

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES*Monday, October 10, 2016*

The House met at 10.30 a.m.

PRAYERS[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]**ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER**

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, I wish to bring to your attention the presence in the public gallery of this year's participants in the National Youth Parliament. On your behalf and on my own behalf, I wish to welcome them to today's sitting.

*[Desk thumping]***APPROPRIATION (FINANCIAL YEAR 2017) BILL, 2016**

[Fourth Day]

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on question [September 30, 2016]:

That The Bill be now read a second time.

Question again proposed.

The Attorney General (Hon. Faris Al-Rawi): *[Desk thumping]* Good morning, Madam Speaker, and I wish especially—not that I am permitted to, but I acknowledge the presence of those whom you have mentioned, the young parliamentarians who will be paying attention to what we do today.

Madam Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to provide an account to the Ministry which is now a combined Ministry that I hold portfolio for: that is, of course, the combination of the office of the Attorney General and the Ministry of Legal Affairs. Specifically, the Appropriation Bill before us is a constitutional requirement and we are here to talk about under my portfolio, the ranging affairs under Head 23 which, in particular, is the Ministry of the Attorney General, Legal Affairs, but I do note that under the 15 bodies that I also have supervisory authority

for, that I do have, certainly, interaction with the Integrity Commission at Head 37, the Environmental Commission at Head 38, the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service at 64 and the Equal Opportunities Tribunal at Head 75.

Madam Speaker, any debate is one which requires some degree of response and I am therefore compelled, as a matter of first priority, to engage the Leader of the Opposition, albeit in absentia this morning, on some of the particulars that she put onto the record. We heard the Leader of the Opposition, in her near three-hour contribution, speak to the need for currency in the conversation. She, in fact, called out, quite boldly, in an apparent mimic of the presidential election in the United States—she called out for the need for fact checkers, implying that the Minister of Finance had got certain things very wrong, and then specifically stating that he had, in fact, misled the population in a number of areas.

The Leader of the Opposition, someone with great experience, many years in Parliament, past Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, now second time Leader of the Opposition, went on to say that the Minister of Finance was vague, miscalculated, wrong; that he failed to acknowledge the reality of Trinidad and Tobago. She went on to say that 20,000 jobs were lost. She said that we were here to talk about \$60 billion in expenditure last year. She said that we were providing for, as she put it, an ultra-elitist State or a supra-elitist agenda. She said that criminals were getting away. She said serious crimes were down to the lowest levels under the PP.

She said that the UNC brought 26 anticrime laws. She said that the PNM Government had brought one anticrime law. She said that there were three Ministers in the Ministry of National Security. She called for reengineering of the criminal justice system. She said that municipal police were not touched. She said that there was nothing to show in the prisons. She said the \$1 million for police

was not done. She said Customs, quite spectacularly, is not a crime-fighting area. That surprised me, Madam Speaker. She said oil drilling was down. She said she is informed—famous words of hers—and advised—famous words of hers—that there was no drilling in Trinidad and Tobago. She called it a factor fraud. She said there was the largest number of persons with jobs under the PP; lowest unemployment under the PP. She said that they had the greatest number of collective agreements; highest revenue, she said.

Mr. Charles: Madam Speaker, Standing Order 48(5), a constant reference to “she”.

Hon. F. Al-Rawi: Sure. Thank you. The hon. Member—of course, I do know that the Member is an hon. Member and she is also a “she”. So forgive the interaction between the two. Perhaps my learned friend is now reminded.

She said—the hon. Member—that the highest revenue was under 2014 under a PP government. She said that the public debt to GDP ratio was 60 per cent. The hon. Member said that there were \$285.3 billion in collective expenditure under the PP Government. The hon. Member said that public procurement legislation was not had. She then went on to a lavish conspiracy theory concerning one Gerry Brooks and the ANSA McAL connection, as she put it. The hon. Member said that the Children’s Hospital was abandoned, and it went on.

