bill. And this is in relation to the Member of Parliament for Laventille West, where it was stated, quote:

“My colleague from Tobago East mentioned the people in the House who had done nothing and the value could be assessed at \$1 million or \$2 million. Mr. Speaker, I do not know about you, I know many people in this country for whom \$100 is much money. There are many people in this country who are struggling to make ends meet and such persons faced with an increase whether \$200, \$500 or \$600, they are living at the margin. Any increase for them is a hardship.”

So it is just a point to note there, Mr. Speaker, for the Member for Laventille West.

Mr. Speaker, I know many times when we deal with matters pertaining to national security, there will always be that perception that you need to pump hundreds of millions of dollars as that is the be-all and end-all to deal with national security issues.

However, looking at the comparison of budget allocation to national security in Trinidad and Tobago and other countries, if we look at the United Kingdom, about 10 per cent; United States 15 per cent; Jamaica, 9 per cent; China, 11 per cent; Trinidad and Tobago, we usually fall within that bracket, and this is with both administrations. So this is to just clarify a matter, where there has always been this perception that we have a budget that you usually see in the Ministry of National Security, it is over what is required. And one of the main things in the Ministry of National Security with that budget always being in and around \$6

billion or so, the bulk of that has to do with when you have over 15,000 members of the law enforcement agencies dealing with salaries.

What we are trying to do this year, Mr. Speaker, is to go away from the same old, same old, where it is that we have this regurgitation of the same systems, but at the end of the fiscal year you do not actually see the tangible results, both in asset acquisition, the type of training required and also the results. And I also want to go into a statement made, where for too long we keep hearing the situations about “Government need to come up with crime plans”. The person who is now appointed as the Home Secretary in the United Kingdom, this was a statement made, this is the Rt. Hon. Theresa May. She actually stated in her—when she moved into office, her first speech:

“‘I’m not interested in running the police.’ That principle—that we are best served by a police force run by professionals rather than politicians—is at the heart of this Government’s plan to cut crime.”

And this has to do with this concept we keep hearing, “What is your crime plan?”

And again I wish to stress that the concept is not about coming up with crime plans or even anti-crime plans, because the individuals who all sit here, I think we all have the interest of the country at heart, and if we do, we need to accept to ourselves that we do not have that capability, that experience, that training to say that we have what it takes to understand what it is to deal with proper security management, to deal with criminology, to deal with—coming up with anti-crime initiatives.

The role of a Government, the role of politicians is not to come up with crime plans, and I will say it for the umpteenth time. It has to do with providing the proper assets—the logistic, the financial and the administrative support for the law enforcement agencies—and also to ensure that you provide proper policies, the policies and the framework upon which the law enforcement agencies can then utilize their resources in an effective and efficient manner.

But dealing with that, Mr. Speaker, we can come up with all of the policies and crime can be reduced, and I will actually deal with that later on. But what we are seeing here, there are two different things. We have to look at the actual reduction of crime and taking away the perception and fear of crime. And this is very important. We can refer to New York City in the mid-90s, when the murder rate was reduced by over 53 per cent, serious crime by over 63 per cent, but the citizens did not feel safe, and there was a totally different strategy. So it is a

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twofold mission, where you have to deal with actual crime reduction based on policies by the Government and law enforcement initiatives, and also taking away that perception and fear of crime.

But here we have now within the last year, and I will come with the statistics as a fact, that this has been the lowest rate in the last 30 years in this country of serious crime. But, the perception and fear of crime are still there. The unfortunate thing, Mr. Speaker, is that we have seen situations now where Chicken Little is just coming about, and all sort of messages that the sky is falling, with different scenarios that really—it is unfounded and it is unfortunate. Every time you make a statement that does not have the value and it is totally irrelevant, and it is senseless, it is baseless, you are actually putting unwanted fear to citizens that is providing instability. And I would be the first to correct it, because I definitely will always be the first to defend our law enforcement officers, Mr. Speaker, if they do no wrong. And this involves the attacks we have continued to see now from politicians and individuals who seem to have their own interest at hand.

At the end of the day, as politicians, as Members of Parliament, persons who are here as servants, we have to be very careful of the statements that we make because when we are making these statements we are putting fear into the public for no reason, and also it is affecting the morale of the law enforcement officers who are there to protect and serve with pride.

And, Mr. Speaker, I will continue to do what is required. I will continue to do what is necessary. I will continue to do what is right. Again, and I will just throw some quick examples of where this has really gone overboard. We can go straight into the matters of the armoured personnel carriers. We can speak about the reserves being called out. We can speak about the police being militarized. We could speak about the Laventille patrols. These are all scenarios where things have happened for the right reasons, for the right purpose and all of a sudden they have been turned into some different scenario to put fear into the citizens and to affect our law enforcement officers. Let us look at the call-out, Mr. Speaker.

It was unbelievable that a call-out of a grand total of 50 reserves, these are part-time soldiers, these are retirees, these are persons who have jobs all over the country, the grand total of 50 are called out, and the perception is given that there is some massive situation that is taking place. And we must not politicize national security. I have the document right here, Mr. Speaker, from the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force, dated August 06, 2014. “Approval to call out Trinidad

and Tobago Defence Force Reserves". This is not Gary Griffith, this is not the President. This is the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force, because they are the experts, they are the ones that ascertain the situation based on manpower strength.

Mr. Speaker, one of the problems we have with security is that many people who are not involved in security will say look, just bring out 50 men. When you deal with increased manpower strength, it is not a situation of plasticine that you just pull them out of the shelf, you make people and you put them on a parade square. Where do they come from? And it is very unfortunate that you do not understand that the date for them to come out would have been August 29, two days before the Independence Day Parade, one day before the dress rehearsal for the Independence Day Parade. This came from the Chief of Defence Staff. So are we questioning the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force that they are involved in some kind of clandestine operation and they do not want the country to know? Mr. Speaker, and the answer is no.

Mr. Speaker, I would just like to quote the statement from the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force, because yet again because of politics we have now affected the morale of the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force because we have given this impression that they are part of this massive conspiracy. The release from the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force:

The Defence Force through this statement wishes to put to rest the issue concerning the call-out of members of the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force Reserves. This call-out is a usual request made by the Chief of Defence Staff to the Ministry in order to augment the manpower requirements necessary to fulfil the ceremonial and operational obligations of the defence force that occur every year around this time.

Why did the Opposition not make this same concern last year, or the year before or the year before or the year before? And I continue:

These requirements include but are not limited to the various formation anniversary parades, the city, borough, and Independence Day parades, the Commander in Chief Parade scheduled for September 20 as well as the preparation for the Christmas into Carnival joint patrols.

It is here, Mr. Speaker, in black and white, from the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force.

So is it that they are saying that they are liars? [*Crosstalk*] I will continue. The Office of the President was forced to actually make a release, which was very

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unfortunate, that the Office of the President now had to go to defend the Office of the President because they made it seem that the Office of the President they were not aware of their role and function. But it is straightforward, Mr. Speaker.

Another article:

“Army reserves call out not secretive—military spokesman”

Mr. Speaker, and again if we want to really go into it I can actually go back to a certain period. I did hear, I recall when the Member of Parliament for Chaguanas West in fact, he had actually condemned the situation for the call-out of reserves. But right here, the Member of Parliament for Chaguanas West, when he was the Minister of National Security, on December 14, 2012 to March 31, 2013, he as the Minister of National Security called out 62 ranks. Guess what? For joint and mobile patrols, provision of routes, security, provision of special operation, camp security. Because this—and nothing was wrong with that, because the Member of Parliament for Chaguanas West, he was in his right, because that is the role and function of the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force.

Contrary to the perception of many, the role of the defence force is not just to fight wars, it also has to do—in tandem with Chapter 14:01 of the laws of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. In the Defence Act, it stipulates also that they act as an aid to civil power and they are there to assist in and provide manpower strength for ceremonial duties. They did what was required and they are being attacked, they are being accused of being part of this clandestine operation. But I could go further, Mr. Speaker.

We also have to look, we can go all the way back to—2007: call-out of reserves from December 22 to February 29, 2008, 70 days. Call-out, 280 other ranks from the reserves. What is it for? The maintenance of peace and security during the remainder of the Christmas and the entire Carnival period. And who was in Government at this time, Mr. Speaker? You all protest too much.

The same thing took place in 2004 for 81 days. Also, 58 men from September to December to deal with other situations, and it is all there, a pattern. We actually took the Cabinet Note from 2009, we deleted 2009, we inserted 2010 and we used the exact system that was done in 2009 by the previous administration to provide the manpower strength required for the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force to assist in the parades and to assist in the Christmas and Carnival season.

Mr. Speaker when you actually look at the manpower strength during the Christmas season, when you saw the number of soldiers that were on joint patrol

with the police officers in all of the main cities: Port of Spain, San Fernando, Scarborough, Point Fortin, Arima, Chaguanas, they did not just come out of the air. There was a reason for it. You must have the manpower strength and this was a simple request made by the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force.

And again, Mr. Speaker, now I am seeing another situation again “Warns of creeping militarization”. Now, this is a serious concern because once again, just like emailgate, it seems that we have a situation that the more you keep saying something over and over, as baseless as it is, you hope that people would buy into it. And what I intend to do, is before the ink is dry, if anytime releases are made to affect the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force, the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, and I know it is going to affect the morale, it is going to affect and put fear into the citizens, I will immediately expose it and expose them, Mr. Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, some of the statements that were made, it stated that we intend to try to—soldiers and police, a statement made that they are one and the same, that I as the Minister of National Security believe so.

Let me just clarify. Gary Griffith, when he was a soldier, yes, I will always have the principles of a soldier, but one has to do with love for your country. When I put my hand on a Bible it had very little to do with anything else but love for my country, love for my people. And a statement such as this, Mr. Speaker, when it is that you try to give the impression that somebody who was a soldier, and is now a Minister of National Security he will militarize the law enforcement agencies, it is as ridiculous as the point—because the concept of a soldier—it has to do a lot with persons trained in leadership.

Over 10 of the last 12 persons who were US Presidents they were in the military and they left at the rank of lieutenant and captain, most of them, from John F. Kennedy, the Bushes and so forth. But there is a reason for it. That does not mean that they will turn it into a military, but it has to do again, it shows the principles. But when it is that people try to deliberately give the impression, because I have military training, I am trying to militarize the police. It is impossible because, to start with, based on the Constitution, no politician can ever turn and militarize the police. So that again, it seems to be a deliberate attempt to put some type of fear into citizens.

Then after, Mr. Speaker, we have the statement, we have here, the National Operations Centre. What was the reason for the National Operations Centre being placed under the Office of the Prime Minister? So let me clarify it for the fifteenth

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time. On our visit to the United Kingdom, there is something that in the United Kingdom they have called COBRA. It is called the Cabinet Officers Briefing Room. COBRA is similar to what you will have in the White House, where the person who is the Commander-in-Chief they would be in control of that operation, of that briefing room.

3.15 p.m.

The National Operations Centre is something that we have now that has proven to be very successful. But, yes, the National Operations Centre, if you recall, was the National Security Operations Centre. Based on our research we were able to ascertain that not all natural or man-made disasters in a country will be primarily under the operations of the Ministry of National Security, and it is common sense. If there is a flood, you would have the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure involved; you will have the Ministry of Housing and the Environment involved; if there is a health epidemic, my comrade on my right, the Minister of Health, will then be working side by side with me. If there is a situation in the energy sector, the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs will be involved. Hence the reason why a National Operations Centre will come under the umbrella of what we would have known as the National Security Council. The National Security Council comes under the Office of the Prime Minister similar to the Cabinet Officers Briefing Room in the United Kingdom.

So this impression, again, to try to put fear—and here I am now trying to explain to those who do not understand. A National Operations Centre comes under the umbrella of the National Security Council because it will involve, at times, of any natural or man-made disaster, several ministries working hand in hand, and with that, through the National Security Council, it is chaired by the—the chair of the National Security Council happens to be the Prime Minister. Much ado about nothing. A deliberate attempt to try to give the impression that this was, again, some clandestine operation. This was based on research; this was based on advice we had. But why make a statement like that? And we can go on and on.

We go into the situation with Laventille. Initially, when we sent out the patrols into Laventille, again, demonizing the soldiers, the worst things about them: “soldiers are trained to kill; that is not their job”. And I took the licks and I took it. And guess what? We are walking the streets of Laventille now and every single law-abiding citizen in Laventille can boast that this is the safest Laventille has been for years. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Member: “Dey doh want dat. Dey doh want dat.”

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: And what are we doing? Again, because the role and function of the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force enshrined in the Constitution has to do with support of the police, an aid to civil power if and when required. And by doing that, they are going out there; they are providing the patrol; it is a hearts and mind campaign, and they are providing that deterrent.

Crime is a product of opportunity. The greater the deterrent, the less likelihood someone will want to commit a crime because now there is a greater chance of them being apprehended. We are putting heavy emphasis in certain hotspot areas. Again, there is a saying that, “do so eh like so”, because the same people who are complaining—I could go back to 2008, an article in the *Guardian*, Richplain and Bagatelle:

Following Sunday killing, heavy support from the police and the army. People in full support.

2008: Heavily armed soldiers keep watch in Laventille.

2007: Soldiers were due to take up positions in Mount Hope from last evening. They joined the armed policemen.

2007: Morvant shopkeeper stated that she believes the police and army have been going all out and this is what needs to be done.

And we could go on and on.

2006, East Dry River, Laventille: The criminals running scared. We need police and army here 24/7.

The list goes on and on. So why is it that when you are on the left side of the Speaker, you automatically figure that it is wrong and demonize soldiers, but then when you come on his right side—when you were on his right side you see all the value and the importance of the military?

So I am not here to try to continue to discredit statements that were made, what I am here to do is to show—let us stop demonizing our law enforcement officials. They are here to protect us. And it gets worse. Now we are hearing statements of police brutality, and police are just shooting at random. Mr. Speaker, you know the sad thing about this is that we continue to—*[Interruption]*

Dr. Browne: Who is saying that?

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: No, I am not calling any names, but the statements are being made that give the impression that the police are going above and beyond. Some people have deliberately been trying to demonize the police to say that they are shooting from the hip, and they have gone reckless. But let us

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look at something here, Mr. Speaker. There have been over 200 shootings of police officers since 2012. So in the last 32 months, on over 200 occasions police have been shot at. That means every five days in this country someone has shot at a police officer.

What do we expect? Do we expect the police officer to just throw marshmallows at the criminals? Every five days an officer is shot at by criminal elements, and then when the police officers return fire, you want to demonize them. And I could give you an example of how dangerous that is. I am not in any way—and we have no intention to defend any police officer that he would not use minimum force. If he has abused his authority, he would face the full brunt of the law. He would be disciplined. But look at this. This is an example of how dangerous this is, because the good thing is, I have the training in national security and law enforcement.

When you have a situation with a—there was a soldier yesterday, someone tried to steal his car. He drew the firearm at the soldier—because the person, I know him well. He drew the firearm at the soldier and said, “I am taking your car now”. It was a Chrome 38, now in the hands of the Morvant police station. The soldier, with his immediate action drills—the IA drills—went low, drew his firearm and aimed. At any point, Mr. Speaker, the fact is that that officer had a right to fire that trigger—to operate that trigger—because if anybody has a weapon pointed at you, it is your right to defend yourself.

Do you know what he did, Mr. Speaker, because of what is happening now in this country, because of the people demonizing the law enforcement? He hesitated. He waited for a few seconds and said, “Sir, I had to hold because I saw what was going on now. I was afraid that if I fired, I would have to pay the price”. Those few seconds could have cost him his life.

So we need to be very careful about demonizing police officers. I am not saying—the 30 police killings might all be because the police went beyond, but they might all not be, and this is where I come to the point that five officers have been shot at. Every five days an officer has been shot at. [*Interruption*] I am not calling names, but the statements have been made about extrajudicial killings and police officers firing indiscriminately and—[*Interruption*]

Mrs. Mc Intosh: By whom?

Miss Cox: That does not mean there is no cause for concern.

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: No, no, wait. But the point is, when these statements are made, it can affect the law enforcement officers from knowing

when to press that trigger. It can cost him his life. It can also cost the lives of those he is trying to protect. So all I am saying, Mr. Speaker, is when we have a situation that every five days officers are shot at, let us check ourselves and realize that these men are out there, putting their lives at risk every single day, and if they are shot at, they have been forced to do nothing else but to defend themselves.

Mr. Speaker, bearing that in mind, it is very sad that we are aware that every five days police officers are shot at, four of them have been killed, 14 have actually been injured in shootouts in the last 30 months—200 shot in all. And here it is, again as a Government we say look, let us try to get policies. What can we do to protect our law enforcement officers? So we did our research and we said, they need to be protected because if you are in the back of a pickup and someone throws a hand grenade or someone fires a round more than a nine millimetre and it is a 556 semi-automatic rifle, it will penetrate the vehicle. It can easily go through a glass. So let us get something called armoured personnel carriers. And lo and behold, here we are, trying to provide something to defend our law enforcement officers, not as an assault weapon, not as an assault vehicle because it has no armament, nothing for assault; no weaponry at all, but we are providing something so that our law enforcement officers can be protected, and somebody jumps up: “Expensive toys”. Now you refer—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Imbert: It was boys with toys.

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: Yes, boys with toys. So we have our law enforcement officers being referred to, let us give them a toy; it is not necessary to protect our law enforcement officers. Mr. Speaker, I will go down fighting to defend our law enforcement officers and to provide them with the tools that are required. [*Desk thumping*]

So we are going into hotspot areas and then some people would say, “\$1.2 million? That is an expensive toy”. Well, let us disregard the lives of police officers; let us have a no-care approach about the family that might never see their loved one coming back home, whether it is soldier, sailor, police officer, because \$1.2 million is too much. Let them die. Let us just say that, if people are being so thoughtless. But cost benefit analysis, you have a vehicle with four persons in it and you throw one hand grenade and all four of them are killed, guess what happens? We now have to pay \$4 million. So out of basic common sense, basic dollars and cents, if not out of humanitarian aspects and understanding the value of a life, how could you say that is an expensive toy?

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But you know what? Just now. What is this I have here? Wait. “Ay”, I have the budget from the PNM in October 2004, and what does it say on Security? They were boasting about armoured personnel carriers for force protection. [*Desk thumping*] So the boys with toys, from the budget in 2004 boasted—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: Read that.

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: “The Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force is also being made more effective to confront the security challenges facing the nation by being provided with the right mix of skills, competencies and manpower. The TTDF has adopted a strategy of simultaneous engagements on several fronts and will be given additional assets, including:

Armoured personnel carriers...”

Boys with toys in 2004. But you know what the difference is, Mr. Speaker? The thing is, we are aware of what is required and we are looking after the interest and we will provide that. They knew what was required, they could not provide it, and we are doing it for our law enforcement officers. [*Desk thumping*]

So, Mr. Speaker, there is a saying again, “Do as I say but not as I do”. So when you were there on the right side of the Speaker, you thought it was important; you go on the left, and every time we try to do something to help our law enforcement officials, you try to attack.

But it gets better. You see it being an expensive toy for armoured vehicles to protect our law enforcement officials, but at that same time they boast about armed helicopters for surveillance and drug interdiction. So now, this is a difference. We are speaking about armoured personnel carriers with no weaponry to protect people, and you thought that was bad, but you are boasting about having helicopters with weaponry.

Mr. Speaker, I have been in a lot of ranges. I was involved in all sorts of different patrols, and I can tell you it is very difficult to be in a helicopter putting live fire onto the ground. So by doing that, it is quite possible that their intention was to actually fire at criminal elements, whether it is somebody smoking a marijuana joint, and then with that, you might very well attack someone else, shoot the wrong person, and then with that, civilians would have been killed. But again, the words of collateral damage meant nothing at that time.

Mr. Speaker, why is it, it is okay to have armed helicopters; it is okay to have armoured personnel carriers, but it is incorrect now to do it to protect our law enforcement officers? Because nine years ago we never had the problem that we

have now where every five days a police officer is shot at. So we are doing what is required.

But you know what, Mr. Speaker? It got worse because we go into this situation again. It reminds me of this—it is like a road march we make, over and over. And to those on the other side, I will ask them, the anti-crime initiatives made in that era, they were weighed, measured and found wanting, and that was a fact. The concept of SAUTT and OPVs, that failed. Instead of trying to regurgitate and defend something—it did not work. I keep hearing about this situation with the Special Anti-Crime Unit. The Special Anti-Crime Unit—and, again, we are speaking about the comparison with the National Operations Centre—is chalk and cheese. Again, the value of the Special Anti-Crime Unit—there were certain things that can be of value, but the problem with the Special Anti-Crime Unit—and most of the people who are on that side of the Bench said they were never involved; this was based on someone's mind and he decided to go with it.