Permit me, therefore, Madam Speaker, to respond to all, as I do now. You see, when Trinidad and Tobago hears explanation of the type by the hon. Leader of the Opposition, you expect that the facts are going to be correct, more so, when the hon. Member calls for fact checkers. You see, that it is a rather bold statement on her part.

Mr. Imbert: She is being “Trumpy”.

Hon. F. Al-Rawi: Perhaps she is being “Trumpy”, as my learned friend for Diego

Martin North/East says. Let us deal with a few of the facts. The hon. Member for Siparia said that under her Government the country recorded the highest ever GDP figure. Fact check number one: Central Bank data shows that in nominal terms at current prices, the highest GDP ever recorded was in 2008—[*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Imbert: No, no, no.

Hon. F. Al-Rawi:—with a nominal GDP of \$175.287 billion.

Dr. Rowley: And where was she then?

Hon. F. Al-Rawi: The hon. Member was in the Parliament then in the Opposition but she came as Leader of the Opposition to put a fact onto the table—wrong. If real GDP is examined, data going as far back as 1991 shows that for every consecutive year up to the financial crisis in 2009, nominal GDP had been the highest in the country's history at that point.

Claim number two: Output from the non-petroleum sector grew every year. The hon. Member for Siparia said that we had seen the non-petroleum sector growing under her section and that the PNM had nothing to demonstrate on that. The fact check reveals as follows: the *Review of the Economy* does show that the non-energy sector did record growth for all five years under the UNC, however, the focus on non-energy sector masks the fact that for the entire five years, from 2011 to 2015, the UNC presided over four out of five years of contraction, Madam Speaker, in the energy sector. In that five-year period they, in fact, only managed to generate two years of economic growth, according to the book that is in the publication before us now, the *Review of the Economy, 2017*.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition claimed that her Government presided over the highest ever foreign direct investment. The fact check provides and proves as follows: Central Bank data, going as far back as 1999, shows highest FDI recorded was \$2.1 billion. Guess what the year was— 2008, Madam Speaker.

[*Desk thumping*] Further, from 1991 to 2015, the data reveals that the UNC presided over the first and only net outflow of FDI—

Mr. Imbert: What?

Hon. F. Al-Rawi:—recorded at US \$66 million in 2013.

Mr. Imbert: Going out? Money going out?

Hon. F. Al-Rawi: So far from the allegation that the Leader of the Opposition brings, FDI was highest when she was in opposition in 2008—certainly under a PNM Government—but foreign direct capital flight—outflow—was the highest ever in the history of Trinidad and Tobago under the UNC Government. The facts also indicate the UNC would have presided over some of the largest outflows in the country's history, recording outflows of US \$7 billion in total between 2011 and 2015.

Dr. Tewarie: Would the hon. Member give way?

Hon. Members: No!

Mr. Imbert: Sit down “nah man”. Sit down and stop disturbing people.

Hon. F. Al-Rawi: Claim number three—

Dr. Tewarie: You would not give way?

Dr. Rowley: No.

Hon. F. Al-Rawi: In a little while. The claim: the UNC earned the highest revenues in the country's history. Fact check: the data shows that the highest revenue was, in fact, earned in fiscal 2014; yes, \$ 58.3 billion, comprising tax revenue of \$47.2 billion, non-tax revenue of \$9.8 billion. However, the hon. Leader of the Opposition said, dig into the details. We dug into the details. The information reveals that under non-tax revenue, profits from state enterprises jumped to \$5.3 billion in that year, after only recording less than \$300 million per year in previous three fiscal years. Let me explain that.

The number at \$58.3 billion was the highest. The details show that it was the raiding of the revenue by way of dividends from the National Gas Company of Trinidad and Tobago—cumulated savings over many years under a PNM agenda—that was taken and brought into the revenue line item. The fact is, it was taken and spent. But, Madam Speaker, it is a far different thing to say that it was earned, because that revenue, for a company like the National Gas Company, is critical for its investment side. It is only when the National Gas Company has the ability to expend revenue that we can generate revenue-generating projects to create employment and grow the economy. So that is not only factually incorrect, but grossly irresponsible, Madam Speaker.

Dr. Tewarie: Would you give way, hon. Member?

Hon. F. Al-Rawi: No, not yet.

Dr. Rowley: Not ever.

Hon. F. Al-Rawi: I believe you still have to speak.

Mr. Imbert: Yes. “Leh him talk when he ready.”

Hon. F. Al-Rawi: Let us talk further. The hon. Leader of the Opposition said that the industrial relations is something that they should be so proud of. She said they had the highest number of collective agreements.

Mr. Indarsingh: Correct. That is a fact.

Hon. F. Al-Rawi: Listen to the Member for Couva South: “Correct. That is a fact.” I went into the details. In the period 2002 come forward to 2016, I disaggregated five years from the records at the Industrial Court and they demonstrate that in the period 2010 to 2015, 229 collective agreements were signed across the general services division, essential services division and special tribunal. I took a five-year period prior to that. I did not take the entire PNM period. You know what the figure was? Far be it from 229 collective agreements.

In fact the figure was 431 collective agreements.

Hon. Member: What? [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. F. Al-Rawi: In fact, Madam Speaker, that is nearly twice as much as the claim that the Leader of the Opposition put on the table.

We are continuing—well, this year for 2016 we, in fact, already signed 27 collective agreements. But what the hon. Leader of the Opposition did not put on the record was that the collective agreements for 2011 to 2014 in the largest sectors of collective bargaining association, the OWTU, et cetera, those were specifically left out from the collective agreement processes which should have been completed.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition went on to serious crimes, and I want to put onto the record that serious crimes at 2012 stood at 17,841 and serious crimes today in 2016, stand at 8,597.

10.45 a.m.

So far be it from the direction she suggests the figures go to, hon. Leader as she is, they are in fact in the opposite direction. Data on serious crimes, 2005—2015, as compared against the period January 01 to August 31, 2016. Madam Speaker, in 2015 to 2016 under our period, there was a 27.6 per cent decrease in murders. There was a 30.2 per cent decrease across all other serious crimes, with accumulative decrease of 30.1 per cent. Again, fact checking showing that the Leader of the Opposition just cannot be trusted to bring particulars to the Parliament. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Leader of the Opposition spoke to the legislation that was brought by the PP Government, and I checked those facts as well. In fact, of the 83 Acts of Parliament brought in the tenure of the UNC, not including those which lapsed, 83 of them were brought into Acts of Parliament. Do you know how many of those

actually dealt with crime? It was 20 out of 28, and the PNM as an Opposition supported 20 out of 28. [*Desk thumping*] More particularly, of the 83 Acts of Parliament, 28 of those, as I say, were criminal related and so on, but do you know what the staggering thing is? The hon. Leader of the Opposition forgot to mention the state of operationalization and implementation of the laws.

Let me give you a few examples. The Bail (Amdt.) Act, 2011, well we know that was struck out and I will come to that in a moment; the Anti-Gang Act, 2012, struck out and I will come to that in a moment; the part of the Miscellaneous Provisions (Kidnapping and Bail) Act, 2011, modified as a result of sunset clauses in Anti-Gang and Bail amendments which are no longer a part of our legislative landscape; Electronic Transactions Act, not fully proclaimed; Miscellaneous Provisions (Remand) Act, no courthouses put into place; we looked to the Interception of Communications Act. We heard a song and a dance from the UNC about that recently. You know what? No regulations; we came to the Interception of Communications Act, 2010, no regulations; we came to the Trafficking in Persons Act, 2011, not operationalized until the Minister of National Security, the Member for Point Fortin, convened the task force under this Government to operationalize that law; the Administration of Justice (Indictable Proceedings) Act, 2011, remember that from which section 34 was the sole clause proclaimed of real value; we then went in to Legal Aid and Advice (Amdt.); we went in Administration of Justice (DNA) Act, 2012.