You cannot have an operational element outside of the law enforcement agencies, and that is what caused the problem. When you had the Special Anti-Crime Unit, you extracted manpower, you took assets, and they had operational command. When you do that, it will cause bad blood. It affects morale; it will cause competition, and with that, the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service and the defence force were affected.

What made it worse, you take \$5,000 to give to this elite few and put them into the Special Anti-Crime Unit. That must affect morale. We always speak about the importance of the detection rate and intelligence, but you form another intelligence agency in the Special Anti-Crime Unit to then compete with the Special Branch and other intelligence agencies. More competition, more crabs in a barrel; people competing for turf; people fighting to show that they are more important than the other. What does that do? The nation is affected in security.

That is what happened in 1990 when we had that situation. And what we have done now is to collaborate all the intelligence agencies into one cohesive unit through the SSA, and with that you can get real time information, then turn into real time intelligence for real time operation. So when we speak about the Special Anti-Crime Unit, it is unfortunate but during the era of the Special Anti-Crime Unit, crime was at its highest. The murder rate was at its highest in the history of this country: kidnappings, rape, armed robbery.

Hon. Member: Nonsense.

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: And I will bring all the statistics right here. I heard “nonsense”. Well, let us just go with it. Thanks for saying “nonsense”.

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In 2008, the murder rate was 548; 2013 it went down by 20 per cent. In 2009—let us look at the last year that we had SAUTT. [*Crosstalk*] Woundings and shootings, compared to last year, down by 23 per cent. Rapes, down by 26 per cent; serious indecency, down by 56 per cent; kidnapping, down by 27 per cent; kidnapping for ransom, 87 per cent; burglaries, down by 49 per cent; robberies, down by 52 per cent; fraud offences, general larceny, down by 36 per cent; larceny of motor vehicles, reduced by 40 per cent; larceny in dwelling houses, reduced by 41 per cent; narcotic offences—

3.30 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, and you know, the next thing is, they will say you are playing with statistics because people are not reporting the crime. You cannot hide a murder, you cannot hide a rape, you cannot hide a kidnapping, you cannot hide if your car is stolen, because the people will report it. They will report it. So, to try to claim with this new red herring: “Well, the people are not reporting crime”, that is why all serious crime has been reduced by 38 per cent in all; [*Desk thumping*] 38 per cent. So, all of a sudden, we now have this situation that people are not reporting crime but they were reporting it when SAUTT was there, it was okay to report crime but they are not reporting it now. Mr. Speaker, it is a fact.

But again, do you know what they are trying to say? The police, they are lying; to say that crime has gone down, it is not true. Well, again, it is a fact that in the last 30 years, all serious crime—last year, the serious crime reported was 13,000. That was the lowest number of serious crimes in the last 30 years in this country. [*Desk thumping*] And, Mr. Speaker, this is in no way to say that we have achieved our mission, that we are there, but we are in the right direction, and the right direction has nothing to do with anti-crime policies. It has to do with four principles to ensure that your policies can work in the right direction: good leadership, good management, accountability and to measure performance. And these four things would be utilized through specific policies, and not through anti-crime initiatives and hit and hope. Hit and hope and then—I will give you a simple example.

You have a blimp. The blimp was based on someone’s idea. He probably watched the national—the NFL final with Goodyear and figured this is the way to go. You cannot compare a Goodyear blimp—we had 17 soldiers running to try to catch this thing with a rope and holding this rope to try to pull the Goodyear blimp. Seventeen trained men trying to catch a blimp and that is how you held down the blimp and that is a crime policy. Mr. Speaker, welcome to the 21st

Century. There is something called Unmanned Aerial Vehicles, UAVs, and that is the difference. So, again, and we can look at all the initiatives that we will have towards ensuring that we can continue to move in this way.

But, the National Operations Centre, it does not have control. The National Operations Centre is doing just the opposite to what SAUTT was doing. It acts as a communicational platform. It acts as that collaboration to ensure that all the agencies work together, they trust each other, they have that sense of communication and understanding to ensure that you have successful operations. Mr. Speaker, again, going back to the situation where there is this concern and the fear of crime. We can continue to put in the right policies and the law enforcement officers will continue to perform, but even if it is that serious crime is reduced, if that perception and fear of crime is still there, we would have still failed. So, we are continuing to look at the importance of taking away that perception and fear of crime.

There are a number of different objectives that we achieved during the last year, but, Mr. Speaker, we will always look at the ultimate barometer with the concerns for crime, which will be murder. But, Mr. Speaker, there are, and again, 250 out of the 400 persons murdered last year, they were persons involved in gang activity. It is unfortunate and that is the last piece in the puzzle for us to find a way to dismantle the gangs. Because there is a saying: the problem with living outside the law is you can no longer benefit from the protection of it, and that is exactly what has happened right now with the problems we have with gang warfare. Because if you have individuals involved in gang activity—
[*Interruption*]

Dr. Browne: Who said that?

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: Mr. John Dillinger. Anything else?

Dr. Browne: You know who is that?

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: “Nah, yuh are a good man.” [*Laughter*]
[*Crosstalk*] Mr. Speaker, I am hearing voices in the wilderness there. So, there are different initiatives that we have but the problem with gang activity is that if you can dismantle the gangs, it means that the murder rate can then go down astronomically and that is an important fact. We are putting in many different policies to deal with the reduction of gang warfare, but it also goes hand in hand with something known as secondary crime prevention.

The Ministry of National Security, our focus for the last fiscal year involved primary crime prevention, and that has to do with law enforcement, hard

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targeting, deterrent, intelligence gathering, arrest and that is important. But it is also important into the concept of secondary crime prevention. Secondary crime prevention involves having persons use their energies away from a life of crime and the social aspects of crime prevention are very important. But, within the last year, we have seen a much higher visibility of law enforcement officers on the nation's roadways via the rebranding of the Highway Patrol Unit. Never in the history of this country have we seen such high presence. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, we also had the launch of the E-999 where the population now, they have a powerful tool when reporting crimes. It is recorded, we have computerized statistics, CompStat. We are able to ascertain the crime, look at the situation and then we can utilize the resources in that manner. So when you have the E-999 system now, gone are the days when someone will call and you will hear a police officer say, "Well, ma'am, I do not have a vehicle" or "Ma'am, we do not have a driver". We now have the checks and balances which go straight into my point of the four principles for law enforcement: good leadership, management, accountability and measuring performance.

By measuring performance and having accountability, we can now ensure that vehicles are now placed in specific locations. They are now put in an area of responsibility based on the threat assessment. So if you cut it into 40 different parts of Trinidad and Tobago, we can state how many vehicles of the rapid response are required in that particular area. They are now put on GPS. The GPS will ensure now that they are accountable, we can measure their performance. If the call is made, we can ascertain how fast that officer arrived to that location. By doing that, they will be left with no choice but to perform.

Also, through the E-999, we can now look at the call, pinpoint where the call is, look at the vehicles in closest proximity to that call to ensure that you can have an immediate response. This has never happened before, Mr. Speaker. Hence the reason why it is we have now provided that deterrent, hence the reason why we have now provided that greater presence, and that greater presence, that greater visibility will now play a big part in taking away that perception and fear of crime.

Apart from the highway patrol, apart from the E-999, we also have the heavy presence from the Rapid Response Unit and that is just what I spoke about. The Rapid Response Unit provides that avenue, apart from greater visibility, it provides that deterrent; it also will take away that perception that people feel that no one is there to help them, and also, it ensures that a situation that may have been a misdemeanour based on the vehicle not responding to that situation, it may

have escalated into a serious crime. So the Rapid Response Unit has been very successful in providing that.

And again, when we have reached a point, Mr. Speaker, that persons will actually say that they are hearing the sirens too much, they are seeing too many blue lights, well, expect to see a lot more very soon, because we intend to turn this place into a blue light district. We intend to put as many police vehicle patrols all over this country to provide that deterrent, to provide that heavy visibility to ensure that you take away that perception and fear of crime. That is our objective. Because, yes, we are reducing crime but we also have to take away that perception and fear of crime, and this is being done through the policies that we spoke about.

Mr. Speaker, it also involves the launch of the Community Comfort Patrol Programme which has greatly assisted the police in that mobility providing those extra eyes and ears, and also to provide that extra deterrent. As I spoke about the launch of the National Operations Centre, for the first time, we are actually seeing that collaboration and working relationship with all different arms of law enforcement.

Mr. Speaker, we also had the establishment of the National Security Special Operations Group which was a specialized group comprising members of various law enforcement agencies. And this group will respond to events that require a higher level of response. The Unit is highly mobile and will be capable of managing any situation. It can involve hostage negotiation, counterterrorist activity, and improvise explosive devices. This is the type of unit that is required to ensure that we can deal with any situation if it may occur. As I have stated a couple of weeks ago, there were concerns of 1990 and what happened after that. Because of the proper systems that we have now, if at any time, any group of insurgents attempt anything even remotely close to 1990, I could assure you, Mr. Speaker, because of the policies that we have, because of the tools that we have, because of the strategies that we have, whereas in 1990, it took a few weeks to deal with, this time it will be dealt with in a few hours. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, again, we also had the formal establishment of the Energy Sector Security Initiative which is something that is very critical to ensure that you look into the protection of critical energy infrastructure. The ESSI has conducted reviews of the nation's critical energy infrastructure, including offshore and onshore oil and gas facilities, and this is where it is important we have a proper system to ensure that we secure the energy sector through proper systems for security.

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We also had the establishment of the National Security Training Academy. Again, in Cumuto Barracks, under the Special Anti-Crime Unit, you had this training facility but, again, the training facility was there for a chosen few. What we are doing now is to ensure that we provide the systems in the National Security Training Academy to ensure that each and every law enforcement officer has that ability to go forward, go and train and actually be considered Trinidad and Tobago's finest. And if it is they did not have the opportunity, obviously it will affect them in the performance of their duties because if they do not have the capability to train, how can they perform? So the National Security Training Academy will provide a variety of different systems to ensure that the law enforcement officers have what is required.

An indoor training range: How can we have a law enforcement agency and they do not have a range to train? We also have situations for simulation theatres for different scenarios. And also, it goes right back into the importance of ensuring that our officers have the tools that are required and it goes right back to the minimum use of force policy. Whereas before, the police officer will only have the tools from the baton and to move immediately to the firearm. Now, through the minimum use of force, we will be providing him with the tools. The first concept will be communication system and that communication will now ensure he can call for immediate backup. It will also ensure that he will have the baton and then he can move to the pepper spray, to the tasers, and then after to the firearm being the last resort based on the escalation of the threat assessment being so high, he will be left with no resort but to then use his firearm. If he does not have that now, he has no choice but to use his firearm.

So we do understand the importance of providing the tools for the law enforcement officers, but also to have them trained. It involves other aspects, areas to provide them to deal with roadblocks, cordon and search, checkpoint, joint operations, dealing with fighting in built-up areas, counterrevolutionary warfare, and these aspects will all be provided in the National Security Training Academy so that these officers can then be properly trained.

We do also understand the importance for customer service training because it is an unwritten contract. That contract involves the police officer stating: I, the police officer, am willing to provide you with your fundamental right to safety and security, but you as the citizen, you must give me the information that is required, HUMINT, that human intelligence. That is the importance for the citizens to give the police officers that information that is required. The citizen, on the other hand, is then saying to himself: I am willing to help you, I am willing to

give you that information but you must respect me as a citizen to understand that you work for me. If we can bridge that gap, bring back that, that is going to be an unbeatable combination to defeat the criminal elements. That is why the importance we are seeing in customer service training, providing that type of training so that the law enforcement officer will know how to speak to persons, how to deal with citizens and how to have them respect them.

Mr. Speaker, we can actually look at all of the different scenarios to show that there was a reduction in crime but even in major events, I think it was a known fact, in every single poll that was stated, it was stated that the Trinidad and Tobago Carnival 2014 was regarded as the safest Carnival ever. [*Desk thumping*] It had a very big part to play in that same joint collaboration with the National Operations Centre where for the first time, there was that joint working relationship. If at any time something happened, we were immediately getting that real-time information to have that interception. Where through the helicopters, you are getting live feed being passed on to the National Operations Centre. Through the calls, we were able to tell if a situation was escalating, if we need to have backup and proper response. This provided the deterrent. It made people feel safe, because, again, I want to stress that crime reduction is important, but to take away the perception and a fear of crime, it is just as important, and that is what we intend to do.

Mr. Speaker, as we also look at the concept of human trafficking, I am pleased to state that we moved from Tier 2 Watch List to Tier 2 on the USA report on human trafficking.

3.45 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: The speaking time of the hon. Minister of National Security has expired. Hon. Minister, would you like an extension?

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the question is that the speaking time of the Hon. Minister of National Security be extended by 10 minutes.

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We do know the importance and the concern of human trafficking and they charged 10 persons and rescued 13 persons and, as I said, we have now been upgraded to Tier 2 on the Watch List. So, again, we are in the right direction even with human trafficking.

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As we deal with a working relationship with our international allies, in 2005 and 2008, we had a security cooperation agreement with Colombia and Venezuela, respectively. It went dormant and we actually now have reignited that security cooperation agreement, and now we are getting a good working relationship with both Colombia and Venezuela, and this has a very big part to play, not just in communication but in joint operations, in joint training. With Venezuela, we have something called VenTri, Venezuela/Trinidad Training, and this is playing a big part in us understanding each other, knowing your area of responsibility. When could we ever think that you will hear Venezuela actually state that the La Guardia Nacional must understand their role and function and they must not usurp their authority? Because just before, you heard the concerns about the La Guardia Nacional. So now we are actually working with the Venezuelans. We are actually working with Colombia Government. We are understanding and getting information to assist us in the problems with human trafficking.

Mr. Speaker, also there was the increase of CCTVs with 500 cameras throughout Trinidad and Tobago, and the difference with this is now it is being fed to one central coordinating area, upon which we can then have an immediate response if required.

Mr. Speaker, we also had the re-establishment of the Transnational Organized Crime Unit, and with this, you know many times we boast about the success of our foreign international law enforcement allies, but the Transnational Organized Crime Unit they were very instrumental in the seizure of over US \$300 million in cocaine that was actually going off to Europe and another US \$100 million and that had to do, again, with what we have built. Never before have we had this type of heavy working relationship with our allies from the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Venezuela, China, France, Spain, Colombia, Italy, to name a few.

Mr. Speaker, I could go on and on. But, I can speak that we can—
[*Interruption*]

Dr. Browne: Thank you very much for giving way, hon. Minister. I just wanted to know if you could inform the House, any update, on the killing of that defence force officer, or the mysterious death of the defence force officer at the base? Has there been any progress with that investigation? There was a report that it may have been asthma, it was homicide, et cetera. Any light you could shed here?

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: Mr. Speaker, that is still ongoing. But I think he was playing football. That is not the one who was playing football? What I will do, I will find out exactly what that is pertaining to.

Let me just quickly look at Tobago. We have taken a very strong interest in the security for Tobago as well, because, as I have said, a safer Tobago means a safer Trinidad, and again it has to do with policies. It is a fact that Tobago is much safer but if we allow criminal elements to migrate into Tobago, what it will do, it will cause the law enforcement agencies to now have to extract many resources and even manpower strength into Tobago. By doing this, it will affect security in Trinidad. So what we are doing, Mr. Speaker, is keeping that grid around Tobago and we can boast that in 2013, there has been a 39 per cent reduction in serious crime in Tobago. There has been a 96 per cent reduction in tourist-related crime. The improvement in the detection rate in Tobago has increased from 20 to 25 per cent. There has been an increase in police officers, and we have had a number of different initiatives done in Tobago, and we will continue to operate in that manner.

Mr. Speaker, as I move on, we can also look at the concerns about maritime security. Again, it goes right back into the situation with the OPV. Please, the OPV, it was something again, that was weighed, measured and found wanting. We are not saying that it is not important for us to have that type of vessel. But what, again, you have to look at is where the threat is. The threat, whereas an offshore patrol vessel is a vessel that is used to secure your exclusive economic zone. Your exclusive economic zone is from 12 miles to 200 miles and that would be in your deep water. That is in the north and the east coast in the Atlantic Ocean. It is important for us to secure our exclusive economic zone. However, it is a fact that the major amount of illegal entry of weapons, drugs and human trafficking comes from the low-lying waters in the Gulf of Paria and the south coast. So what we are doing is actually putting those proper deterrents and the type of security wall that is required.

The three-tier approach will involve tier one, providing a situation of lockdown from the shoreline to two miles out. That will provide the use of hovercraft, going into the swamps, going into the low-lying waters, because the criminal elements have the flat-bottom boats. It will also involve interceptors.

Mr. Speaker, we then go into tier two. Tier two involves 50-metre vessels and the unfortunate thing had to do with the previous administration, they acquired six Austal vessels and they were lemons. They are all now virtually unserviceable.

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We then go into tier three, which has to do with the offshore patrol vessel. Mr. Speaker, they continue to say that they shut down the OPV and the OPV was the be-all and end-all to reduce criminal activity. Mr. Speaker, HUMINT, intelligence is what is important. If you put 100 OPVs in the water and you do not know where the drugs are coming from, the OPVs will be of no use. So which is critical/the important—it is not the boast about asset acquisition, it has to do with intelligence. But more importantly, when you acquire assets, it must equate with manpower strength. Because the OPV required 70 persons. With the rotation, that 70 plus 70, and then after you have to look at the attrition rate, based on resettlement, training, retirements, and so forth. You require at least 170 to 180 persons to fully man an OPV. And then, when you multiply that by three, Mr. Speaker, we did not have enough for one OPV and the reason for that, they did not even have enough to man the six Austal vessels. So had we gone ahead, we would have acquired three OPVs and they would have been just parked up in Staubles Bay because they did not equate with manpower strength acquisition. In addition, Mr. Speaker, when you get these assets, you must have the manpower strength acquisition and you must have the proper training to facilitate it.

I did hear the Member of Parliament for Laventille East/Morvant, she said that she was told there were four things about the OPV: we must change the name. Yes, that is true. We said we must change the name of the OPV because the OPV equates with blight, lemon, failure and there is no need to call it an OPV. The Brazilians took it and they changed the name to an Ocean Patrol Vessel. You know what, Mr. Speaker? The Brazilians have an exclusive economic zone that goes out for miles.

Dr. Browne: Ocean Patrol Vessel?

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: Ocean Patrol Vessel.

Mr. Imbert: What is the acronym?

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: Offshore Patrol Vessel. Mr. Speaker, one word is offshore, one word is ocean. Let us understand. Mr. Speaker, again the cost. When you look at the comparison of the cost, if it is that you are going into a business and someone tries to sell something to you and it is that the court says you need to give the person back their money, it means that it was a failure because by right, the court said: listen: it was a lemon, give it back.

Mr. Speaker, I could speak about the number of different things. We have the construction of nine fire stations that will be upcoming. [*Desk thumping*] We have constructed of eight police stations last year. [*Desk thumping*] We have eight

other police stations that would be constructed this year. [*Desk thumping*] We have the acquisition of coastal patrol vessels, hovercraft, interceptors and UAVs, helicopters, a proper system for the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Management. But all of this, Mr. Speaker, one thing that we need, one thing that is important for us to ensure that we have success, it is not just tools, it is not just idle boast that we indeed reduced crime, it has to do with the political will and what we are doing. We will continue to have that political will to do what is right.

I might be deemed politically young and sound mean, but I assure you, Mr. Speaker, I would never be red or green. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

Mrs. Paula Gopee-Scoon (*Point Fortin*): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of National Security—I am not going to spend much time on him—came here in his usual state of exuberance, animation and jazziness. I saw him blowing kisses across the floor. No, that was for the public gallery, as usual. But I need some clarification, Mr. Speaker. He said that the role of the Government is to promote all that the law enforcement agencies require and they are not the ones to come up with the crime plan. I find that difficult to believe and I ask the question then: Who is responsible for the crime plan and what is the role of the National Security Council on which the hon. Member sits and, of course, the Prime Minister is at the helm of that organization as well. So I need clarification on who is supposed to prepare the crime plan.

But apart from that, I was very disappointed in the quotation by John Dillinger, which he used. He said those who break the law are not entitled to its protection. I really wonder, that statement needs some further depth because it really sends a signal that democracy is really under threat in this nation, and I am very disappointed that he would come in this honourable House and use a quotation by John Dillinger, who is an American gang leader, a most famous bank robber. [*Desk thumping*] I think he robbed 24 banks, robbed four police stations as well. He is a murderer. We know the movie *Public Enemy*. Johnny Depp acted as John Dillinger. Very disappointed that this is the kind of quotation that you would bring to the House, quoting someone who has broken the law; a notorious person who has broken the law. But I am aware that the Member has some ambitious programmes for transforming—[*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Please, Members, please!

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: I am aware that the Member has some ambitious programmes for transforming Trinidad and Tobago's defence and security capability. So I am told in a letter by Mike Anderson, the Director General

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International on Immigration Policy who when he wrote, from the Home Office in the UK, the hon. Winston Dookeran—he did, and this was to inform of the decision to actually impose a visa regime on Trinidad and Tobago nationals. This was because the whole question of transnational organized crime has not been fully attended to and that this is at the root of the criminal activities in Trinidad and Tobago. So, I am aware that he is—I am told in this letter from the UK about this ambitious programme.

We see spots of it in the news, and so on, and when he comes on occasions like we just had today. But it is confirmed in this letter by the Home Office and this is that Trinidad and Tobago, the UK has in fact taken a decision to impose a visa regime. That letter is dated December 19, 2013. But they have only suspended the implementation of the decision until January 2015. But, of course, they have not come clean with the public and the public knows nothing about this. So when in fact we in the—[*Interruption*] yes we need it to go to England—PNM, when we were trying to—in fact the approval was given by the European Union. When we sought to have visas waived for visits to Europe for three months, for the number of persons who love going to Europe on vacation, this Government has in fact put us in a position where the UK has said they have decided to impose a visa regime. I hope that they would do enough in the six months prior to January 2015, so that we could be relieved of that burden. In fact, it is a right we have enjoyed since Independence. Since becoming independent in 1962, every Trinidadian knows that they can go to the UK for a period of up to three months without a visa. So I have some concerns. Minister of Foreign Affairs, I would want to hear about that.

I propose to review the work of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs under the scheduled responsibilities as laid out by the President when I was the foreign minister. I do not believe it has changed. It is only that the responsibilities for foreign policy are the responsibilities of the hon. Prime Minister. But I would look at things like external relations, overseas missions, and so on, Caricom and the wider affairs and I may mention consular matters and multilateral relations, and so on.

Pages 78 to 79 of the *Public Sector Investment Programme 2015*, defines the strategic vision of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs under this administration. And it says, and I quote:

They see “Trinidad and Tobago as the regional leader and influential actor in international fora, promoting and sustaining its national interests...”

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Of course, national interest being energy and energy industries, et cetera and it goes on further with the quotation.

I want to say, however, that I see very little evidence of the Ministry's influence in the promotion of any of the country's economic interest in any intense and meaningful way. And if it is that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has, then the message has certainly not been getting out. So I would say that it is failing, both in terms of its intended outreach to the right audience, when it comes to economic diplomacy—so that is to the audience abroad—and also to its domestic audience here. In other words, diplomacy has not taken place.

What I am saying is that foreign affairs and foreign policy is everybody's business. It has become everybody's business and our nation desperately needs dialogue on these matters.

4.00 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, I think there is a moral imperative—it does not matter whichever the ministry is—to be guided by, the welfare of the most ordinary citizen in this country, because we are here to serve them. Perhaps it is time that the elitist look of the Ministry—I tried very hard, when I was the minister—that elitist style is, in fact, broken down and so on. There is a perception even so by the other ministries. I think sometimes people have no idea what goes on, but it has to be fixed, Minister. Even the Prime Minister, therefore, as she conducts her foreign policy and foreign affairs and so on, it is very important how it is promoted, that there must be accountability and there must be justification for everything that we do or appear to do.

So, when you look at foreign travel—I will tell you that this is a Government that is over travelled. Minister of Foreign Affairs, if you examine the Ministry's Head of expenditure—this is not an attack on you personally, I have great respect for you; I will say that—I think you will make history as, perhaps, one of the most travelled foreign ministers. When I look under another head in the OPM, I see extensive travel, as well, for the hon. Prime Minister; trips to India, China and so on with many stopovers in Panama. I have to ask myself, to what end? You see, because I do believe that travel decisions must be focused and in line with national priorities. Our national priorities at this time are economic and the overall promotion of our domestic policy.

So that is something that I do not see happening on the other side, press conferences. When you return from a trip or so, press conferences are mandatory and they must be articulated in a way that the public understands. In other words,

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how does it serve my interest? What is in it for me? Those are the kinds of statements that must be made. In other words, trips must be results-oriented and they must be—yes they must be aggressive in intent, but they, definitely, must be results-oriented.

So that Minister—[*Interruption*] I need your protection, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I need your protection.

Mr. Speaker: Who is disturbing you?

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: All; the Members for Couva North, Oropouche West.

Mr. Speaker: Well, you have my protection. Please, allow the Member to proceed in silence.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: I refer to the *Daily Express* of Friday, September 05, headlined, “Dookeran talks economic integration”. It is that he was there to speak:

“...on the future of economic integration in the Caribbean, its likely impact on the labour market, and how improved partnerships between government, private sector and the labour movement can contribute to better labour market outcomes for the region.”

I think this is very, very good stuff, very good discussion. I cannot fault you for that, but all the way in Samoa, to the extent where you missed your coalition’s last budget reading; its very last budget reading, which was very important.

So four and half years into Government here we have, to my mind, continuing academic discussion because, really, I have not seen any output from these kinds of discussions on economic integration, convergence and so on. To my mind it has been rather a discussion and I have not seen it translated into reality. So, I have not seen that economic diplomacy has actually been promoted and turned into any substance at all. So, I say, valuable discussion, yes, but have you really done anything about integration? Is there a policy on integration especially towards the Caribbean and the wider Caribbean from your Government? I am saying, no.

I feel that many of the meetings that you attend are unwarranted, some of them seem to be technical in nature. I have been keeping a track of them but, again, you have to be careful about your colleagues, you know. These things are easily approved, especially, perhaps, the Minister of Housing loves to act and I understand when he acts he dabbles in all sorts of policy matters. You really have to watch them. You really have to watch them because, maybe, in some Cabinet meetings they do not want you there. I know that you are a man of principle and I

could very well understand why they rather have you out rather than in. [Interruption] Out rather than in.

When I look at external relations, Mr. Speaker, global challenges, regional challenges and our own national issues prompt us and require us to continually assess and to shift our domestic agenda. It is that our energy industry contributes substantially to our country's GDP, 39 per cent in 2014. Of course, there has been a surge in shale production in the US. There have been major oil and gas discoveries onshore and offshore all over the world, on continents and even closer to home and there are new plants and export projects around the globe. So that Trinidad and Tobago is really forced to rethink its energy strategies, even for the long term, so, it is not at all prosperity as this budget would imply. In fact, to my mind, this budget is irresponsible budgeting, especially from the point of view that our revenues are uncertain, especially in the short to medium term.

The Minister glibly projects that the growth momentum is expected to be maintained over the medium term 2015 to 2017, but I do not see how this could be done. There is no gas master plan, no realistic energy plan. All this huff and puff about a gas master plan, to this date, I do not believe it has been given out. I know that the Central Tenders Board had issued an international tender and I would imagine there were several companies that would have responded, but to date there is no gas master plan being prepared by any named company, consultant or anything like that. I know in 2002 we had done one; Gaffney and Cline had done it on behalf of the Trinidad and Tobago Government; there is none.

So, I am saying there are no realistic plans and really, your Government has totally ignored the imperative of diversifying the economy since you came into office. So, I make the point that economic reforms are an absolute must and, therefore, Minister it is people like you—you need to be in attendance at these Cabinet meetings—you need to be the voice of pragmatism and reality as I know, that can come from you. [*Desk thumping*]

It is from that posture that I would expect that you and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs would evoke a more dynamic, defined, aggressive economic diplomacy with particular nations. Surely, we want to keep our linkages with the entire rest of the world, but more than ever, given the global environment, our situation demands that economics must be at the heart of the relationship with nations. I am sure you will agree with me, it is economics at this time.

So that our bilateral relations must be intrinsically linked to our economic imperatives. For every trip, for every visit, there must be concrete business

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imperatives of national interest and of a direct benefit to our citizens. Yes, we have had visits from the heads of states of Japan and China. We even had the US Vice-President, Joe Biden, visit our shores but they were not here at our invitation, they were coming to the region, they were pursuing their own interest. Trinidad is a convenient place to stop off for many reasons. They wanted to meet with Caricom and then somebody had to pick up the tab for Caricom. So, here we are. We see ourselves in a much more fortunate position than Caricom and I do not have an issue with that, but I am asking: What are the concrete developments that are coming out of these visits and what projects and what programmes? These are the definitive things that we want to hear from you. What is being pursued?

So that specific approaches are needed in pursuance of our economic agenda with our international partners. I am saying there must be sustained pursuit of potential foreign investors. That must come out from your Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Surely, the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs, the Ministry of Trade and so on would be doing their work but the point is there must be sustained effort of potential foreign investors from your Ministry. Your visits and the visits of all your experts and so on must constitute active marketing to corporations, to lending agencies in the interest of our local investors. Our missions abroad must be in constant contact with this stock of investors in particular countries, in other words, like hot prospects and out of many will come one. That is the kind of approach that we should have, very aggressive. There must be active pursuit with follow-up visits by business delegations and our joint commissions, which we have with particular countries, those must be a means for exacting real prospects for business opportunities. We need that.

We must maintain a robust business network externally in countries that are relevant to our local business interest. Yes, use lobbyists, but my ears are always up when it comes to lobbyists as well. I do not like men in three-piece suits and shiny shoes and so on, so yes we need them but we have to be aware. Summit conferences, again—for which your Government has found a new love—must yield results. We must have maximum gain from all of these summit conferences. Right?

So the Ministry, in building our bilateral relationships, must do so with targets, with action plans and with continuous reporting on your achievements with particular countries. If outside expertise is needed, we must get it and there must be a strong private sector involvement, perhaps, through an economic

development board. Our interest with Latin America and the wider Caribbean must be deepened.

In other words, Minister, I see the Minister of Foreign Affairs, I see the Prime Minister, I see all of you opposite me, I see all those persons in the missions as sales people. That is what we have come to now, aggressive sales people. You are a salesman, all of you are salesmen.

You have spoken about establishing, for instance, a mission in Japan. I will ask you: Have you really analyzed this and is it really feasible? You know what it costs to establish a mission, right.

Our overseas missions: I make the point that they are not in tune with our economic realities. A lot of your political appointees have not been effective at all. I do not think that things are going well in our foreign offices. I think they are just treading water and not going anywhere. There are some major challenges in the consulates. In Miami I am hearing of impropriety; I am hearing of poor employee relations; people being paid and work not being done. In Toronto the Consul General is known to be difficult. There is somebody who is employed inside of there; they are employed in that consulate to serve the people of Trinidad and Tobago, yet, he is writing in our national newspaper castigating the Opposition. That cannot be the role. I have forgotten his name, but he is writing, advancing the interest of the People's Partnership, yet he is an employee doing work on behalf of all of the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. That cannot be right. He needs to be fired.

In New York, we are having some serious challenges resulting in a current matter before the Industrial Court. So, it is turbulence, turbulence, turbulence. In our missions, our UK missions, I am told, is being run by a Foreign Service Officer II, but lately I am hearing that there is a locally recruited person—that is somebody who is living in the UK—who might be managing as well, and that person is not in tune with what is going on in Trinidad and Tobago at all. I understand that that person might as well be involved in the management of it, but not good enough.

In New Delhi, I understand it is either a Foreign Service Officer II or III who is acting. In Ottawa, believe it or not—Ottawa, we have so many interests with Canada—an International Relations Officer, I am told—a recently hired graduate under my watch—is manning that mission. That is impossible. In Costa Rica it is a Foreign Service Officer III; in Abuja, Nigeria, there are no Foreign Service Officers, I am told. So it is the political appointee, a secretary, an accounting officer and nobody else wants to go. I do not know why.

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In South Africa and Brazil, it is just quiet. In Geneva, Ambassador Sandy has no choice but just to leave things; let the experienced foreign service people do their work because he does not know what to do either. In Beijing, I understand—well, you know who is the head of the Beijing Mission—they are already having problems there. In Ottawa, I do not know what High Commissioner Buxo accomplished. In Jamaica, I do not know how effective they are.

We know that in Brussels things are solid because there was a senior Foreign Service Officer who we appointed as Ambassador. I know things are solid there, but in Washington, I mean you are not really getting any umph out of Washington per se. I hear it is dancing whole day. He will know what I mean and some of you will know what I mean by that.

In short order, your appointees have been operating in a manner that is inimical to the interest of the people of Trinidad and Tobago and that is disappointing, and our economic interest is just not in sight; it is not in sight. So that even with the number of unmanned offices at this stage, I read in the papers where you said that you will be making some appointments. At this stage, we are in an election year, we are going to be back in office, I do not think it makes sense making any political appointees. I think what you ought to do is to take some senior FSOs and send them out there to man the offices in the meantime. I think that is the best thing, or bring some of the retirees back out on contract and let us get this ship running a little better than it is. Some attention needs to be given to the head office as well because there is a recently appointed Deputy Permanent Secretary. She is Deputy Permanent Secretary who is Acting Permanent Secretary. She does not have any help in the form of deputy secretary as well. And whilst she might be a good foreign service person, it is almost an impossible task that you are asking her to do.

Even the IROs, I understand there is high turnover; we cannot afford to lose them. There has always been a problem with manpower. You cannot afford to lose them, so you have to press Service Commissions to ensure that there is, in fact, some kind of transfer from the International Relations Officer system into the foreign service system. In the meantime, give them some kind of professional allowance to ensure that they stay to serve this country. We need them as it is. So, there is a lot of work to be done there.

4.15 p.m.

With regard to Caricom affairs. I have not seen this Government, this People's Partnership establish at all, the kind of dominant role, which the PNM once played in the region. I have not seen that. To my mind, it has being strictly maintenance.

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Absolutely no vision and no implementation of any action, which will serve both our interests in terms of the region and ourselves as well. The last Caricom meeting in St. Kitts, the Prime Minister, I understand, barely went in and came out, and stayed there for a few hours, right. So your policy has been inconsistent and, therefore, our legitimate interests have not been served. In fact, it has been compromised and our relations have been unproductive.

We spoke before of the insensitivity as before, but really, I think you need to adopt a focus of integration and not confrontation as we have been doing with the region. So we have to work on enhancing the relationship with Caricom. Even if it is for enhancing business on either side, at least we will ensure that there are reliable markets for our goods and services. We must put in place the kind of mechanisms that are necessary, to assist our business persons in penetrating that regional market, and the extra regional market.

I note that if—I looked at the figures in the budget, and if you exclude our energy sector products, our trade with Caricom has been falling according to the *Review of the Economy 2014*, the balance of trade, excluding mineral fuels, declined by 11.2 per cent, and that is not good at all. We need some answers to that.

Then even looking beyond the Caribbean, there has been no progress in establishing the trading agreements, I am told; not happy with that. We did so much work with the Fifth Summit of the Americas and so on, and it should have opened doors, but I think your Government has squandered away all of those opportunities. So let me quote from the *Review of the Economy 2014* where it says:

“Negotiations for the CARICOM-Canada Trade and Development Agreement, designed to replace the Caribbean-Canada Trade Agreement...”

I am quoting your document:

“...(CARIBCAN) waiver are in an uncertain state.”

You have to give me some reasons why Minister:

“...Negotiations held in June 2014, three key areas still remained outstanding preventing an Agreement, namely Market Access in Goods, Services and Investment.”

These negotiations—in short order, the negotiations have collapsed, and what is worse, is that Trinidad and Tobago is now threatening to go it alone, and

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deciding our own bilateral agreement. So I think what they are going to do now is pick up their marbles and go home, and that to me is a demonstration of a loss of leadership in the region.

So there is still no progress also on the negotiations with El Salvador for a partial scope agreement that began about a year ago. We seem to have successfully concluded negotiations with Guatemala, I believe for a partial scope agreement, but even so, I do not think that agreement which we signed has found favour with our Caricom friends, and they have raised some objections according to your review, to some of the commitments made in the agreement, especially in relation to specific goods such as cheese, breadfruit, sorrel and pharmaceutical products and so on.

Even in cricket, you really have failed us, in terms of your leadership. You know, there are several cricket grounds across the Caribbean capable of staging international cricket. The venue for some matches will be decided at the Caricom level I am told, but despite the interest of the Trinidad and Tobago Cricket Board in hosting one of the games for next year's visit by the touring English cricket team, Trinidad and Tobago failed to be considered because the bid got lost. As far as I understand, it is in the office of the Prime Minister. You tell me, Trinidad—I saw the article in the *Express* newspaper of August 04, 2014 headlined:

“T&T miss out

‘We could not meet the deadline as it required not only TTCB input but Government input.’”

Those are depressing words, Mr. Speaker, very depressing words for us. You know, when they looked for Government's support, the support was not there. It was not forthcoming. The documents were stuck in the office of the Prime Minister, but I do not know where that office is. I understand the Prime Minister now operates out of a San Fernando office at the teaching hospital, as well as from her home in the Philippine. So I do not know where it is stuck, too many places, too many offices, but as far as I am concerned, terrible foreign policy on the part of this Government towards the region.

Multilateral relations: Well, I think our interests are being well served by a very enabled career staff and not the political appointees, you know. On the business of candidatures, I am informed that Minister Bhoendradatt Tewarie is being recommended for the position of the Secretary General of the Commonwealth. [*Laughter*] That was news to me.

Mr. Imbert: Which Bhoendradatt Tewarie?

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: Our Bhoendradatt Tewarie and everybody is beginning to look for positions after they demit office, you know. [*Laughter and crosstalk*] My own view is that the person best suited for that job would be the Member for Tunapuna, [*Desk thumping*] but I am told that it is Minister Bhoendradatt Tewarie. I think this Government has gone so far, I understand there was a candidate who was rejected, a Surinamese who was rejected by the Surinamese Government, but the Trinidad and Tobago Government is promoting that candidate as well. I think that is for the Secretary General of the OAS or some other organization or something like that. It is not easy.

Treaties: I would like to see you do more in terms of treaties. You come here in a budget and, of course, glib again, \$500 for every child from—not that I have a problem with people benefitting, and especially people in need, \$500 for any child born of an underprivileged parent. But you know what I want to hear—this Government looked at treaties, like the Convention on the Rights of the Child, that was ratified by us. It talks about many things that we are not actualizing. It speaks about corporal punishment, for instance, of children, and we know we have had some issues with that in our own country, and which needs to be addressed in a holistic manner by your Government. I mean, these are the kinds of things—exposition, that we should be hearing about, not give 500 there and 500 there. I want you to come and talk about children, right, and come and speak about these treaties like the Convention on the Rights of the Child and so on. Okay.

So I am really looking forward Minister, to an improvement in policy and in particular, in favour of the promotion of economic interests. That to me is most important at this time. I mean it is sale, sale, sale, sale!

I will like to speak a little bit about energy, if I am allowed. Many of our speakers on this side have spoken, but I want to go to the actual *Hansard* of the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs. He came here very defensive, not a well thought out speech, but obviously the Leader of the Opposition drew him out. He came here in hasty retreat and made a number of statements that I just want to speak to. He spoke a lot about the Savonette 4 well, and he seems to want to advertise a lot on the basis of what these private enterprises are doing. He spoke about the Opposition sabotaging or preventing the execution of work on the Savonette field and so on. I want to just remind this honourable House, that the Savonette platform was locally designed and manufactured in La Brea by TOFCO during the 2008/2009 period. [*Desk thumping*] All of this was work that was

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engineered by the PNM. That gas field is owned by bp and was discovered sometime in 2004, long before the Minister ever smelled office.

Natural gas production started late October 29, 2009 and the Savonette wells 1 through 6 are currently producing. Well 7 is part of the 2014 programme. So this is not new news, it is a continuation of the good work being done by bp in Trinidad and Tobago.

Then he went on to talk about—and I mean, I really found this was frivolous, eh, almost like “gun talk”.

“Whenever the PNM speaks about energy, the first two words to exit their mouths are Point Lisas, as though Point Lisas is the be-all and the end-all of the energy sector.”

Now, “wat kinda thing is dat”? Because the Government had nothing to do with the hard work that we put into erecting Point Lisas, awful of him to do that. It was the PNM that had been responsible for that. He went on again, I was so very disappointed:

“...between the years 2008 and 2010, there was a collapse in investment by one of this country’s major upstream energy companies, and there was a loss—a collapse in confidence on behalf of that company.”

That was a very disappointing statement, because between 2008 and 2009, and he referred to that period, he compared our work with their work right through his contribution, that period of time was when the world was in a financial crisis. It was the global financial crisis, and economists had agreed that it was the worst financial crisis since the great depression. Rogoff, a former chief economist at the World Bank said, that it was a once in a 50-year event. So what is this Minister—why is he choosing that period of time to compare the work that we did, and the fact that not many—that investors did not stay around during that period.