We heard the Member for Oropouche West say the Government should talk about DNA. It took this Minister of National Security, under this Government, to ensure that a regulator for the DNA Bank was hired for the first time since 2012 [*Desk thumping*] so that the law could be operationalized. The Children's Act, 2012. Madam Speaker, you know that it was only under the Family and Children

Division Act that we brought, that we sought to amend 18 pieces of law including material amendments to the Children's Act not done, not operationalized by the UNC Government.

We look to the second preliminary enquiries legislation, the Administration of Justice (Indictable Proceedings) (Amdt.) Act, 2012 not operationalized. There was a third. There was the Administration of Justice (Committal Proceedings) Act not operationalized. We have three preliminary enquiry laws that came after the original laws, four preliminary enquiries laws, and when the Member for Oropouche West was asked would the Opposition support the complete abolition of preliminary enquiries, all of a sudden we got, well we will have to consult on that. Madam Speaker, our criminal justice system is choking on the back of preliminary enquiries that have been in analysis paralysis for years that are too long to count.

When we look to the Miscellaneous Provisions (Administration of Justice) Act, 2014, partially operationalized; the Miscellaneous Provisions (Prisons) Act, 2014, not proclaimed or operationalized fully. Why? Because the Ministry of Justice hired to deal with prisons, would spend conservatively somewhere close to \$2.7 to \$3 billion, promised this country that we would get judicial complexes, that we would get courthouses, that the Remand Yard would be renovated, that new accommodations would be had for children. Madam Speaker, do you know what the status of all of that is? Absolutely nothing, other than expenditure on contract, on breach of procurement regulations for the design and build. We spent \$2.7 billion in the Ministry of Justice to get nowhere. That is some of the fact checking.

We have quite a bit more to come and permit me, therefore, to dive into a few things that I wish to account for. You see, we have had successive budgets come forward, Government to Government, and every Government has had to

suffer from the difficulty of not having a whole-of-government accounting system. In a whole-of-government accounting system you would come to Parliament and demonstrate your savings, year on year, to deal with how you spent your money, where you are going with that money and what you expect your value for money across the board to be. So permit me to talk to what the Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs has done.

Let me put on the record that we had an allocation that resulted in a total expenditure under our Government estimated last year at \$405,338,250. The revised estimate and the actual amount used went downward. In actuality, we spent \$376,896,999.06, and that reduction in expenditure was taken across the board and resulted in value for money savings in the Ministry by a number of things being achieved.

One, the merging of the two Ministries allowed for, for the first time, a harmonization of departments which are the backbone core: human resources, information technology, the number of lawyers that we have. All of that resulted in significant savings for us, but by moving as we are moving in the process right now to the Legal Affairs Towers, we have in fact allowed ourselves to give up a BOLT arrangement at Cabildo Chambers to the tune of \$6 million odd a year in savings, rental for properties never occupied—rented for five years—we have assigned over to the Judiciary who needs extra space and spending. And, Madam Speaker, I think that the country really is very concerned mostly as to what the Attorney General's Division could say about legal fees. It is a matter of fact that the last Government spent in aggregate close to \$1.4 billion in legal fees.

The Ministry of the Attorney General spent \$444-odd million in legal fees under the tenures of Anand Ramlogan and Garvin Nicholas, but, Madam Speaker, what people may not know is how much debt they left behind. You see, I was

quite surprised to learn that the inherited debt on legal fees, which we got, was not at all paid off by that amount of money. In fact, far from that be the truth, the truth is that there were approximately \$137-odd million left in legal fees from the last Government, and on the \$80 million that was provided to us to go into to spend in terms of legal fees we were not permitted the ability to actually expend or pay in as wild a fashion as the last Government did.