So I looked to PFC Energy to hear what the people in the energy industry were saying about that period. They said that the oil and gas industry had been hit with a triple whammy, because of the collapse in the price of oil, a massive decline in the demand for oil, the drying up of new credit available and so on. So the financial crisis had a great impact on the oil and gas industry. So, therefore, it makes the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs’ remarks very, very unfortunate, in fact, very saddening coming from a Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs who should understand the environment a little better.

Then he went on to talk about all kinds of things, you know, about chandeliers and A6 curtains and all that foolishness within his statement as well. I am not going to go into any depth on that.

Of, course, he spoke a lot about foreign direct investment, but I am saying, yes, you had some foreign investment. Yes, foreign-direct investment, but no new companies. It is all those companies that are here already, the “upstreamers”, right, they are the ones who are already here, and they know that this Government will soon be out of office, so they are continuing their investment in Trinidad and Tobago. All of their physical infrastructure is here already, the human capital is here, so they are continuing to do their business, but in terms of new investors, absolutely, absolutely none. Then he takes a turn on the people in the Point Lisas Industrial Estate, and saying that they have taken this issue of the gas curtailment to the political level. How absurd and oversensitive! You cannot make—this is a matter of dollars and cents. The Member for Chaguanas West read us a letter which came—a letter in 2011, three years ago, a letter which came from the CEOs of all of those mega-companies in the Point Lisas area, and they were beseeching and begging certain things of this Ministry. The Member for Diego Martin North/East also made reference to the concerns going on in that area, and here he is putting it on the—making “kuchur” with the Opposition, and it is very, very disappointing.

He went on to talk about the Leader of the Opposition visiting some bp function at Hyatt, wanting to hear what Bob Dudley had to say. I want to make it clear, that yes, he may see him at a function at the Hyatt, but it is that the Member of Parliament for Diego Martin West, in his capacity as Leader of the Opposition did make an official visit to London, to the offices of BP, to visit Mr. Dudley’s office, and he went there I believe, with also the chief of bpTT, Mr. Norman Christie. And what is wrong with such a visit from the Leader of the Opposition, who is going to be the next Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago? [*Desk thumping*] What is wrong with that?

Mr. Imbert: “Dey jealous.”

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: Yeah. He went on to talk about all the projects that left, but again, we are all aware of the global financial crisis and it did not escape anyone at all. He listed a whole lot of companies that we were attracting, and this is the very same thing I was saying to the Member for Tunapuna, you have to have your hot prospects. At least we attracted hot prospects, and out of them came few, out of many came few. For them, they have no hot prospects, nobody is coming at all, and do not expect anything of that DME plant at all. With what gas?

Then he went on to talk about the Opposition taking credit for the Juniper project. Absolutely, yes, it is a PNM project without a doubt. [*Desk thumping*] So, right?

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He talked about the gasoline optimization project and the fact that it is now completed at \$1.5 billion. Who said that is completed? The catalytic cracker, we know is always down and, in fact, it is down for particular reasons. [*Crosstalk*] The bitumen upgrader plant, it is down, right. We are importing bitumen I think from Jamaica and other countries in the Caribbean.

Mr. Imbert: Importing bitumen!

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: Imagine that! We are importing bitumen. [*Crosstalk*] The ultra-low sulphur diesel plant, not functioning; they are now telling us next year as well, you know. I want you to tell me about the escalating cost for that GOP project and the mismanagement which has taken place under Petrotrin. What took you so long to complete that? I want to go into detail about Petrotrin as well.

But let me not go on about all this nonsense about Audi A6 and curtains and so on. I will ignore that. He was talking about—oh, he was talking about the high LNG revenue, and because the commercial structure for many of the LNG contracts changed under them. That spot pricing started under the People's National Movement. So that is with regard to—I should not have spent all the time with Mr. Ramnarine, with his energy 101 contribution. He comes here to baffle the country, all you know about energy, but does not deal with the hard issues; that is a problem that we have with him.

4.30 p.m.

But, let me go right into crude oil production, continuous slide under this—
[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member. Hon. Members, it is now 4.30, but consistent with what we have been doing over the last few days, we will allow the hon. Member to complete her contribution, both in terms of original speaking time and your extension of 10 minutes and we will break.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: How many minutes do I have now? Fifteen minutes?

Mr. Speaker: You have until 4.39 of original speaking time and then you end at 4.49. Okay?

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: So, with the leave of the House, we will allow you to continue. Continue, hon. Member.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: So, yes, the continuous slide in crude oil production. You know, the Minister, on July 21, delivered a speech at Cara Suites and this is what was reported in the *Guardian* newspaper, July 21.

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“I want to make it unequivocally clear that my number one priority is to increase national oil production. National oil production stands at about 95,000 barrels of oil per day. This rate of production is unacceptable,’ he said.”

And he puts that due to “lack of investment, planning and strategic missteps by the last administration”.

His focus would have been on optimizing, increasing oil production and he talked about a number of proposals for Union Estate, including the bitumen upgrade by Reliance of India. Where is Reliance of India today? I do not know. Reliance never came as did SABIC and Sinopec as well. What we want to know is specifically, what is the reason for the decline? Is it lack of investment? All of the planning and strategic missteps by your administration, the very things that he is accusing us of, those are the reasons we have had a decline. It is exactly that. Huge mistakes and mismanagement by Petrotrin, by the board, by the President and by the senior management, a team that is completely clueless about refinery management and that is what Petrotrin is about.

It is a refinery and at the level of the board there is no refining expertise. Nobody on the board—there is a gentleman there, Mr. Baisden, who came from NGC. He is not a refiner; no one else. The President, Mr. Hassanali, he is not a refiner either.

Go back in history and look at all of our past Presidents: Wally James, Claude Lee Lum, Lawford Duprey, Keith Awah, Malcolm Jones, Ken Allum; all refiners. They could not wait for Allum to reach 60. They sent him home because it is about politics; but you bring in Hassanali and you renew his contracts and he is clueless.

I will tell you, that same ultra-low sulphur diesel project, he said, in 2009: leave it for him, that is his baby, nobody else knows how to deal with it. Here we are, many years later, and it is an unfinished project, delayed, huge—in fact, the entire gasoline optimization programme, delayed, huge overruns, badly mismanaged, spiralling costs and missed deadlines. And what it means is that Petrotrin cannot produce the quality diesel that is required out there in the world; not even can it satisfy the Caribbean market, so that countries are going to go elsewhere. And if they cannot get their diesel from you, they are not buying fuel from you either. So that you end up with a marketing issue and that is the problem that Petrotrin is now having.

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They are telling us it is all kinds of design issue and they are blaming the union and that kind of thing, but it is Hassanali. It is Hassanali, who knows that he does not know what he is doing. He does not know what he is doing. By now, we should have been producing cheaper crude with this upgrade. That is what the upgrade is about. Unfortunately, we are not able to do that. We are still buying very expensive crude.

They cannot produce, so we have to buy expensive crude in order to refine it and all of this does not make economic sense, again. I am very upset about that bitumen plant which is down and that is because of shabby, shabby, management; complete mismanagement because Petrotrin has been made into a political instrument.

Then, right below Mr. Hassanali, you have Mr. Mado Bachan, Vice-President, Refining and Marketing, another political appointee. He knows no refining. He is the one who is on suspension without pay; but they brought in an Australian now. I understand he knows what is going on on the ground. How could you have him reporting to a President who does not know, who then reports to a board who does not know?

That is what is happening and, of course, the company is losing human capital: a significant, experienced staff have gone because of very poor management of that company. Somebody has said to me, there is a school of thought that the company is being set up to be privatized or to be sold to a foreign company and we are saying to this Government and to Petrotrin that that will not sit right at all, not until you come up with some kind of thorough analysis and you have talked and discussed with industry experts globally, so that there are some real answers as to what we will do with Petrotrin.

I know that business conditions are not rosy for refiners because there are plants that have closed down in the Caribbean, in Aruba, in St. Croix as well and then the one in Curacao is struggling; but the point is, if they had made the right decisions, we could have been on the way to improving Petrotrin.

I am not saying that they met it in a rosy condition. That is not so, but it is the reason why we had to take the right decisions. You see, all of the drilling programmes that they are doing now, the seismic survey and so on, those are our plans. And I agree with you that you should have continued them, but you are mismanaging them and that is the issue. [*Desk thumping*]

We took a decision, there were many things to deal with—the asset integrity and so on—but we took a decision that we would deal with the products first, that

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we would deal with the refinery first so that we would end up with products that would meet international specs and that was constantly changing, the specs. So that is why we said, let us go with the GOP and, in the meantime, we will continue to import crude and will deal with it as it goes on.

But years later—that project started when, 2005?—it is not yet complete and then you said you will increase production and you have not done that. The aged infrastructure is a problem; it was a priority for us, but you came in and you did nothing, nothing, nothing about that.

We had brought Shell back into the picture, you know, they do not talk about it—Shell Global Solutions—and they had put several systems in place, but once you people came in all of those systems fell apart. With no refiners at the top, nobody understands what to do. Two blind men—the Chairman and the President. They have to go. They have to go.

But I am going back to that programme, I think it was called some Journey to Excellence Programme or so. And they were communicating with all of the stakeholders. Petrotrin is not just those people who sit in the building or in the refinery, we are talking about other people as well; all the stakeholders. The President stopped that. He said that there were too many meetings, but you needed to be communicating. He stopped all of that as well.

And then they come and talk about this Jubilee find, God is a Trini, and we were supposed to believe that we would have been seen oil flowing and we would have restored the production levels and so on and Trinmar's production levels would have gone up, et cetera. And the problem, as I understand it, is that there are not enough lines to bring up the crude and, if pressured, the lines would burst. So, the infrastructure—you cannot go talking about the crude that is in the ground; you need to know how you are bringing it up. The infrastructure is, in fact, going to burst, and the work cannot get done because they have fired all the contractors.

So there are one or two contractors; there is one contractor with an offshore barge. The work just cannot get done and even the South West Soldado project, that is moving very, very slowly and you know that. Would you believe the project manager for the South West Soldado project is an accountant? An accountant, impossible.

So Petrotrin is in a mess. Trinmar is in a mess. There are problems with innovation, with management systems, bureaucracy as well, bad decisions. It is

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horrible and, of all the things that this Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs comes up with, the Chairman of NP now wants to go to Haiti, a big US \$30 million deal.

You have problems to deal with in your own country. I am saying it is laudable to try to provide Haiti with products but, at the same time, you have problems here. Venezuela is getting out and you are going in. And we are in shambles. How are you going to get that money out of Haiti, do you know? How are you going to get that money out of Haiti? And then we heard about the bunkering project in Panama. That was in July 2013, we were going to expand bunkering facilities.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the speaking time of the hon. Member for Point Fortin has expired. You would like your extension?

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: Sure, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the question is that the speaking time of the hon. Member for Point Fortin be extended by 10 minutes.

Question put and agreed to.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I understand, with that bunkering facility, they actually went and they bought land. Somebody must have made money on that Panama hoax. I do not know who it is. Everybody just seems to be so keen about Panama.

Just a little bit about HSE as well. Sham Deyal, we need to get rid of him. I understand he is on suspension following the Guaracara leak, the tank leak. He is not on suspension, sorry; he is on vacation. They sent him on vacation to protect him. Imagine you have a huge misstep like that, a huge leak with that tank and he goes on vacation. You understand? If Valerie Cornfield had been there, his predecessor, nothing like that would have happened. But this is a man who does not know HSE. He loves the environment; he knows about rising sea levels and quality control and so on. He is not supposed to be there, but this whole second spill was catastrophic. Less oil was leaked than with La Brea, but the quality of the oil that was leaked was lethal, very dangerous to human health; the benzene level six times the acceptable levels and that is because the fuel came from the slop tanks, which is the garbage bin of the refinery—very, very, very poor. Where is the investigation on that? Where is the investigation on that?

Really, we have to start looking at a different model for Petrotrin and Trinmar. Let us get the view of the experts. Fire the board. Fire Hassanali. Bring back

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Allum. Transfer Eugene Tiah. You all are giving him enough hell in Phoenix Park as it is. Do something, but it is in a mess.

And, with regard to these audits, I want to know who will do these audits. What is the schedule for each state company? These are the energy audits that the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs has announced. What are the priority areas identified for immediate audit? When would the various audit reports be tabled in the House? We need to have those answers: the action to be taken against the management of the audited companies in the event that serious dereliction of duty is unearthed. We need all of those details.

Again, I am concerned about the natural gas shortages that my colleague spoke that. Even all that you are talking about—I think it was the Juniper project also, all of those are only to fulfil existing needs. There is no new gas coming on shore at all. We have to think about a new role for NGC as the middleman. The way NGC was set up, it worked well when there was no threat from shale gas and there was something about 100 million tonnes per annum of energy coming up in the years that followed, but that model can no longer be sustained. They are making a healthy margin but, of course, the down streamers, to put it simply, are “ketching their royal”. We have heard enough about that.

So we have got to do something about NGC and NEC. They were set up under a PNM Government and it will be under a PNM Government that a strategy for the future will be developed because it cannot be business as usual. It cannot. We have to get a new model.

We had said go and start looking global, you know, and there was a project in Ghana, but you came in and you stopped it. So that is where we are. So, I am really concerned about the gas environment. I looked at the *Petroleum Economist*, Mr. Speaker, January 22, 2013:

“Shale forces rethink in Trinidad and Tobago

The Caribbean producer could have suffered more than most with the rise of US shale output. While it has adapted in the short term, to secure its place in the new-look global gas market, Trinidad and Tobago must develop a new, long-term strategy.”

It is a new area and you all are still wearing dark glasses. Competition is stiff: East Africa, Australia, Canada, Azerbaijan, Brazil has huge finds. Argentina has reserves, Venezuela has reserves, Gulf of Mexico, plenty of activity; Guyana, French Guiana, Suriname, Barbados, Jamaica, Nicaragua; and you have not got

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your act together yet. Where is your gas master plan? Where is it? So, a lot of issues to be dealt with. It is finite. You have to deal with NGC as well, but the problem on your side is the political stability, is the economic stability. You all are just not coping well with the real issues at hand.

Norm Christy, whom you have quoted earlier from bp Trinidad and Tobago, he said:

“...the industry has changed dramatically...and what has got us here will not keep us competitive.”

You have got to do something about making it easier for the down streamers, the people on the other side. So I speak in defence of all the private sector people, locally and, of course, the ones who will come here potentially as well.

You have to speak to diversification. You have not diversified at all. You need to improve on support to an already mature manufacturing sector. You must embrace the private sector. You must improve competitiveness. Look how badly we are on the WEF Competitiveness Index. You keep saying we have gone up three rungs from 92 to 89, but of course, it was 92 out of 148 countries. Now it is 89 out of 144 countries, so you really have gone nowhere. No way. So disingenuous of you. Very disingenuous of you. Very, very disingenuous of you.

4.45 p.m.

I want one of my colleagues to go through the WEF figures to see how really badly performing this Government is, but I have to talk a little bit about Point Fortin. I have a short time here.

You talk about sod turning, not good enough. I want to know when that hospital will be constructed. [*Desk thumping*] Right? You cannot talk about the south-western growth pole unless you build that hospital. We want to see it constructed [*Desk thumping*] and I want the details. I have not yet seen— [*Interruption*] stop disturbing me—in the budget where the money is coming from. Point it out to me, Minister of Health. Right!

I want us to look at Cedros carefully. I know that there are plans that Petrotrin wants to start developing Cedros from the point of view of exploration, but with that comes a loss of income in terms of fishing, and I want to know what would be the replacement industry. How are you going to change the face of Cedros? You are not going to get away with that at all.

We are still waiting on the UTT Campus in Point Fortin. If it is going to be the place for development, I want to see the UTT Campus build there. I am fed up of hearing everything being built in Debe and Penal—all right? [*Desk thumping*]—and the Point Fortin Civic Centre is not done as yet.

So, a lot to be done. I am not happy with the Minister's performance with regard to the Loran Manatee Field as well. This is a political negotiation. I am not happy with his strategy. We should have moved on further. I am not satisfied that this Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs is a heavy hitter; enough of a heavy hitter and, therefore, I think—you know, there was a cabinet reshuffle in Venezuela, and the Minister of Energy was actually removed from office and, I think, this is what this Prime Minister should do now; a Cabinet reshuffle even though time is near with them, but that Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs needs to go. [*Desk thumping*] In closing, I have to say, the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs needs to go. [*Desk thumping*]

Minister of Public Administration, I wanted to say something about you. I understand you spoke last night, but I am not happy [*Crosstalk*]—Point Fortin, do not worry. When you see we come to detail those estimates, I am going through line by line for everything to do. That is another budget debate, so you wait, Oropouche East. That is another debate. We are dealing with actuals then.

The Member who is responsible for public administration, I still do not know what your Ministry is doing. I know you spoke a lot yesterday, but I think that whatever you do, you must serve the public, and I do not think the public is seeing your work. I am walking into Ministries, the service is still not good; governance across the Ministries is not proper, and I think you are responsible for governance and service delivery. It is not up to standard and I think you need to craft a model for proper service delivery and for efficiency. I am still not seeing that. I think it must be people-centric.

I am not seeing the kind of transformation that I should have seen over a four-and-a-half-year period. You were not always there, but I am still not seeing that there. I have a feeling that there should be participatory approach, somehow the public should be involved in saying what they want to get out of the ministries. I do not think I have seen that approach coming from your Ministry as well. So, I am sorry I missed what you had to say, but there we are. Do I have more time?

Mr. Speaker: You have five seconds.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: The people of Point Fortin have been starved for the last four and a half years. It is about time that they get the attention that they

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deserve, but it would not be for long anymore. It is a matter of months before the People's National Movement regains office under the stewardship of the Leader of the Opposition, the Member for Diego Martin West. Point Fortin will be in good hands shortly. I want to thank you, Mr. Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker: Yes, I think it is a good time for us to pause and have some tea. This sitting is now suspended until 5.30 p.m.

4.49 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

5.30 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

The Minister of Foreign Affairs (Hon. Winston Dookeran): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the opportunity to allow me to give a brief account of the activities and affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the period under review in this budget debate.

Mr. Speaker, I want to start by complimenting this House, yourself, the Leader of Government Business for introducing in the Standing Orders, that is now in effect; the establishment of a Foreign Affairs Committee of Parliament. [*Desk thumping*] I see on page 48, or rather 60, of these Standing Orders, the Committee of Foreign Affairs is a select committee and:

“...shall have the duty of considering from time to time and reporting, whenever necessary, on—

- (a) International treaties and agreements entered into by the Government on behalf of the State; and
- (b) other matters relating to Foreign Affairs as may be referred to it by the House.”

I commend this approach, and I believe it will allow in the future for Members like the Opposition spokesman, the Member for Point Fortin, to raise all the nitty-gritty issues that she raised in this House at the committee stage, and that we will then be able to deal with these issues. I look forward to the early implementation of this select committee as proposed in these Standing Orders. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, in the course of my contribution, I will attempt to address some of the nitty-gritty issues that have been raised by the hon. Member for Point Fortin but let me try, in the time available, to ask to put in perspective the activities and the affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs over the last year. I hope, in so doing, I will be able to establish very clearly, that notwithstanding some of the issues of information of which the Member spoke about, and which I

believe the country has a right to know, there has been enormous progress on many aspects of the conduct of diplomacy and on the issues of foreign affairs by this Government for the last four years, and also for the last year.

I want to start by outlining a few of the key issues in which we have been engaged in the conduct of diplomacy. The first one I would raise has to do with the Caribbean region and, more specifically, with our relations with Jamaica and, secondly, with our attempts to advocate for the full insertion of Cuba into the hemispheric relations of the world.

Suffice it to say, by the intervention of many dialogues on this issue, we have been able to calm the waters between Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica. In the United Nations, the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago had advocated the full insertion of Cuba into hemispheric diplomatic life, and since then we have been attempting to do so wherever we can.

I guess, it was in the Association of Caribbean States where a strong statement to that effect was made by Trinidad and Tobago, and was followed up in an even more pronounced way in the Organization of American States at its annual meeting. I hope that the diplomatic work in which we have been engaged will, in due course, and shortly, reap the necessary rewards by having Cuba involved fully in the hemispheric affairs of our region. At the next Summit of the Americas which will be held in Panama, I would anticipate that there should be a further discussion and perhaps decision on those matters.

Mr. Speaker, during the last four years and, more specifically, during the last year, we have been able to move towards major economic diplomacy, a point raised by the Member for Point Fortin. In fact, the cornerstone of our approach to diplomacy has to do with economic diplomacy.

It is true that the results of diplomatic work are not seen overnight, nor do you see visibly the results of such work, but they lay the foundation for future benefits and that foundation has been so well laid by this Government over the last four years, that I have no doubt that the developments that have taken place in the diplomatic life of the region is, but a reflection of the well-laid foundation from the results of our diplomatic work here in Trinidad and Tobago.