So specifically, what we did was to dramatically cut down the briefing by way of external briefs so that we could account for what the Solicitor General's Department and Chief State Solicitor's department do. You see, Madam Speaker, we have a complement of human resource personnel inside of both Ministries. We corporatized the Ministry. I can tell you that in the two departments there are approximately 5,900 cases in the SG's Department, 5,500-odd in the Chief States Solicitor's Department, and instead of briefing out the work we pour the work back into the Ministry so that in fact under this year, under our tenure, we only retained 30 lawyers across the external platform. And, Madam Speaker, that resulted in a massive savings where we used state lawyers, we exposed them to training across a number of portfolios including contract like in FIDIC Yellow Book, White Book, Red Book. We exposed them to intellectual property.

Madam Speaker, for the first time ever lawyers in the Chief State Solicitor's Department can say today that they have received laptops to do their work for the first time. Thirty laptops provided already, more to come because they were operating not only without business assistance or secretarial services, but with no IT technology to come and go, and the expenditure of investing inward resulted in significant savings.

Let me give you an example. You will recall the mad rush by the last Government to deal with the Central Authority's extradition of Jack Warner. In

the Magistrates' Court alone the bill sent in by lawyers including Gerald Ramdeen, et cetera, involved in the Magistrates' Court alone \$15,485,833.30. In Magistrates' Court alone before we get to authority to proceed, before we get to any steps involving High Court, Court of Appeal, Privy Council. Do you know how much money we spent this year on that matter?—\$464,000. [*Desk thumping*] So we dropped from a billing of \$15.5 million in one case alone to \$464,071.87 by using state attorneys and a sprinkling of outside attorneys where significant resources exist. You see that is value for money. [*Desk thumping*].

Dr. Rowley: And training for the young lawyers.

Hon. F. Al- Rawi: Training for lawyers. You heard the hon. Leader of the Opposition talk about creating an elitist state, multimillion dollar personnel. I want to ask the hon. Leader of the Opposition: when one person, Gerald Ramdeen, sends in bills for \$32,858,916.07, what is that? When Alan Newman QC sends in bills accumulated to \$58,167,495.93, what is that? When Afa Law Ackbarali sends in billing to \$35,818,703.16, what is that? Another gentleman, junior counsel, \$30,530,858.72—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Rowley: Junior counsel?

Hon. F. Al- Rawi: Junior counsel—another junior counsel, \$34,692,270.07, what is that? Vincent Nelson QC \$55,583,826.07, what is that?

I went back into the parliamentary debates brought by Anand Ramlogan, who complained bitterly in October of 2010, that he had the misfortune of having to spend \$16 million on legal fees inherited on local attorneys. Over an eight-year period he claimed that \$84 million, eight years under the PNM, were taken by 10 lawyers and he alleged that I was one of them. I challenged him on the floor of the Parliament to name one case that he could say show a cent from. I received umpteen letters from state enterprises writing me in the months after to say please

report if you have any information or briefs. Do you know what the answer to that was?—zero dollars and zero cents, Madam Speaker.

11.00 a.m.

Make it up as they go. So when the hon. Leader of the Opposition is talking about multimillion-dollar men and elitist state, Madam Speaker—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Rowley: “She knows wah she talking about.”

Hon. F. Al-Rawi: She knows what she is talking about, you know—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Rowley: She appointed them.

Hon. F. Al-Rawi:—most respectfully, because they are appointed to the House.

Mr. Imbert: “And they eh want to pay tax.”

Hon. F. Al-Rawi: Madam Speaker, permit me to stick a pin right now into some of this and to diverge into a very significant issue of bail. This year in managing the 1,800-odd employees that I have direct supervision for, I can tell you that we have tightened the matrices, we have managed significant savings, but one area that concerned me on the substantive law side had to deal with the amendments to the Bail Act.