Sometime ago in Caracas, the Prime Minister went and did two things: one, to ensure that the Caribbean region becomes part of the Latin American Economic System, the SELA movement, and by her involvement, we are able now to change the governance of the Latin American Economic System from a troika which was mainly a Latin American one, to a quartet which now includes the Caribbean as a significant player in the governance of that organization.

And, secondly, to assent to the membership of Trinidad and Tobago in the Development Bank of Latin American, CAF as it is called and, in so doing, Trinidad and Tobago today is the first Caribbean country to have a full membership in the Development Bank of Latin American, and is ready to reap the rewards of that membership by virtue of having access to technical assistant grants and, indeed, disbursements for the future. These developments may look simple, but when we look at it we will see that the foundation is being laid to create a greater access of Trinidad and Tobago into the Latin American markets and financing.

The third area that I would like to briefly refer to has to do with our involvement in getting on the G-20 agenda a number of issues relevant to the Caribbean. We did this with a great amount of force in our meeting with the United Kingdom and Caricom. If I have the time, I will refer to the details of that meeting where we placed very squarely on the G-20 agenda, issues facing the Caribbean on a number of fronts, and we have now translated that into our meetings with the current chair of the G-20 country, Australia, and the one that will take over in the next month or two, which is Turkey.

5.40 p.m.

These developments do have their impact over time and, therefore, the idea that there must be visible results to diplomatic activity today for today really is not the way in which we can expect results. Notwithstanding that, Mr. Speaker, we have been able to establish many very concrete and very detailed initiatives in order to deal with immediate results. I have no doubt that the foundation that has been laid in these and other matters will have continuing benefits to the entire region and to Trinidad and Tobago, in particular.

Very recently, talking on the issue of economic diplomacy, which has indeed been one of the keystones of our entire focus in foreign policy, has been our agreement to become an observer member of the Pacific Alliance, which is a new development. The Pacific Alliance comprises of Chile, Colombia, Peru and Mexico; and Trinidad and Tobago sought to be a member in order to benefit from the work of that Pacific Alliance which is growing at a tremendous rate. In so doing, we are able to secure substantial funding for a project through the Government of Mexico on the small and medium enterprises in Trinidad and Tobago. I have no doubt that the Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development, the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre, would be very happy to

see the injection of those funds from the Government of Mexico in order to build upon the development of small and medium-sized enterprises in Trinidad and Tobago, and that fund has been channelled via the Association of Caribbean States.

The exact amount has been finalized but it is a significant amount of funds that will be put to work. We have also agreed in our relationship with the Pacific Alliance to establish a business council between Trinidad and Tobago and those countries of the Pacific Alliance. So that the private sector, of which the Member spoke about, is integrated into the process of the new diplomacy, and that is being put into place as I speak now, to establish that business council between us and the countries that I have mentioned earlier.

Thirdly, we have agreed to work on the full integration of our capital markets between those countries and ourselves, and when we talk about the benefits of integration, it comes by opening up the markets for the movement and flow of funds. These are some tangible, visible evidence of our diplomacy in, first of all, acceding to become a member of the Pacific Alliance and, then, secondly, in seeking the funding that is required.

Another area of economic diplomacy in which we have had great credit has to be in the development of partial scope agreements. We have signed one such agreement less than a year ago with Panama. In fact, the Prime Minister was present and I was present at the time when we signed the partial scope agreement with Panama, and we have almost completed the partial scope agreement with Guatemala, subject to one or two issues to be resolved, and that will be signed very shortly. As we are speaking, a mission will be going shortly, led by one of the ambassadors in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to finalize the agreement with El Salvador.

This is economic diplomacy at work. These are things that are setting the basis for the movement of investment, for the access to markets, and for the ability of the Trinidad and Tobago manufacturing and business sectors to have a wider economic space for the future. These are the things that emerge out of these partial scope agreements, all of which had been done with great promptness over the last year, and they also require Caricom support.

So, Mr. Speaker, the issue with respect to economic integration has been foremost on the agenda, and Trinidad and Tobago has been the leading proponent for the widening of the economic space of the Caribbean region, and we have proposed an entire framework of Caribbean convergence. We have argued that the

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Caribbean Sea economy has a population of over 30 million people, and what we are working towards, as this negotiation continues, is to open up the markets for the business sector in Trinidad and Tobago to give it access—easy access, preferential access—to a bigger market, and that is how the economic benefits would eventually emerge and the private sector will be involved.

So the Member for Point Fortin, of course, raised the issue as to where is the economic diplomacy, and I thought I could outline these as some very concrete steps, other than the ones that I had raised earlier on, in order to put the economic diplomacy on the map. There are many other things, but I only wanted to address that very specific issue about economic diplomacy.

Mr. Speaker, we are all aware that Trinidad and Tobago has become the centre of gravity for the conduct of diplomacy in the Caribbean and between the Caribbean and Latin America. [*Desk thumping*] Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar was gracious enough to host four major Heads of Government meetings here over the last year, starting of course with the President of China, the Vice-President of the United States, the President of Venezuela and, more recently, the Prime Minister of Japan and, last year, the President of Nigeria.

For a small country like ours to have been able to attract the Presidents and Prime Ministers of these major countries of the world, [*Desk thumping*] is but evidence of the fact that Trinidad and Tobago stands tall in the world of diplomacy. They therefore look at Trinidad and Tobago as a country that has managed its foreign relations in a manner that its neutrality at times is respected; its advocacy is seen as something that they admire; and its sense of impartiality and fairness is something that they all respect. [*Desk thumping*] This is not the result of four years, this is the result of previous times, and we have built on it and we have built on it fast and large so that today Trinidad and Tobago stands tall in the world of diplomacy.

Mr. Speaker, in building the future we know that we have to build the institutions that will be able to sustain this effort. We know that politics of today needs to be supplemented by institutions for tomorrow, and that is why we have been able to do a number of things with respect to building the institutions for the future. You are all aware of the development that has taken place recently when the Prime Minister opened the Diplomatic Academy of the Caribbean. It is an institution that has been established in order to train our diplomats of the future. For the first time in the Caribbean we have such a diplomatic academy established to do this job and it is Trinidad and Tobago that took the lead in establishing this [*Desk thumping*] for the region.

I received a report today on the activities of the Diplomatic Academy, which was only formally established on May 06, 2014, and already they have covered a number of programmes dealing with the practice of diplomacy, not the theory, the practice of diplomacy. The programmes continue to be developed. I think there are now over 20 modules, as they call them. I would not go through them but the information is there. It is an institution that is open, not only to Trinidad and Tobago, not only to diplomats, but also to the Caribbean region and to leaders, in general. I am told that to date, in the last four months, 180 participants took part in these programmes, which is but evidence of our training people for the future challenges ahead of us.

We are not building stones that will fall apart tomorrow; we are building a foundation that will be able to withstand all the rigours of tomorrow. In that respect, we have introduced with the University of the West Indies, an entire programme of activities to encourage work on diplomacy to take place. I just want to refer to a journal that is now a permanent journal for the first time in Trinidad and Tobago, dealing with the *Caribbean Journal of International Relations and Diplomacy*, and every three months the series of articles that are prepared by researchers here and abroad to deal with the challenges of diplomacy in the region.

I recognize that there is a problem in disseminating this information to the wider community. I recognize that in spite of the fact—and I use this—these are all the statements that we have issued in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on all our matters over the last year, but they are not sensational, and I just raise it to let you know that it is available for all those who are interested. We have now set up an online newspaper called *Foreign Policy Insights* in which these documents are now being placed for the dissemination of those who are interested. I need not go into it. I just brought this to give you an idea of the statements that have been made and the institutions that we are building in order to ensure that the people are aware of what is taking place, and how the conduct of diplomacy and the practice of international relations benefit them.

In the scheme of things, Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is a relatively small Ministry in terms of the resources available to us, but we do so by managing a number of missions abroad. In this very budget that we are approving in this House, we have now increased, in our coverage, provisions to establish a full embassy in Panama, resulting from the visit of the Prime Minister to Panama and—I should have mentioned that earlier—the visit of the President of Panama to Trinidad and Tobago as well. We have also included provisions for the establishment of a diplomatic presence in Colombia and in Mexico, and already

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we have begun to hold discussions for a Caricom presence in other parts of the world.

It is a new initiative where we are trying to establish a Caricom presence where none of us have been before, and the United Arab Republic, Saudi Arabia and Turkey are three countries that have been earmarked for discussions on this matter based on their interest. So there is an expansion that is taking place with respect to our representation, and I am pleased to inform you that the Government of Turkey recently announced their decision to establish an embassy here in Trinidad and Tobago as part of their global outreach for the region. [*Desk thumping*]

5.55 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, these developments are developments that are building the institutions for the future, based on the fact that Trinidad and Tobago is now positioned to play a more pronounced role in international affairs. But let me just briefly mention an issue that was raised by the hon. Member for Point Fortin, which has to do with the UK visa regime.

The UK Government did inform us that they had some concerns with the security aspects of the visa system, and indicated that we needed to correct and fix it, and that they would work with us to do so. No decision has been made with respect to the removal of the visa regime of the UK, but a decision to cooperate and to resolve that issue has been agreed upon.

The Minister of National Security led a team to London, a few months ago, with all the experts on security and immigration matters. In order to address those issues, the UK sent a team to Trinidad and Tobago to do so. About a month ago, we signed a security cooperation agreement with the United Kingdom, all part of our steps to ensure that we are on the same page when it comes to the security concern. It is a global concern, but it affects us as it affects others, and I want to assure the House that we will continue in our efforts to meet all the requirements; dot all the i's and cross all the t's in resolving that issue, and hopefully we will be able to do so to the satisfaction both of the United Kingdom authorities and all authorities.

At our meeting in London with the United Kingdom Minister of Foreign Affairs, we raised this issue as an issue of great concern to us, and we were given the response that it is a matter we can work out together. It is a review that they are undertaking globally, and they are undertaking it in the region and undertaking it in Trinidad and Tobago. So it is not quite correct to say that there is

a decision on this matter, but it is right to say that we are working to fill the gaps with respect to the security challenges, which is a worldwide phenomenon.

While I say that, I also wish to announce that we have been able, after many years, and more specifically, more intense negotiations with the European Union concerning the Schengen visa, The European Parliament and the European Council have approved Trinidad and Tobago for exemption of that visa. Negotiations of the arrangement between Trinidad and Tobago and the European Union will commence on November 12, to work out the agreement now to effect what the Parliament of the European Union has agreed to. I am hoping that those negotiations which will be conducted for the rest of this year, would be successfully completed and hopefully we can have a date for commencement of that visa. It was announced by the European Union already and, therefore, we are just updating the House on that issue. This issue has become a big one of visa movements, and we are trying to address it in the Caribbean, and you are aware of the steps we have taken to improve the regime of visa for non-national entry, and hassle-free travel in the Caribbean region.

As I speak, we are looking very closely at the situation with Haiti, in order to try and ensure that we can allow Haiti to have the same privileges as every other Caricom country in this respect. That is a matter that is also under discussion between the Ministry of National Security, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Haitian authorities. These things do take time but they are all meant to improve the hassle-free movement of people in the region.

We have also begun to open the doors with respect to investors from Japan, and we have many requests now to open the doors for investment from other parts of the world, which is being looked at with the view of opening the doors for investment through visa waivers, as the case may be, subject at all times to the major issues of security that have to be dealt with in these matters. I wanted to bring these matters to your attention, if only to establish that under economic diplomacy we have been very active on all fronts, and we have been able to set in place a number of steps to improve the environment for economic activity in the region.

We worked closely with all the different Ministries on this particular matter, and in so doing we have been able to also establish technical cooperation between different countries, including China and others. I did give a full report to this honourable House on the details of those visits, and whenever those visits take place we bring the House into the know on these issues, with all the details of all

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the agreements that have been signed. Just for the record, I make reference to them because they are already part of the *Hansard* at this point.

Mr. Speaker, let me also look at the United Nations. Next week the United Nations will be having its General Assembly. It is a meeting place for all countries to come together bilaterally and multilaterally. Trinidad and Tobago has been at the forefront on three fronts. One, we have, in fact, at the United Nations at the very first meeting attended by the Prime Minister, called for the establishment of the Arms Trade Treaty, along with other countries. Today, that has been approved by the United Nations, and now we are in the process of bidding to establish the secretariat here.

I think it was the Prime Minister who said at the time that for us in the Caribbean small arms and ammunition are the equivalent of weapons of mass destruction, and that word has echoed in the halls of the United Nations as of now, because we were able to establish that small arms and ammunition are key to be regulated, if we are to deal with our own problems here and the global problems of security. In my view, it is a major achievement, and I take the opportunity to pay tribute to our ambassadors in the United Nations system: [*Desk thumping*] Ambassador Rodney Charles and Ambassador Eden Charles, who led the diplomatic work on this particular regard that we are where we are today.

We have been able to secure the support of most of the Latin American countries and several of the Central American countries, led by Mexico. Within recent times, we have got the support of countries as far away as New Zealand, Angola and even Spain in Europe. We have been arguing that the time has come that the United Nations must not place all their head offices in Europe, there must be a better geographical distribution of head offices, and Trinidad and Tobago, as small as it is, is offering itself to head an international organization here in Port of Spain. [*Desk thumping*] During the next six months, we will hope we can get sufficient support to have that on our agenda.

The second issue has to do with the issue of the small island developing States. Very recently, SIDS, as it is called, I attended a meeting in Samoa dealing with this issue. We took a very strong position there, that there should be a new global compact between small island developing States and the rest of the world, and it should focus on three things. The vulnerabilities of small island States should now be converted to measures of resilience, and that we should use that as a measure to decide on access to development funds, which is an issue that the entire region is facing. When we speak in Trinidad and Tobago, we speak with the

entire region because we know the prosperity of the Caribbean is our prosperity too, and it is in that context we argued that case.

We argued the case, Mr. Speaker, for a better flow of funds between the north and the south, and those are well documented in this new compact that we speak about and, of course, the perennial problem of climate change, which is urgent and imminent, and in many parts of the Pacific is even more urgent and imminent than it is for us here in the region—but even for us it is.

These are diplomatic initiatives that we have introduced in our call for a global compact for SIDS with the rest of the world. In that context, Mr. Speaker, we are setting the stage for the new terms of arrangement between the global economy and the rest of the world.

The Member for Point Fortin asked the question about the establishment of a mission in Japan, and asked whether or not it was feasible. Just to correct the records, what we did announce when the Prime Minister of Japan was here, was a decision to establish an office of the Trade and Investment Company. That is what we had agreed to, to establish a presence. This is something that they are doing in any event. In due course it may be upgraded to a higher level, but as of now our focus is again on investment and, therefore, the decision was to do that. I just wanted to correct that information that is there.

With respect to the CARIBCAN agreement, it has been facing some challenges, and is still being looked at to see how we can overcome these challenges between the Caribbean and Canada. The fundamental issue is that the development component of the agreement is being pushed as a requirement on the part of Caricom countries and, to some extent, reciprocity is what is now on the stage of international agreements.

These are therefore, some of the issues that have been raised. I said that I will try to address them as we go through my contribution.

6.10 p.m.

Let me, Mr. Speaker, simply indicate that even on global issues, we have adopted a position of engagement not isolation, but engagement that protects our vital interests, an engagement that supports the rule of international law, engagements that support the adherence to human rights standards, engagements that de-escalate violence in conflicts of the world. And we attended and supported the United Kingdom in their bid to establish a regime against sexual violence in wartimes and a number of steps in this regard. And we have been able to make

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strong statements in the United Nations and elsewhere, to influence the outcome of some of these conflicts, whether it be in Syria or whether it be with the Ukraine. These are issues that are dear to us, and recently with the abduction of girls in Nigeria, we made strong statements. We are not anymore sitting back idly in these forums; we are making our voices heard on the principles which I have outlined, [*Desk thumping*] and in so doing we are able to influence the perception of solutions that must come about as a result of our intervention in diplomacy.

So, Mr. Speaker, these are some of the basic issues that are addressing us. I just want to put on the record our major initiative which is the reform of the international financial system. The Member for Point Fortin said that we should try and be a little more vocal on economic matters. And on several occasions we have outlined a whole programme that calls for the development of buffers by the international financial institutions in order to protect countries in the Caribbean from having to face up to external shocks. And we have argued that external shocks are not temporary phenomena for us in the Caribbean, but in fact they are a permanent features of our life and our history. We are therefore trying to change the entire paradigm for international financial institutions to alter the way in which they look at these countries.

What we have succeeded so far in doing in terms of actual results, we have gotten the International Monetary Fund to establish a committee of governors who represent small states to look at how to implement the issues that Trinidad and Tobago place on the agenda, in the International Monetary Fund, in order to change the entire framework of relationship by the International Monetary Fund and small states.

We have also been able to get acceptance by the European Union that the per capita income as a measurement of the level of development is inappropriate and not relevant in today's world, because economies like ours which are moving up are now being penalized by high per capita incomes, when in truth we do still have development challenges. And we have gotten them to agree on that, and what is at stake now is the introduction of a new index of vulnerability that will be put into place instead of the per capita incomes.

Now these may be issues that may not seem to be issues that benefit the average citizen, but in fact, I beg to differ. It is by changing the system under which we operate, we change the benefits of the people in whose name we operate, and it is that which we are doing wherever we face the challenge in the international arena. I would not go into the details here except to indicate that this has been our major thrust.

I will say, Mr. Speaker, that Trinidad and Tobago has reached a position where it is seen as a country that can be relied upon to adhere to the principles I have outlined before; it is a country that is building bridges within Latin American and the Caribbean as our new thrust; it is a country that has now opened itself to investment worldwide. I think we are all aware that the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago has been the chief advocate.

Mr. Speaker: The speaking time of the hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs has expired. You have 10 extra minutes. Would you like an extension?

Hon. W. Dookeran: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the question is that the speaking time of the hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs, be extended by 10 minutes.

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Minister, you may continue.

Hon. W. Dookeran: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I was indicating that wherever the opportunity arises, whether it is at the summits in Panama or at the ACS or the bilateral meetings, Trinidad and Tobago under the advocacy of the Prime Minister, has been saying that we are indeed open for business. And a lot of the results that you have seen in the economic report that we are discussing have been supplemented and supported by this move to open up Trinidad and Tobago for business from wherever we can. It is true some of that will take time, but at this stage the job of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is to establish the agreements that will make this all happen.

I want to bring to your attention, Mr. Speaker, the specific agreements that we have made over time with respect to our global political engagement and leadership, with respect to the United Nations General Assembly, where we undertook there, to create an environment that will support more political engagement and leadership by small economies. We have been at the forefront in trying to be a catalyst to accelerate the process of reform in the United Nations Security Council. Small as we may be, our views have been requested. And recently in our bilateral meetings in New Zealand, which I attended while we were in Samoa, this was a main issue of dialogue between us and New Zealand on that issue, and more recently we have had discussions with other countries on this matter. We have been arguing that the security reform must, in fact, reflect the geopolitical realities of today. We know it is a difficult issue, but it is an issue that

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we are persisting on, and we have taken all the opportunities that we have to so do.

With respect to the issue regarding—there are so many issues here, Mr. Speaker, I have to choose one or two because of the limitations of time, but there are a number of issues here which have been raised with respect to the Commonwealth of Nations. We are now looking very carefully and working together with other countries in trying to give focus to the Commonwealth of Nations, and in so doing to provide a better geopolitical role for the Commonwealth of Nations. We have, and I believe the former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Surujrattan Rambachan played a very significant role, in his period, in the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group that dealt with countries in the world, countries in the Commonwealth whose democracy was under challenge, and we played an important role in trying to bring them together. [*Desk thumping*]

Recently, we began an engagement with the whole debate on the blue economy because we have been arguing that the Caribbean Sea is a resource, and the islands are part of it, but the sea is also a resource. And now there is a whole new movement towards exploiting the “blue economies”. We are already putting ourselves as a front runner in that piece of work that is taking place. We participated in United Arab Emirates on that particular initiative that is taking place.

So, let me just summarize, Mr. Speaker, what has been our main thrust. We have been focusing on the Caribbean region giving it a new energy. We have supported the Caribbean, the strategic plan for the Caricom Secretariat, and we are engaged in negotiations with other countries to give the Caribbean integration movement a little more space to operate within. We have been working very closely with many African countries, and some of our companies in the private sector and in the state sector have found interventions in some African countries in the field of banking and in the field of energy, and we continue to work to try to find a place there.

We are consolidating our efforts in Latin America and in the Caribbean. I opened up the possibilities of more access to those markets, and at the global level we are doing what we can to improve the relationship between small economies and the International Monetary Fund.