You see, Madam Speaker, we know from the hon. Minister of National Security that approximately 650 people accessed bail after the sunset clauses applied in the bail amendment anti-gang. But, Madam Speaker, I do not know if you know that on Friday gone, the hon. Madam Justice Gobin produced a judgment at the High Court where Gerald Ramdeen and Anand Ramlogan, as attorneys-at-law for claimant before the court, obtained an order, an award of the court, that the Bail Act brought by the UNC Government into law, piloted by Garvin Nicholas, resulted in an unconstitutionality. Madam Speaker, what was quite interesting about that, costs and damages for that are now to be applied.

So the UNC pattern is, pass a law—let us go through the *Hansard*, look at

what they say, we need it, we need it, we need it, help us to fight, help us to fight, they gain Opposition support, because we were very careful to give support to give crime fighting an advantage. What they did very importantly was to remove the reversal of burden provisions in the bail legislation which was the one safeguard that could probably allow a law like that to stand and Madam Speaker, I will say now.

I stood behind the President's Chair and I warned Anand Ramlogan when he brought the law and he was trying to harmonize it from three-strike to two-strike to one, I said be careful, there is an issue in here and if you package it all into one, in one fell swoop, the whole thing may fall. But Madam Speaker, I thought I was talking to somebody who agreed that time comes first in terms of your attack. The hon. Member for Siparia said this Government should have put crime-fighting number one in the hon. Minister of Finance's speech. But what do you do when you sit down? You discuss with the Opposition meaningful support and then you leave office, you take the information which you and you alone have, you go to court and then you prosper in court collecting damages from the court over what you know you have issue with.

Madam Speaker, it is the same thing. We heard about firings. Do you know, as was put onto the record by my learned colleague hon. Lovell Francis, 20,000 people, they claimed, were dismissed. There is a difficulty in the economy—private sector, public sector—even accept that that figure is true which we do not, it is not true. The fact is, in the period June 2010 to December 2010, 10,000 people were dismissed. *[Interruption]*

Hon. Member: October.

Hon. F. Al-Rawi: Sorry, October to December, 10,000 people and it is a fact because it is an answer in written form on the Parliament record given by the UNC.

But you know what is worse? As Attorney General, I am right now looking at files on the desk which show me that I have to give authorization for this Government to pay damages to people who were wickedly fired by the last Government to the tune of millions and millions of dollars. So what on earth could be the logic behind raising these issues?—I wonder.

Madam Speaker, Trinidad and Tobago wants to know where we are going on crime and crime, they asked, should be our number one priority. Permit me to deal with anti-crime crime-fighting measures. You see, Madam Speaker, in the last year, we have done a very careful survey of what the laws look like, and what we have confirmed for fact is that you do not only need laws but you need targeted laws and you need operationalization at the same time. If you wait to do it in series, one after the other, you end up in trouble as you would have seen from the laws passed by the UNC Government, the vast majority of which are not operationalized.

We have said to Trinidad and Tobago that it is critical for us to improve our criminal justice system by its management form and content and that very specifically, what we need to do is go behind the money. And we say that Madam Speaker, because, most respectfully, our position is that going with dragnets to collect people with two joints of marijuana, one gun by one gun is important, yes, but the engine which stands behind is not being attended to and that backdrop is no longer local because there is a foreign context to it and I will just introduce that now.

The Financial Action Task Force for Trinidad and Tobago has said to Trinidad and Tobago, through the Caribbean Financial Action Task Force 4th Round Mutual Evaluation which looked at Trinidad and Tobago's situation, that we are to be put into enhanced follow-up because we have shortcomings in the

clarity or disclosure of what is referred to as our beneficial ownership, meaning who is the real owner of an asset. They also say that our convictions are too low and take too long for money laundering, for predicate offences which are under the Proceeds of Crime Act, anti-corruption, et cetera.