This therefore, in a nutshell, is really what we have been doing. I am very pleased to have the opportunity to account to this Parliament, and to inform this

Parliament that the details on what I have said here today are, in fact, listed in our foreign newspaper, our online newspaper, in different ways and forms, so that all the information is there, and I look forward very much to this dialogue becoming a genuinely non-partisan one, so that there will be a common approach, as it has been really in the past, on the issue of foreign policy.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think that is all I can say at this point in time, and to thank the hon. Member for Point Fortin for raising the nitty-gritty issues, but she would realise that the issues that we are dealing with are way beyond the issues that she raised here today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Minister of Community Development, Member for Mayaro.

The Minister of Community Development (Hon. Winston Peters): Thank you very kindly, Mr. Speaker. I rise to contribute to this debate on the national budget for 2015, on the theme that I like, and I think that would resonate and has resonated with a lot of people in Trinidad and Tobago—“Empowering our People through Sustained Economic Growth and Prosperity”.

But before I move further into my contribution, I would first want to congratulate our hon. Prime Minister. And secondly, I would like to congratulate the Minister of Finance and the Economy for doing a fine job; for presenting a budget that is really people centred, despite what the detractors would say.

My contribution to this debate will focus on achievements of the Ministry of Community Development for fiscal 2014, and my Ministry’s plan for fiscal 2015 which contribute to ensuring empowered citizens and dynamic communities. Indeed, I would like to focus on something that is important to me which is the constituency of Mayaro, and the people who elected me to be in this august House. You see, when I decided to get into politics, that was the driving force. The driving force behind me getting into politics was to do something for the people of the constituency of Mayaro, a place that has been neglected for years.

6.25 p.m.

Since I was a child we have been clamouring for things, we have been asking for amenities that never came our way. But, Mr. Speaker, those things were not done by this administration, they were done by another administration, an administration that had 30 years of unbroken rule in this country, and what did they do to places like Mayaro? Neglect them. They neglected it, and so I got into politics to lend a helping hand to see if I can correct them. And when I got into politics, I did not just walk into politics and ask them to vote for me because I am

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a UNC, or vote for me because I am this or I am that. I went there with a plan. I told them exactly what I was going to do after careful observation of the neglect of my constituency.

And like this Government that I represent, we have a manifesto that we put together and we tell the people of Trinidad and Tobago what we are going to do if we get into power, and the things that we say we are going to do, we are living up to each and every one of it. [*Desk thumping*] And so, the problem in this country is that a lot of people on the other side have become accustomed to putting a manifesto together, a manifesto that means absolutely nothing, because at the end of their tenure, at the end of their five years, nothing that they put in the manifesto is ever adhered to.

But what we did is put what we are going to do in the manifesto, in a national manifesto, which, of course, has become our contract with the people of Trinidad and Tobago. And, so, when I decided to go and subject myself to be the representative for Mayaro, I too put my own Mayaro manifesto together. And I put this manifesto together meaning well, meaning that once I get into power and my Government is in office, I would do every single thing that I say I would do to make their lives better.

Mr. Speaker, I took this with me everywhere I went, to every home. So, when the people of Mayaro voted for me they did not vote for me *vaille-que-vaille*; they voted for me believing in me and believing that what I say is what I am going to do, and up to this point I have not let them down, and I have no intention of letting them down. I am going to do every single thing that I say here, and I want to just read it, you know, so my colleagues on the other side would understand.

Mr. Speaker, when I went to them I told them that my objective and my pledge to them is to deliver quality road paving in crucial areas, proper drainage, prevent flooding and provide a pipe-borne water supply for all in Mayaro. That was pledge number one. Timely processing of agriculture leases and preservation of prime agricultural land along with the development and rehabilitation of access roads, ponds and drainage. I told them that I was going to increase funding from the Agricultural Development Bank for registered farmers, as well as refurbishment of the Rio Claro market and the reconstruction of the Mayaro market.

The Mayaro district health facility to be expanded into a full-fledged hospital, with the incorporation of a burns unit and a dialysis and oncology clinic. Mr. Speaker, I dare say to you, that that right now has been sent out for tender. [*Desk*

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thumping] The Rio Claro health centre, at four o'clock in the afternoon you had to make an appointment to get sick, because if you got sick any time after four, you could not go there, so I promised them that I would have it open 24 hours. Today, it is open 24 hours a day. I promised them it would have a better ambulance service and equipment, until transformed into a full-fledged hospital. That is done. I make promises that I keep.

Increased police car patrols and roadblocks and foot patrols, and anybody in Mayaro would tell you today that they see more police in Mayaro than they have ever seen before. And it is not like when we had somebody else there where every minute you are hearing some young man killed some other young man in Mayaro, or a set of robbery and people cannot come on the beach. That is a thing of the past, but we would talk a little more about that as we go along.

Mr. Speaker, I promised them that we would have the installation of CCTVs in the town centre in Mayaro and in Rio Claro and, indeed, in Biche. I have not quite gotten that one as yet, but that is something that we are working on with the Ministry of National Security. I promised them a fire station for Mayaro, a fire station for Mayaro that was promised since I was a child; my grandmother would say, "since king hatchet was a hammer". [*Laughter*] But today, Mr. Speaker, if you go to Mayaro you would see the construction of that fire station taking place. [*Desk thumping*]

I promised them major recreation grounds would be given due consideration for upgrade development and nature trail parks and training of tour guides to be implemented. That is done. Today when you go to the recreation ground—if you go to Rio Claro now you would see the development of the Rio Claro recreation ground, you would see that we are doing all of these things, and everything that I promised so far is being done.

I promised them the refurbishment of the Mayaro public library. I went even further than that, because I, as fate would have it, was in charge of building libraries, so instead of refurbishing a library in Mayaro I built one, and so, Mayaro has its own library now, that was promised to us since I was a child. [*Desk thumping*] It is going to be finished in a little while, construction is taking place. We had a little snag because of some monetary setback, but it is there. I promised them the construction of a library in Rio Claro; that library is finished now as I speak.

Mr. Speaker, I promised them that once I get there, the Biche High School which falls in my constituency would be opened. Today the Biche High School is

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open. [*Desk thumping*] We opened the Biche High School. I promised them that the Biche Presbyterian School—that the former administration said cannot be done because people would get sick if they go there. Well I want to tell you that my grandmother and them went to school there and they are well, they died from natural causes at 95. So, Mr. Speaker, I am saying to you that the Biche Presbyterian School is finished today and occupied. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, I promised them that I would do the early childhood centres in our community. Today we have one in Ortoire, we have one right now as I speak that the Minister and I are getting ready to open in Cushe. So, we have the centres. These are things that were promised a long, long time and the other administration said that they could not do it or they did not do it for one reason or the other.

We promised that they would get an increased schedule of buses, regular buses from Guayaguayare to Port of Spain, Rio Claro, and today anybody who traverses those parts of the country can tell you that they can stand up and wait for a bus and they would get it. [*Desk thumping*] And I want to tell them that it is not sufficient, but we have, in fact—Minister, I understand; now I am in Government I would understand how it is, you cannot get everything one time. The only time that you get everything that you want at the same time is when you have a choir, and everybody sings the same song, and sometimes some of them have to hush in order for you to hear the balance. [*Laughter*]

So, I want to thank you very much, Minister. But I want to say to you, I did not come here today to bash anybody or to talk about anything, but I listened to some of my colleagues on the other side and I want to tell you, you know, the PNM wants people in Trinidad to believe that they are a new entity that nobody does not know anything about and they want them to try them out. But the PNM, Mr. Speaker, is an entity that everybody in this country knows about, and I say to you that everybody who suffers in this country today should blame the PNM. “It have nothing name no new PNM and no old PNM”, because they boast that they are 60 years old. So, how you could say you are a new entity when you are 60 years old? I never see a 60-year-old new entity.

Miss Cox: Who say they are 60, or you do not know?

Hon. W. Peters: “Is how much it is? Well, correct meh, nah?”

Miss Cox: How much UNC is?

Hon. W. Peters: Well, 50-whatever they are, they boast that they are old, and that is good. [*Laughter*] And we like that, but sometimes you must not be old conveniently. You mature when it is all the good things, but you are not mature when you have to take blame for all the wrong things you do in the country.

Well I am saying to you, every time they get up and they speak about the wrong things in this country, it is a sad indictment on themselves, because they are the ones who caused it in the first place. [*Desk thumping*] But they expect after they have ruled this country for 43 years and the things that they did not do in 43 years, they want you to do it in five. “What go wrong in the morning cah come good in the evening.”

And so, Mr. Speaker, they complain about—they want mass transportation. I want to tell you, Mr. Speaker, the PNM undeveloped Trinidad and Tobago, you know; undeveloped a country that was developed even before they come here. Because I want to say to you that just recently, we celebrated the 100th anniversary of Rio Claro, and what was at the centre of Rio Claro is the train, and we celebrated the train that took people from Port of Spain to Mayaro—I mean, to Rio Claro—and the train took people from Port of Spain to Rio Claro, and the train took people from Port of Spain to Point and to Siparia. And today, the PNM is telling you that they are doing a feasibility study for a rail. They spent \$545 million to do one feasibility—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Gopeesingh: Pre-feasibility.

Hon. W. Peters: Well it is a pre-feasibility one to do a feasibility. And then they are coming to tell you now, like if they were never there, “it ha too much traffic jam, it have this on the road and it have that on the road, and the drain ain’t fix”.

Mr. Speaker, I want to tell you something, every part of Trinidad and Tobago, the people will do well to not have the PNM represent them, and I am serious. Anywhere that the PNM represents, if it is a place that they meet that is progressive, by the time their tenure is over that place is in a mess. It is in a mess. [*Desk thumping*] I do not know, they complain about the amount of things that are not done. Today they would tell you, but you are doing things and you are doing it south of the Caroni Bridge. Why you have to do so many things south of the Caroni Bridge now, after they were there for 45 years? It is because they were never done before.

I have in my hand here the achievement of things that I have done in Mayaro in five years without all that money that they had. If we had the money that the

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PNM had, we would have done so many things that you would not even recognize Mayaro when you come there. Because I want to tell you, I had to fix—in four years I had to fix 114 drains, when they were just there. They were not there like 10 years ago. It is only four years they were out of office, and even then we had to fix 114 drains. I mean, I could call them. I could stay here now and call every single one of them.

Miss Cox: Call them out.

Hon. W. Peters: Nah, you want me to take up all my time calling drains. [*Laughter*] I am not taking up all my time calling out drains. [*Crosstalk*]

But, Mr. Speaker, 114 drains we had to do, and I tell you—18 recreation grounds in my constituency that had to be repaired and to be lit, and you were there all the time, what did you do?

6.40 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, I want to tell you something. You want me to tell you something? I heard them talking just now about, when election come we did this, and when election come, we did that.

Mr. Speaker, in 2007 election, you want me to tell you what they do? The people of Biche have a perennial hatred for them because they punished these people so much—let me tell you. In order to fool the people they came with some machine and cut the road. They put up a pile of pipes on the side of the road, that you could not even see—if you see pipe, millions of pipes. When they lost the election, you know what they did, they come and picked back up every single piece of pipe, every single length of pipe; the PNM picked them back up. But you know what we did? We have since run water from Rio Claro to Biche, [*Desk thumping*] and we leave the place that they cut there as a reminder of their wickedness to the people, so we run the pipe on the other side of the road.

Mr. Speaker, I want to tell you more than that what they did, you know. It has a place in Mayaro called Kernahan. They were trying to lure the people of Kernahan to come to vote for them. At the time we did not have as much cell phones and stuff, so the people in there wanted communication. You know what they did? They came with a truckload of phone booths and put them down in all kinds of strategic places so the people will look like they bringing phone booth inside of there. [*Interruption*] It did not have any phone in the booth, but it looked like they were coming to run it. And as soon as the election was over, you know what they did, they came back and picked up every single one of the phone

booths. “We should ah bring it and put it by all yuh house.”

Hon. Member: Where did you get that story from?

Hon. W. Peters: “Where I get the story?”

Mr. Jeffrey: Once upon a time.

Hon. W. Peters: Mr. Speaker, all that I am saying here is the truth. Well yes, they would continue to say that is once upon a time, and the truth be told that it is once upon their time when they were in governance.

I really do not want to go through all this thing, [*Crosstalk*] no, but they want me to tell them all about that, you see. It is so much, it is so much, it is too much, it is just too much.

Mr. Speaker, the Mayaro market, some of you who come to Mayaro on weekends and come for vacation, you know what it used to look like, you know what the Mayaro town centre looked like. They had the place like a dump, literally they had it like a dump.

Mr. Jeffrey: PNM fix it.

Hon. W. Peters: PNM? “PNM doh fix nothing.” What is it that PNM fix? PNM mashed up everything. The Colonial people leave things here for them and the PNM mashed them up, and then they continue to mash up even further, and then complain to me today.

Mr. Speaker, I had to do over the entire Mayaro market, upgrade, total upgrade. Even burial grounds, you know, when “lil” children passing by the burial grounds in Mayaro long time when PNM was there, they had to run. They say “jumbie” living inside of there. I am serious. Now, when you go you could see the upgrades of the grounds.

Road paving—we had to do 76 roads. These are secondary roads, 76 of them we have done. If you go to the constituency of Mayaro now—and when I say the constituency, I am talking about the entire constituency—you would find that everything is upgraded. Not what we had then, and passing for progress. All they talk about—the progress that they talk about never exist. Days extension, two days extension, three—Chatergoon Road. I mean we just have too many roads to call. Mr. Speaker, let me tell you.

Mr. Cadiz: What about the village with no water?

Hon. W. Peters: The village with no water, I want to tell you about it. I am coming to that now, we are “gehing” down to the water thing. We never had any water. When you go on the side of the street, is only blue barrels, black barrels, all kinds of barrels you are seeing on the side of the street. Today, when you go, it

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has a place called Union Village, and Union Village is a place that supported PNM, it was one of PNM's little enclave in Mayaro. But, Mr. Speaker, for 100 years they existed, and for 100 years they had no water. Some truck had to bring water for them. It was until I promised them, that was one of the promises I made, and today, if you see barrels on the side of the street, it is to put garbage, for no other reason.

The same thing in Biche, promised people water, none. And they talk about progress and they talk about PNM. And for some reason they really believe that this is PNM country. They believe that somebody give them the right because even though they are not in government, if you do something in this country—and this Government is doing something, the people give us the right to govern the country. You have the right to talk, it is fine, but we have the right to govern. But when you do anything in this country as long as they did not say that it is right, it is not right. It is not the right thing.

Hon. Member: They take claim.

Hon. W. Peters: They take claim, they could take whatever they want.

Mr. Speaker, let me just try to see how best I could go through this thing here. You know it had landslip in Rio Claro, since I was a child, since I was going to school that never ever got repaired, when, a PNM Government existed for all these times, I had to fix, in four years, 54 landslips, [*Desk thumping*] 54 of them. “And you cyar tell meh dat all yuh did not see the landslips there all the time.”

Miss Cox: “It have landslip all about.”

Hon. W. Peters: “It have landslip all about”, I know, but I fix them.

Mr. Jeffrey: How much you fix in Moruga?

Hon. W. Peters: I did not have to fix any in Moruga. I want to tell you, the one—you know at one time my constituency went down there, and I fixed one of the largest landslips on the Moruga Road at the time. But at the time the Government changed I was still the representative, and they are so wicked and so vindictive when they were going to open the landslip—I said they are wicked and vindictive, when they were going to open the landslip—[*Crosstalk*] I will sit down, yes. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, Minister, more eloquent language to describe Members of the Opposition, please.

Hon. W. Peters: They do not care about the people at all. That is more eloquent, I guess. They do not care anything about people. So when they were going to open that very landslip that I was responsible for, I sat right there in the

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audience; they called everybody, they talked to everybody, and they left me sitting down there without even acknowledging me as the Member of Parliament. And today, they would come—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Jeffrey: “I went through that with all yuh.”

Hon. W. Peters: You do what?

Mr. Jeffrey: “I went through that with all yuh.”

Hon. W. Peters: And today, they would come and tell you about how people are vindictive and people are doing this to them. Anything that people learn that is wrong in politics in this country, blame the PNM, because they teach you.

Miss Cox: You have a tabanca, boy.

Hon. W. Peters: A tabanca for what? I was never a PNM, what I have a tabanca for. I was never a PNM. “So nobody ha to tell me ah coming home, and I ha to come home and all ah dat.”

Mr. Speaker, in Agostini Village, we laid pipe there. We replaced lines from Rio Claro to Clear Water. We lay water from Navet to Biche, from Clear Water to Agostini. Bangladesh Village, Ecclesville never had water in all these years. Today, I hear my colleague on the other side complaining that she have some road somewhere, inside some place where somebody, and they do not have any water. That is in St. Ann’s somewhere.

Mrs. Thomas: In Maracas.

Hon. W. Peters: Where it is?

Mrs. Thomas: In Maracas.

Hon. W. Peters: It is in Maracas, a place that they represent, and they were only in Government four/five years ago, but she is complaining today, “how dey ha no lights”.

Mrs. Thomas: I just came.

Hon. W. Peters: Well, whether you just came or not, you are in an entity that was there for a long time and represented that very place. They are complaining you know. So it is himself complaining to himself. I am not complaining to anybody. I represent Mayaro from since 2000, I represent them from 2001. This is about the seventh year and I am in government for five. And in this five years that I am in government, I am ensuring that the constituency of Mayaro, my legacy would be that I give them the things that I promised. [*Desk thumping*] And that is

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how people should be. I am not representing any other constituency. Any other constituency that I represent is as a Minister of Government, and as a Minister of Government I have to do what a Minister of Government could do; do the things that fall within my purview. And you would hear about the things that fall under my purview in a few minutes. But I am here to talk about Mayaro, because had it not been for Mayaro, I would not be here. [*Desk thumping*] I swear to represent Mayaro and the day that I stop representing Mayaro is the day when I stop being in politics, because without them I cannot do anything. And I want to thank them very, very, very much for reposing faith in this calypsonian.

Mr. Speaker, today Mayaro could boast about fish landing. Mayaro has one of the nicest fish landing—when you go down to Guayaguayare we are doing some remedial work on it right now. But when you go down there you are going to see, these are the things that they could have never done for us, and if Mayaro had depended on them and voted for them, they still would not have had it.

We have a construction of the Ortoire heritage market. And I want to tell you, you hear us talking about—my colleague was talking about blue economy, well to contribute to that blue economy, we just opened the Galeota Port. [*Desk thumping*] The Galeota Port, at a cost of US \$85 million, and this is in Guayaguayare. This is something that you could not even hear about it. I am proud of the people of Mayaro for making sure that they reject the PNM resoundingly because they have finally seen the light so they do not have to complain like the people of Laventille and the people in Diego Martin who continue to stay with PNM and say they are PNM until they dead. Well I want to tell you, that if you are saying “you is PNM until you dead” you will be dying faster than you believe you would.

Mr. Speaker, the Tabaquite Road has always been in a mess. Now these are main roads that we are talking about. When you look at this now in four years, in four years we have revitalized the Tabaquite Road with box drains on both sides. We just have about, maybe about a mile and a half of road again that they are working on right now, from Poole, Guayaguayare, Bristol, Lazzari, the Naparima/Mayaro Road, it is really—I cannot understand for the life of me why some people forever believing that PNM is their saviour. And all the people who believe that PNM is their saviour, all the places where they believe that PNM is their saviour, those are the places that are the most dilapidated, that are most neglected. [*Desk thumping*]

Miss Hospedales: That is not true.

Hon. W. Peters: Mr. Speaker, I would be ashamed, Laventille has never ever in life, since we have had electoral politics in Trinidad and Tobago, Laventille has never ever been represented by any other party but the PNM.

Hon. Members: True.

Hon. W. Peters: And that is true. And I want to tell you today when Laventille has to complain—listen, Mr. Speaker, I want to turn to a more sombre and sober mood, because when I talk about my constituency and its neglect by the PNM, and I think that it is wickedness that they do to them. I tell you how they picked up the pipe and how they picked up the phone booths and how they did not run water—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Gopeesingh: You feel the pain.

Hon. W. Peters: I feel it, Mr. Speaker, I feel it. So if I am a bit emotional it is because of that. But let me kind of calm myself and bring myself back to some kind, you know—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: Calmness.

Hon. W. Peters: Yeah, yeah, let me get back to the progress of my Ministry. But only to say that I will continue to represent the people of Mayaro and I will take up where they left off and I could tell them that the people of Mayaro will never ever be so foolish again as to put a PNM representative in Mayaro; never!

Mr. Speaker, let me just say one more thing. When you went to Mayaro five years ago, if you stand up in Mayaro Junction too hard with one glass of water, the whole place used to flood. If you throw out that glass of water in Mayaro, the place flood. I am serious, Mr. Speaker. Now, you know what? Just with one little bit of engineering we have fixed a big drain that passes at the back of the market because of my representation. [*Desk thumping*] And today it could rain as hard as it wants, we have no flood in Mayaro Junction, none whatsoever.

6.55 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, let me turn to my ministerial duty and explain. This administration has articulated a *Medium Term Policy Framework* designed to focus attention on seven interconnecting pillars for sustainable development which are pursued and monitored through the five priority areas. The core contribution of my Ministry to national development is in the area of poverty reduction and human capital development. More specifically, my Ministry contributes to the strengthening of social capital at the community level. My Ministry also contributes to the priority area of crime, law and order.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Crime reduction.

Hon. Member: “You write dat or what?”

Dr. Gopeesingh: “Ay”, behave yourself.

Hon. W. Peters: Mr. Speaker, in this regard, the Ministry of Community Development provides institutional strengthening to enhance the organizational capacity of communities; develops the infrastructure to support communities’ cohesiveness and collective actions. It provides the financial and technical resources to enable organizations to mount initiatives which protect children and youth from the lure of criminal activities and enhance human capacity and socio-economic development.

Mr. Speaker, please permit me to share with this honourable House how we have approached our mandate of community development and the plan for fiscal 2015. The three broad areas we will discuss are: empowerment, infrastructure and institutional strengthening and capacity, a critical, though perhaps undervalued aspect of the empowerment in the area of mediation. Mediation is increasingly recognized as an important option. We have a mediation unit in the Ministry because, you know, these days conflicts could get out of hand very, very easily and our mediation unit has been playing an important role in ensuring that we bring people together so that they can at least find a better way to get themselves together; talk it out.

Mr. Speaker, 260 persons benefited from the parenting workshop that we had, and that is an increase of 28 per cent over fiscal 2013. Mr. Speaker, 3,721 persons participated at the mediation community outreach programme, and these programmes, 263 persons participated in the parental support group. You know, oftentimes we see people beating up their children with “fork and shovel” and what have you, on the TV, and this is what this is all about. We are making sure that we teach parents how to deal with their children; how not to brutalize them, you know, because sometimes children could get a little out of hand. But with our mediation group, we take care of all of that.

Additionally, the mediation division also provides counselling. This case benefited 5,388 persons. This includes—you know, many times we say that the male does not take part in anything. Well, in the mediation classes, this is not so because we have 2,417 males and 2,971 females.

Notwithstanding these advances, we are aware of many rural communities where there is an urgent need for the service, but some of them are so rural they

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cannot get to you, so when you cannot go to the mountain, we bring the mountain to you. What we propose to do—what we are doing, as a matter of fact, to these rural areas, we are acquiring two buses and equip them with all the amenities as, indeed, you would have in the office when you come to our office, and we would have all the people there who would give you all things that you need. All the mediation counselling and everything, you would get them. So we would be going around and coming around to you.

It is noteworthy that since the start-up of the community mediation programme, the division that provided support to the Magistracy by managing an average—[*Interruption*]

Miss Hospedales: When was it established?

Hon. W. Peters: What? What you say?

Miss Hospedales: When was it established?

Hon. W. Peters: When was it established? Why is that important? You want to say it is a PNM thing. [*Laughter and crosstalk*] No, no, she want to—no, no! Listen, that is one of the problems that we are having. We want to be a developed country but we want to hold on to all the little things: [*Crosstalk*] this is PNM do that, and this is UNC do that, and this is COP do that. My friends, let me say to you—

Miss Cox: “Yuh start off by saying PNM eh do nutting.” [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. W. Peters: From where I came to get here, I come from Trinidad and Tobago, and when something is done, it is a continuation. Who “make” that chair you sitting down on? Who build this building that we are in?

Hon. Member: PNM.

Hon. W. Peters: PNM?

Miss Hospedales: Yes.

Hon. W. Peters: PNM cannot build “no” building. “Wha PNM building de building wit?” My friend, whatever we have in this country belongs to the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Hypolite: You said you built the fire station.

Hon. W. Peters: I caused the fire station to be built. [*Laughter*] But I am not going—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: “He build de drains too.” [*Crosstalk and laughter*]

Hon. W. Peters: Mr. Speaker, let me forget about—

Mr. Speaker: Yeah, Member for Mayaro, I know there is a lot of excitement in the House.

Hon. Member: We want to go home.

Mr. Speaker: Yeah. The hon. Member for Mayaro, you may continue, please.

Hon. W. Peters: Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, as I was saying—
[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: “Yuh time eh up yet?”

Hon. W. Peters:—we lend support to the Magistracy. As a matter of fact, last year we had them recommend to us, for our intervention, 600 court referrals. We are having in excess of 600 court referrals per year. So our mediation unit at the Ministry is playing a very important part. Mr. Speaker, this is in keeping with the mediation mantra of “talk it out, not fight it out”, and we are promoting peace and harmony among families.

I turn next to the Retiree Adolescent Partnership Programme, or RAPP. This programme is investing in the empowerment of our children and youth in ways that would steer them away from a life of crime and unproductive life choices. This RAPP programme, the Retiree Adolescent Partnership Programme, provides the platform for learning, enrichment and mentoring where elders, with the requisite experience, are involved in this empowerment initiative. RAPP is geared towards helping adolescents, especially at-risk youths, to appreciate the learning experience by providing a stimulating environment for positive, social intervention. RAPP provides children and youth at the community level with academic assistance, sport initiatives, art, craft, music, life skills and general guidance.

Mr. Speaker, in 2004, with five RAPP centres at Couva, Belmont, La Horquetta, Valencia and Laventille—Laventille—the programme benefited a total of—let me get the right total for you—184 children, 14 years and under; 104 youths between the ages of 15 and 24 years. In 2015, we propose, given the value of this programme, my Ministry will expand its initiative, extending these services to children, youth and parents in 10 additional communities across Trinidad. My timekeeper here keeps telling me that my time is running out very, very fast. Let me get to some of the things that I really want to get to here.

Turning now, Mr. Speaker, to a programme targeting adults in my Ministry. Community Education Programme focuses on the needs of households, the unemployed, the underemployed and the vulnerable, the less fortunate and at-risk in our society. The programme provides such persons with the opportunity to learn a skill which can be used to promote entrepreneurship, income-generating capacity or skill for use in household management.

In fiscal 2014, a total of 5,948 trainees benefited from 300 courses conducted throughout Trinidad. In 2015, the Ministry will continue to make the adult education and community education programmes available to citizens of Trinidad. Moreover, the Ministry will seek to rationalize these two initiatives to ensure that resources engaged in the delivery are optimized.

This is a very important programme: the Geriatric Adolescent Partnership Programme or GAPP.

Miss Hospedales: That is a failure.

Hon. W. Peters: GAPP is a failure? Wait until you get old. [*Laughter and crosstalk*] GAPP is a social programme which—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the speaking time of the hon. Minister has expired. Would you want to—

Hon. W. Peters: Yes, Mr. Speaker, yes.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the question is that the speaking time of the hon. Minister of Community Development be extended by 10 minutes.

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: You may continue, hon. Minister. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. W. Peters: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As you would know—and my colleague over there has said it is a failure. But as you would know, Mr. Speaker, we are an ageing society, and this reality has compelled us to increase the number of caregivers who are engaged on an annual basis, from 400, when we came into office in fiscal 2011, to 600 in fiscal 2013. [*Desk thumping*] Also, in keeping with our people responsibility theme that this Government has been keeping, we have increased the stipend to these people that they have been getting all the time, from \$1,800 to \$2,500. Mr. Speaker, that might sound as a little bit to some of my colleagues on the other side, who might say, “But that is a little bit of money”, but that is a 38 per cent increase from what they used to give them. This programme might not mean “nuttin to you right now until ah next couple ah years”.

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Mr. Speaker, what we have done in 2014, 600 caregivers provided service to the elderly across Trinidad; 92 trainees graduated from level one training; 165 trainees are registered at level two training. A two-day interactive workshop was conducted for caregivers in the area of professionalism in the workplace. Mr. Speaker, 2014 marked a significant milestone for the GAPP programme as it celebrates its 20-year anniversary of contributing to national care and affection for the elderly.

To mark this milestone, my Ministry is currently in the process of compiling paperwork for regional accreditation with the National Training Agency for level two training. Level one accreditation will be pursued during the next fiscal year. This would mean that they can go anywhere with these certificates and say, “I am a caregiver”, and do that. They can also open up their own businesses because you know that we have to take care of the elderly.

7.10 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, I want to turn to something that is dear to me before I really—ah, here it is: the Best Village Programme.

Miss Hospedales: PNM, Dr. Eric Williams.

Hon. W. Peters: Of course, Dr. Eric Williams. And what is wrong with that? He was the only good PNM it had, Dr. Eric Williams. “It eh ha no more.” [*Crosstalk*] I am one to say that Dr. Eric Williams was the only PNM I knew who did something for people. Mr. Speaker, he introduced the Best Village Programme and I recognize that and I am happy about that because I am a product of the Best Village Programme; a proud one at that.

Mr. Jeffrey: Go PNM!

Hon. W. Peters: What PNM! The Best Village Programme has left an indelible mark on the social landscape of Trinidad and Tobago contributing most significantly to the shaping of our cultural identity, and helping us to embrace who we are as Trinbagonians. The Ministry continues to implement the Prime Minister’s Best Village Trophy Competition as one of our flagship programmes to build community spirit and cohesion through healthy competition and social interaction. And while I am on that, I want to congratulate Miss La Reine Rive 2014, Tadia Bruce. [*Desk thumping*]

The programme continues to garner support from groups and communities such that during the fiscal 2014, Mr. Speaker, 732 groups participated in the Best

Village Programme; 129 groups in the Village Olympics; 73 communities participated in the Clean and Beautify Competition; 960 children participated in the Junior Best Village. Mr. Speaker, we see the best village as an ideal tool to develop culture and the arts in Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, I want to turn quickly to infrastructural development. The availability of appropriate community facilities is highly associated with a greater community collaboration, more organized community and greater engagement in local activities to enhance the quality of life of residents. Under my watch, I have sought to expand the provision of community facilities and to ensure that modernized facilities are provided, consistent with the growing needs and population size.

In this regard, I commissioned the development of a state-of-the-art standardized design for the construction of all new community centres. This standardized design creates efficiency in terms of planning and construction of new centres, as well as for facility management, in addition to these facilities, and will provide more space and adequately cater for use as shelters. We are not just building community centres, we are building community centres with an outlook, with a futuristic outlook. If things should happen in the country, they can go there as shelters. That is what we are doing.

Mr. Speaker, in the north, the East-West Corridor, we opened the following centres—and I want my friends to hear because a lot of them said that “we ent do no community centre in their community”: Patna, River Estate Community Centre, opened; Cocorite Community Centre, Second Caledonia Community Centre, Mango Rose homework centre, Quarry Drive activity centre, Calvary Hill Community Centre, La Seiva Community Centre, St. Augustine South Community Centre, Tunapuna Community Centre, Bon Air West Community Centre, Malabar Phase IV Community Centre, Upper Malabar Community Centre, Talparo Community Centre, Cumana Community Centre, and North Eastern Duranta Gardens Community Centre.

Mr. Speaker, in the central and south: Guayaguayare Community Centre, Preysal Community Centre, Union Community Centre, Waterloo Community Centre, Gulf View Community Centre, La Gloria Community Centre, Hindustan Community Centre, Marac Community Centre, Sister’s Road Community Centre upgraded, Couva/Roystonia Community Centre, Jerningham Junction Community Centre, Golconda Community Centre, Carapichaima Community Centre and Ortoire Community Centre.

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I would say to you that we would continue in fiscal 2015, the key infrastructural programme of the Ministry would include the completion of 22 community centres and the start-up of 18 community centres with an allocation of \$80 million under the Infrastructure Development Fund. The Ministry proposes to continue our community centre refurbishment programme for which we have been allocated the sum of \$15 million. Now, I want them to know it is \$15 million and not \$50 million, so we will do as many as we can.

Over the past year, the Ministry has been partnering with the Ministry of National Security to harmonize and expand the delivery of services in challenged areas where we are undertaking the construction of new community centres like the one on the Beetham that they so ask all the time and the representative from Beetham is saying that we built no community centre there. The reason why we did not finish that community centre is because we have to put a police post that has to be finished even before the community centre, and if he wants to be truthful, every time I go there, I take him with me.

Mr. Hypolite: Nah, that is not true.

Hon. W. Peters: That is not true?

Mr. Hypolite: That is not true.

Hon. W. Peters: Mr. Speaker, I take him because he is the representative. And if he also wants to be truthful, he will tell you that the police post that is being built there is almost completed. That is if he has been there in recent time.

Mr. Speaker: You have one minute.

Hon. W. Peters: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I will take my one minute to say to you that I want to, again, thank my Prime Minister. [*Desk thumping*] I want to thank her for this people-centred budget. I want to thank the Minister of Finance and the Economy. And we as a Government, this People's Partnership Government, would continue to put people first. We would continue to serve the people, serve the people and serve the people. [*Desk thumping*] We will continue to serve all the people that they have left behind. We are going to take them where they are supposed to be.

So, Mr. Speaker, we would continue to work while they continue to talk and criticize as they have been doing. I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Chandresh Sharma (Fyzabad): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I join this debate, I think it is instructive that we revisit why we are here, what

brought us to this Parliament and the importance of this budget coming at the end of the first term of the Kamla Persad-Bissessar-led administration and certainly in preparing for the second term. What is very important to remember is that it is the first time that a Prime Minister, elected, was called upon to rescue Trinidad and Tobago. This had not happened from the days of Dr. Eric Williams, right up.

In 2007, a government came into being led Mr. Patrick Manning. In 2010, Mr. Patrick Manning collapsed; he could not run the Government, which led to an election on the 24th day of May. In fact, you may recall that in January 2010, Kamla Persad-Bissessar was elected the political leader of the United National Congress and this led her, over a short period, to communicate ideas and have conversations with other political leaders, some present in this House and some elsewhere. What emerged then—and I remember in the month of April, the then Prime Minister, Mr. Patrick Manning, along with the Minister of Health, went to open the Siparia health facility at which Kamla Persad-Bissessar, as Member of Parliament for Siparia, was invited.

On the very day of the opening of that facility, the invitation was withdrawn that was extended to Kamla Persad-Bissessar for whatever reason. And at the function—which I attended because the health facility is in the constituency of Fyzabad—Mr. Manning cut short the programme and said he had something very urgent to do in Port of Spain. This was in April, and he came into Port of Spain and advised the President then that the Parliament should be done with and new elections will be held in May.

So, Kamla Persad-Bissessar becoming the political leader of the United National Congress, January 2010; elections called by the sitting Prime Minister who would have had another two-plus years, in April, and elections called in May 2010. What has emerged since 2010? Every single citizen of this country has been treated with.

The Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago, when you look at it, for the first time, the framers of this Constitution intended that the resources of the State must reach every single citizen in our twin-island Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. For the first time in the history of elections in this part of the world—and when you look at governance in many countries, I have looked at maybe 100 countries, and we cannot find a Prime Minister who has caused the resources of the State to reach every single community.

Mr. Speaker, I served as the Minister of Local Government previously. At that time, the general elections were held in May and in July, we had the elections for

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local government at which 134 local government representatives were elected, sitting in 14 corporations, the THA being separate. And in every corporation, we made sure resources went.

In fact, the Prime Minister went further—and the Prime Minister spoke at a global local government conference in the United Kingdom, where for the first time in Trinidad—and you would remember, Mr. Speaker, local government has been with us since 1888, starting under the Spanish rule. For the first time in Trinidad and Tobago, every local government practitioner has an office funded by the State, every local government practitioner has access to resources, which were not available before. Previously, what obtained? Ministers would sit in Port of Spain and determine what will take place in local government areas. We changed that.

Today, you would have heard, over the last few days in particular, every Member of Parliament, on both sides, can identify work being done in their areas. Certainly, every Member of Parliament would like more work to be done, on Government side and Opposition side, but that is the name of the game, you want more and more. So that in every community—you would have heard from the Minister of Education and you see the results coming out after this being the fifth budget—you have seen improvement in every area of examinations in this country. Why is that happening? Because the Kamla Persad-Bissessar's administration is making sure that the resources of the State reach every single child, every single school. So that in every school, improvement has taken place, new schools have been rebuilt, renovations, repairs.

More than that, it is not just the physical building, it is what obtains inside of the building: educational assistance in the way of electronic devices, computers. The Minister indicated to the House, sometime ago, 155,000 breakfasts.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Meals.

Mr. C. Sharma: Meals.

Dr. Gopeesingh: 55,000 breakfasts.

Mr. C. Sharma: Okay, thank you. One hundred and fifty-five thousand; every child taken care of. In every community, every health facility, a doctor is available every single day. Pharmaceuticals are available every single day. No longer are our children dying because of a lack of resources to obtain medical care.

One of the first matters we treated with as Members of Parliament, in which the PNM Members refused to participate, was to make sure that moneys from our

salaries went towards the Children's Life Fund and continues to this day. This is the only Parliament in the world—and I am a proud member of the CPA as many of us are—the only Parliament in the world from which funds from the Members' income go into a fund. So we, again, are doing the first. This has captured global attention.

And when you look around Trinidad and Tobago, we are a preferred destination in every single area. Investments, we attracting outside from the United States, outside of Brazil and, I think, Canada and maybe Chile of late, we are attracting the highest dollar value in investments.

7.25 p.m.

This small twin-island Republic of Trinidad and Tobago has close to 400 multinational companies doing business and everyday more are looking into it; a small country with a new Prime Minister, four year-plus. Major leaders have come here. They have come because there are opportunities to treat with in business, in teaching, how you govern.

This Prime Minister has been able to hold this Government when the PNM would say one month, three months, six months, one year. Today the economy of the country is growing, surpassing many other countries. Unemployment 3.7, the lowest in this part of the world, lower than the United States, lower than Europe, lower than the United Kingdom. Under Kamla Persad-Bissessar, look at the achievements. That is global. This is the only country in the world where every single citizen wakes up to a breakfast. No other country can boast of that. That citizen can be a vagrant on the street because every country in the world has street dwellers and can be anywhere else; every single citizen.

This is the only country in the world today that every single citizen can go and obtain medical care. No other country allows that. There is a process, and all for free; any operation a citizen requires here. This country has doctors available 24 hours, every single day. So if you require medical care, you do not have to worry: will I see a doctor today or tomorrow? Or you do not have to go and hear: sorry, you have to come back next week. You will see a doctor within minutes at any one of our institutions. During the day there are about 100 institutions available because of the health centres. After hours many are available as well, 24/7.

So, Mr. Speaker, this budget—in keeping with the promise we made, which was in our manifesto and which was communicated during the elections, which became Government's policy—continues to treat with the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, making sure that in keeping with the Constitution, we see equality in every single citizen and that citizen has access to every facility in education,

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across the board, from kindergarten right up to university.

Today we have our children of Trinidad and Tobago attending universities in major countries and cities of the world, more than 100 cities. From my own constituency, the number one child in SEA, Shivanna Chatoor emerged. [*Desk thumping*] From my own constituency there were a number of scholarship winners.

Dr. Gopeesingh: From the school you went to.

Mr. C. Sharma: Thank you for reminding me, the school I also attended, the Avocat Vedic School. And let me congratulate the Principal, young Miss Nirmala Ramnath and the form teacher, Jyoti Bridgelal-Komal. Again, I mentioned the names to indicate the governance of Kamla Persad-Bissessar, because every single Member of Parliament, and hopefully on both sides, is acquainted with every school in his or her constituency, because we are part of the system. The Government allows that. Under the PNM, this did not obtain. Today, every school principal is in contact with his Member of Parliament because the Member of Parliament has a working relationship and we make sure resources go into there. Under the PNM you would see schools closing for long periods.

I remember, as the Member of Parliament, being here for many years, water, within half an hour, when the bell rings on mornings, if no water is available the kids had to be sent home. Under this administration, that does not obtain in the least. [*Desk thumping*] It does not obtain. In every single school, today our teaching community is about 17,000? No, 14,000. We are making sure teachers are available. And today we are competing on the global stage in examinations. We are obtaining a number of firsts. And we would have seen, in the case of Pastor Winston Cuffie's daughter, No. 1 in ACCA, the youngest in this part of the world, I understand and there are many other areas.

In fact, I recall the Leader of Government Business, in his earlier young days, obtaining the first place from where he obtained his PhD and I do not think that has been repeated. [*Desk thumping*] And again it shows the development, because we are making sure our young persons are out there communicating.

The MP for Couva North, a young mother. What can she tell the young mothers of this country? You can work hard, you can educate yourself, you can go and teach, you can become a Member of Parliament, you can become a Minister of Government, you can get married, you can have a baby and if you have a second baby, you run the risk of getting \$500 a month. [*Laughter*] These are important communications that the Government keeps telling the national

community, that we are caring for all our people.

Today, one of the desires of every country, every government, is how do we house our people. But Trinidad and Tobago, under this current budget, has introduced a first-time homeowner's loan of up to \$850,000 at 2 per cent and this means that persons working, regardless of where—we have just moved the minimum wage to \$15 per hour. It means to say that person now will earn approximately \$3,000—because everybody works between 40 and 50 hours—that person can now qualify for, let us say \$200,000 loan at 2 per cent over a 20-year period. That would be approximately a \$1,000 loan payment. So, the average householder, with a joint income, or a single income of \$3,000 to \$4,000, can obtain a loan from Trinidad and Tobago Mortgage Finance under the Government provisions.

It would move to the other level. A joint income of \$6,000/\$7,000 will allow you a loan of \$400,000 to \$500,000 at a monthly instalment of give and take \$2,000 and \$2,200. It means to say—and the United Nations has declared that it is important that all our citizens, regardless of where they are, can have access to shelter, where families can have a common area for eating, sharing and studying and the children can have indoor plumbing. Certainly, in our country there are persons who cannot access it because of their financial situation.

Under the National Social Development Programme we make moneys available and under this administration, under Kamla Persad-Bissessar, the most number of house grants to effect repairs in homes has been issued by this Government, [*Desk thumping*] the most number and in every single constituency. The PNM cannot say “we do not get.” The Member for St. Joseph cannot say. The Member for Arouca/Maloney cannot say. They may say “we need more”, but every single—the Members for Laventille cannot say we do not. We may need more. We all need more.

Moneys for wiring, when the Minister of Education indicated that 75,000 computers, we are making sure—not only are they receiving those computers, through our close relationship with all the schools in our constituencies and country at large—from the time we identify one single home without electricity, we are making sure, under the NSDP, wiring of that home takes place, as Minister Nizam Baksh may have indicated earlier.

Today, Mr. Speaker, another first under Kamla Persad-Bissessar, which is a global first, every single citizen, every single home in Trinidad and Tobago, has access to pipe borne water. No other country in the world can boast about that, not America, not the United Kingdom. Every single home has access—[*Interruption*]

Miss Hospedales: No, that is not true.

Mr. C. Sharma: Maybe you do not understand the English—another first. Ninety-seven per cent of our population has access to electricity, 97 per cent. So in four years of Kamla Persad-Bissessar's Government, we are reaching out to the community across the board. We are making sure.

And you have heard of all the roads that have been built. You are seeing, for the first time—again when you look at value for money. Let us quickly make a comparison. Under the PNM, they have not delivered a single project without major cost overrun. You call a project, this building we are in, the building next door, hundreds of millions of dollars. Wastage under the PNM was the norm of the day. We have since changed that. We are making sure we get value for money. One of the first projects that this Government undertook was the relocation of the Parliament in this building. This was one of the first projects, and I must remind Trinidad and Tobago, this came within money budget and within time budget, and we continue this across the board. Today we are delivering homes within budget, again.

You would have seen, under this Government, a very good project that has commanded attention which is the laying of the water main in Navet, the savings of more than \$100 million. What that tells us, what that tells Trinidad and Tobago, for the next 50 years a PNM government must never return. [*Desk thumping*] A PNM government is not in the interest of Trinidad and Tobago. A PNM government is bad for this country. It is bad for our children. It is bad for our mothers going to the hospitals. It is bad for persons looking for homes.

Today, the PNM had a negative approach towards agriculture, because they, for some reason, thought those who were involved in farming the lands were not supporters of the PNM and they treated them very badly and we had to keep importing food and paid them very poorly at the same time. Today, every single home can access food at good prices. You can get fresh fruits and vegetables. The WHO, the World Health Organization, is begging Government to encourage more persons and more and more communities to have vegetables in their daily intake of food, to have fresh cows' milk where possible, to drink more water. We are making sure that obtains, and we are making sure we put money to lend, and today you are seeing access roads across the country.

Our country continues to be very attractive for business, for pleasure, for holiday. In fact, during one time at the Ministry of Tourism, I recall last year we had 534,000 visitors. For a small country, that is doing very well. The World Tourist Organization suggested that we use US \$1,140 per tourist. If we use US

\$1,000 for 534,000, we are pumping close to \$3 billion in that area. It means all our hotels, all our taxi drivers, guest homes, bed and breakfast, every doubles vendor, shark and bake. So, again, tourism is an important part. And for the first time, our local tourist attractions can be visited, because we are making sure, through the regional corporations, through TDC, through the Ministry of Tourism, we are pumping money into those areas to make sure they can be treated with.

In the past, when you went to a beach facility nothing existed. It was run down, it was not taken care of, whether it was Maracas, Vessigny, Los Iros, wherever. We are making sure because we want to encourage that kind of thing.

7.40 p.m.

You want to encourage persons to go and train. For many years there was an apprentice system that obtained at many of the companies, PNM came into being, they destroyed it totally. We have since reintroduced it. Today, all our young boys and girls can access training for up to two years, and placement as well. Now, it is being reintroduced even at Petrotrin and elsewhere. We are making sure that we understand the future of the country must be catered for; the needs of the country must be treated with.

On the global stage we are seeing a shortage of doctors; we are training more and more doctors. You are seeing a shortage of healthcare providers; we are training more and more healthcare providers at all levels. We are making sure, while we build new hospitals, we have manpower to go into them.

Mr. Speaker, what you are also seeing, for the first time, is the availability of opportunities for all our people to participate in governance at all levels. So, in the past, you would have seen the Government of the PNM purchasing—at very high dollar value—expensive labour, sometimes in the form of consultants; et cetera. Today, more and more of our young local people are involved in every single area. In the oil industry you are seeing the very good work that is happening there, and you are seeing now, our Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs, Sen. Kevin Ramnarine, capturing global attention. You are seeing that we are becoming one of the prime areas when external oilfield personnel are looking for training; when they are looking for knowledge, they are looking to Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, the budget also presented to all, the opportunity for business. You would have heard from the Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development the sums of money available. More than that, under the PNM the money was also available, but there was no training available; there was no encouragement. So, under the PNM 80 per cent of those businesses failed. We

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have since reversed that in the last four years because we are encouraging our people to go into business and we are lending them support, so they are not left alone. Today they are doing very well. In fact, the repayment at that level is in excess of 80 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, the budget also presented improving middle-income fortunes. This is an article that appeared in the *Guardian* newspaper. It says the Government, generally, and Mr. Howai, in particular, should be commended for introducing policies that will allow middle-income people to realize their dreams of home ownership and will assist in the improvement of the standard of living now and in the future.

This is very important. This is what Government is about. Government is about providing education and you are seeing we are becoming the leaders in education in this part of the world. Government is important to provide housing. It is not just the physical structure, it is making sure there are roads going to those homes; there is electricity available; there is water available; there is telecommunication. This small twin island of ours has more than 300,000 house lines and close to two million cell phones. It means that Internet access is available here. So, for the investor who is coming, as I indicated, this country continues to attract a large number of investors across the board.

Mr. Speaker, on the global stage, in starting a business, we are ranked No. 67; obtaining construction permits, very good; getting electricity, we are ranked No. 10; registering a business, within days; getting credit, we are rated 28; protecting investors—every investor coming to this country wants to make sure that his investment is protected—22 on the global stage; trading across the borders, available; enforcing contracts, very good; availability of manpower in this country, excellent in all areas; access to infrastructure, shipping—you would have heard the Minister of Transport indicating the number of ships that are coming into this country; with the Panama Canal we expect that to increase to approximately 300 ships calling on our ports. It means that we can service them, that is why they will be coming.

More than that, it means that goods and raw materials can come in when required and export of finished products can take place. A simple thing as making a company seal, hours; cost of it, TT \$115, less than US \$20; apply for taxpayer identification number, one day, no charge; apply for registration as an employer with the National Insurance Board, one day, no charge; registration for VAT, within a few days, no charge; request company name, less than one day, online available, TT \$25 or US \$4.

Mr. Speaker, I indicate these statistics to show that under Kamla Persad-Bissessar, this country is open for business and we continue to attract. When we bring business into this country it brings revenue, it brings expertise, it brings job opportunities, it brings training opportunities and it also allows us to trade with the international global community. It is no surprise that we have had the visits from the Vice-President of the United States, the President of China, the former President of Venezuela, Cuba, Nigeria and elsewhere.

I want to draw the House's attention to a World Bank Report, "Trinidad becoming even more business-friendly":

"Trinidad and Tobago is one of three Caribbean economies that improved their business...environment for small and medium-sized businesses over the past year. This news comes from the World Bank's Doing Business 2014 Report..."

That is this year.

"T&T moved from a position of 69th out of 185 countries in ease..."

So, it makes the point that we are open for business which tells all our young people that there is a great future ahead for them under Kamla Persad-Bissessar's Government.

"The 2014 report ranked economies across ten indicators in the business life cycle: starting a business, permitting for construction, getting electricity, registering property, getting credit, protecting investors, paying taxes, trading across borders, enforcing contracts..."

and treating with issues.

"A section comparing...regulations for employing workers is also included.

Trinidad's 2014 position for ease of starting a business is the result of...merging..."—all the players together.

This, of course, was done under the watch of Minister Vasant Bharath.

Mr. Speaker, the other area I want to quickly touch on is what is available, over the last four years, we have kept improving on: communications across the board, vast improvement; Internet host, we keep increasing; today, it is 241,000 Internet users. The 75,000 computers to schools—as indicated, it is not only used by that child, but family members as well—593,000 users. Telephone lines as indicated, 287,000; cell phones, 1,884,000—budget expenditure, it is indicated

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this project is \$64 million; GDP, approximately 25,000, the official exchange; GDP per capita, 20,000; GDP purchasing power, 26 million; imports, \$9 billion.

Mr. Speaker, I indicate these numbers simply to make the point that under this Government our economy keeps moving, keeps growing and keeps adding value. In the area of crude oil exports, we have increased. We also have increased our crude oil imports to make sure that our refinery keeps maximum production. Crude oil proven reserves, 728,300,000. Our electricity consumption, 7.58 million; natural gas consumption, 23 million; natural gas exports, 17,640,000—that is 17 billion. We are ranked No. 21.

In the area of other exports, in recent times you would have seen more and more of our agricultural produce; in all areas we improved.

Mr. Speaker, good governance leads to something and Trinidad and Tobago is the Caribbean's happiest country. It is important because our people are very happy under this Government. Trinidad is the happiest country in the Caribbean, according to the 2013 World Happiness Report, from the United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network. The report, which was published this year, for the second time, comes after last year's report which found Trinidad to be the fifth happiest on earth. [*Desk thumping*] This is under Hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar's governance on planet earth.

Trinidad was ranked 31st overall in the world, out of countries including Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Thailand, Spain, South Korea, among others. The report looked at what it found to be six key variables: real GDP per capita, healthy life expectancy—as indicated, the life expectancy in Trinidad and Tobago keeps increasing; for females, I think it is now 79 and for males, 75. It means to say that this Government is very good for the people of Trinidad and Tobago. Having someone to count on was part of the research as well. Freedom to make life's choices—very important; freedom from corruption as well, very important.

Mr. Speaker, this is a United Nations report. The report was edited by several bodies including Professor Jeffrey, Director of Earth Institute at Columbia University and Special Advisor to the UN Secretary General. The report covers a three-year period, from 2010 to 2012. There is now rising worldwide demand that policy be more closely aligned with what really matters to people as they, themselves, characterize their well-being. Very important. So that when you govern a country you must govern a country with people in mind. As Members of Parliament, our stock in trade remains people. Everything we do is about people.

Mr. Seemungal: That is what we have been doing.

Mr. C. Sharma: That is what we have been doing. The PNM did not do it that way. The PNM never cared about people. This is why we found ourselves in the situation we found ourselves. They thought about putting up big buildings and wasting money, but you heard from the PNM; you heard from the Member for La Brea. Every week, as a good Member of Parliament, he is asking for things in his constituency.

Hon. Member: He never got it.

Mr. C. Sharma: Because he did not get anything under the PNM. In fact, he became so frustrated one time he talked about “long rope for maga goat”. [Laughter] And we were scared that he used this long rope for other purposes so we made sure we went down there and took care of things. We heard it from every single Member of Parliament in the Opposition.

You have heard earlier today, or yesterday, from Minister Nizam Baksh. There were areas in their constituencies where playgrounds had not obtained lighting. They were spiting their own people. What was not said was the millions of dollars they spent. Where was this money spent by the PNM?

More and more world leaders are talking about the importance of well-being as a guide for the nations and the world. More and more policymakers the world over are talking about this. We here are practising it. That is why international countries and global leaders are looking to us for guidance as well. This is one of the areas that this Government demonstrates across the world. The World Happiness Report 2013 offers rich evidence that the systematic measurement of happiness can teach us a lot about the ways to improve the world’s well-being and sustainable development.

7.55 p.m.

So, Mr. Speaker, this is very, very important. Here, they are talking about the happiness of people that results in a higher quality of living. It is environment friendly. It is demonstrating a care, not only for people, but for the surrounding. There is a challenge in the world today, only 1 per cent of the world’s fresh water is available for drinking. It is feared that waterborne diseases will be a huge killer in the future, and the environment as a whole. And here, the Prime Minister has made sure that she has established a Ministry with responsibility for the environment, and you see it will happen.

Oil spills: we are on the scene immediately, making sure we treat with it. And we are making sure that regardless of what happens, we take responsibility as it happens, at any level. You would have seen in today’s newspaper a letter that was alleged to have been sent from a particular place, was not that, we immediately

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identified with it, and apologized for it. We make sure that good governance obtains, and once there is any fracture of any good governance, we make every attempt to correct it. I suspect that is why some of us are sitting on this side of the House at this time. [*Laughter*] Because goodness must obtain at all levels, and we must never fear to take action that requires to be taken—[*Interruption*] yes, but I mean, that is the reality of the situation. Interestingly though:

“The report found that Latin America and the Caribbean region, along...had shown the greatest increases in ‘life evaluations’ with more than 75 percent of countries in Latin America and the Caribbean showing ‘significant increases’ in average happiness.”

Mr. Speaker, we have lent to this finding simply because Kamla Persad-Bissessar, Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago in her capacity “early-o-clock”, as Caricom Chairman, made sure that we rallied around the Caribbean as well. We are big brother to the Caribbean, and we must demonstrate that. Every single time in the last four years that the Caribbean has called for help from Trinidad and Tobago, whether it was computers for St. Lucia, a situation in Grenada, something in Jamaica, wherever, we have lent support.

Mr. Speaker, Trinidad and Tobago remains very attractive on the international scene. When you look at arrivals of persons coming from the United Kingdom in 2014 up to this time, 26,000 persons; last year, 43,000 persons; 2012, close to 40,000; 2011, close to 40,000; 2010, 40,000. It shows that people are interested in coming to this country, because good governance obtains, fairness obtains, [*Desk thumping*] the availability of goods and services, because the first thing, you want to find out when you are going to a country is, would you be safe? Out of Canada last year, 61,000 plus; 2010, 51,000 plus; 2014 to date, 40,000, again, demonstrating something. Out of the Caribbean last year, 104,000; 2012, 103,000; 2011, 101,000; 2010, 98,000. It shows an increase every year since we came into Government, because people are very comfortable coming here. We are making sure all our Caribbean brothers and sisters feel that family spirit.

Mr. Speaker, on the global stage you would have seen a decline in the American market, and in the global market for that matter, in terms of tourists travelling, even to the United States and elsewhere. But here in the Caribbean, we have seen in recent times—and I was with Mr. Cadiz to welcome JetBlue and WestJet. So more and more persons are coming here, more and more international airlines want to come here. When they come here, they are coming because governance obtains that lends to good business.

Mr. Speaker, many of us identified work in our constituencies, but I also want to identify with some work in Fyzabad, but the point I want to make in saying that, is that this work obtains in every single constituency in this country. When the Government sits as a Government, we determine that roads need to be done throughout Trinidad and Tobago, we make sure we attend to roads. Certainly, in every constituency there would be roads, as obtains in the constituency of Fyzabad; water projects, same; schooling, same. The Minister would have indicated earlier that schools in every single constituency that needed to be repaired, have been repaired.

OJTs: we are making sure for the first time, Mr. Speaker, in any part of the world, a global first, every single young man and young woman, attending university, wrote A levels recently or O levels, and required to work for the summer, before they return to university, every single applicant was treated with and obtained OJT work. In fact, those who wished to stay on for up to two years, they can obtain that. No other part of the world that obtains.

So at this current time, there is not a single person seeking employment who is not going to be attended to. They may be underemployed at any given time, because you may be trained in engineering, and at a particular time there may not be an engineering position, but there would be another area that you can certainly offer labour, and that obtains at this time, and that is another first. We are making sure that we are telling the national community, we are telling our young—
[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, are you interested in an extension?

Mr. C. Sharma: Thank you, Sir.

Mr. Speaker: Okay. Hon. Members, the question is, that the speaking time of the hon. Member for Fyzabad be extended by 10 minutes.

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. C. Sharma: [*Desk thumping*] Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have spoken about firsts in the global community. I want to talk about some firsts in Fyzabad, the constituency for which I have had the singular honour and privilege of being the longest serving Member of Parliament for the constituency of Fyzabad. [*Desk thumping*] With the exception of one person in this House at this time, I am also the longest serving Member in this House. [*Desk thumping*] I simply make that point, to be elected on seven consecutive occasions, you must be doing something good, and Member for La Brea, you can learn a lot.

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[*Laughter*] You must do something good, and that good really comes from a desire to help people. You must have no other agenda. If you have that agenda, that becomes your duty to help people.

So coming out of Fyzabad, we have been able to treat with so many different situations. Today, in the last four years, the Minister, the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre will be very interested, we have caused more than 280 persons to go into business. [*Desk thumping*] We have caused close to 2,000 families to either build new homes, to repair their homes or to renovate their homes. [*Desk thumping*]

Every single person who has come to the age to go for higher education, has been assisted in some way, whether it is the university or vocational training, because we have a huge network, and that is what governance is about, making sure you treat with persons. Death will occur as you know, Mr. Speaker, I have earned the title of the WWF, the first W is wake, the other one is wedding, the other F is funerals, but it is for other functions as well. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Speaker, there are families across Trinidad and Tobago who would always need help, need moral support, and we also make sure that obtains. Mr. Speaker, I made this point simply to indicate that the Government of Kamla Persad-Bissessar really, when we campaigned in 2010, when the then Kamla Persad-Bissessar as candidate for the constituency of Siparia said, support us, and we will make sure we observe the Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago, where the resources of the State will reach out to every community, whether it is the constituency of Fyzabad, or in Laventille. We will make sure that every young child whether in Fyzabad or in Port of Spain, or in Moruga, who wants to go to university, a place would be available, funds will be available; where every young family needing help to repair their homes, funds would be available; where if death occurs and moneys are required for burial, it would be available. When you go to a health centre and you need medication, there would be a doctor, there would be a pharmacist, medicine would be available, and that obtains up to this time. And I assure all our people, in particular the constituents of Fyzabad, given another opportunity not very long from now, we will continue to serve.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, it is very clear that this being the fifth budget, every single budget presented by the Kamla Persad-Bissessar administration, has been and continues to be about the welfare of people, adding value to their lives, making sure they have a better life, and we will continue that. We will make sure that all our children are educated. We will make sure we continue to add to the infrastructure. You are seeing more police cars, security obtains. We are graduating more doctors, more health facilities are opened longer hours. We are

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planting more food, food prices are dropping, fresh fruits are available. The WHO is encouraging to eat more green, you are seeing that. Every home, access to pipe-borne water; every child, access to the Internet. Every parent wanting to travel whether it is to Tobago, over 60, as Minister Cadiz indicated, you can ride the bus from Cedros into Port of Spain. You want to go to Tobago, it is available at no cost to our citizens over 60, for our children in uniform, no cost. We are making sure it obtains at all levels. Trinidad and Tobago belongs to all of us, and under the PNM that did not obtain.

Today, under Hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar, every citizen of this country feels part owner of Trinidad and Tobago. In fact, Mr. Speaker, many of us are wearing this pin of Trinidad and Tobago's flag. Today, this pin is available in every single home. This was given to every child, in every school by the Kamla Persad-Bissessar Government. A flag of Trinidad and Tobago is in every home. What that has done, it has really said to the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, this country belongs to you. We are your Government, for you, by you. You put us to work for you, and we work for you 24/7. I pray God will continue to bless our country. Thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

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, September 17, 2014 at 10.00 a.m., when we will continue debate on the fiscal package 2014/2015, a Bill to provide for the service of Trinidad and Tobago. I beg to move.

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 8.09 p.m.