They say show us an example. Well when you look to the Piarco Airport enquiry, surely a good example is not 17 years in the Magistrates' Court in a preliminary enquiry yet to go to the High Court. And what we have said in response to that is that we are taking urgent steps which is why, Madam Speaker, I can tell you with certainty now that there are several pieces of legislation to be introduced this month to deal with clarity behind beneficial ownership and specifically to follow the money and I want to spend some time on this, Madam Speaker.

We see videos of alleged drug lords in mansions. We see them and we say, well, how is it that these people can be so boldfaced, perhaps as boldfaced as an Opposition now seated, when in Government, when in the election campaign, did not have a word to say about corruption, you know, and I will come to that one in a second, but now have courage to talk about corruption because they may think that the issue of corruption is not being dealt with and I will come to that in a moment. But, Madam Speaker, we say that it is materially important to follow the money by making people explain their wealth and we in fact started that process by calling an amnesty in the Companies Registry and the amnesty in the Companies Registry has produced a very critical backdrop to this. You see, in the Companies Registry, we are now able to certify that we have had an improvement, though not full improvement in relation to companies bringing their annual returns up to date, but that improvement resides in how many companies are still outstanding.

You see, Madam Speaker, we have roughly half of our companies in arrears

particularly in non-profit organizations and in that half—if I could find the factual sheet, it would help. That half of companies in arrears was an exercise which we followed behind because we have said that we had to make sure to clean up the Companies Registry first so that we can take advantage of the method of striking them out. What we did in giving the amnesty allowed for companies to bring their annual returns up to date. Why?

After the closure of the deadline with only less than half of them now up to date, the balance has to be dealt with and there will be an aggressive exercise to strike off companies but not to strike them off and go away with the assets. By way of treating with the Companies Act, we intend to make those assets pass through an accountable cycle in the court. So that if you are striking off a company, for instance, the one that imported or exported cocaine in juice cans, it was a defunct company. They used the name of the company, they exported it out. Moneys may have come into the company. You cannot just strike it off and let the money go. You strike it off and you give an account of what you have through the court process is what we say.

Secondly, Madam Speaker, we are introducing a requirement under the companies law where beneficial ownership must be declared to the Companies Registry and your declaration of ownership must be prompt and up to date. And if you do not declare your ownership, it constitutes an offence under the Companies Act when you have an offence, you have a crime and when you have a crime, you can use your Proceeds of Crime Act.

But that is only companies, what about individuals? Where do criminals park their money? They park it in cash, they park it in property, they park it in companies. We are bringing to the Parliament very shortly specific legislation to target the issue of ownership in land acquisition which is undeclared because there

are massive loopholes in the system. There is no strict registration requirement in certain circumstances. Agreements for sale are not registered. Fraud happens via identity theft in land transactions.

What we notice as well is that people will conclude their agreements, have them stamped for stamp duty or go into the cycle but never register them because they use a trust arrangement. And by targeting trustees, where I own a property in name but it is really someone else who owns it, by targeting the declaration of trustees, we are going to actually have the disclosure to the law as to who owns what, where and why. That, Madam Speaker, is using your approach of following money in a very technical and clinical way and it does not require more laws under the Proceeds of Crime Act, more laws and offences of a difficult time, it just involves tightening the system.

And under the civil asset forfeiture route, we say—and we are looking to the Opposition for their explanation as to their position on this. Is it not high time if you want to track criminality in a real sense that you go behind people who have suspicious wealth, like the FIU says, exists in \$3.7 billion in suspicious transactions, and you make them account for it by explaining how that wealth was acquired and if you cannot explain it, then you lose it. But you do not lose it by Executive or Government's interfering. You do not lose it by going into a never-ending cycle in the criminal courts. You, in fact, lose it under due process in the civil courts in this country which can deal with trials between a period of one to three years. That will radically transform to approach to criminality anti-crime measures in this country.

White-collar crime is the venom that is in the veins of our citizenry right now. We are attacking this for the first time in this country. [*Desk thumping*] Madam Speaker, what we have done is to do it on the back of statistical

information. You see if we add more to the criminal justice system, take a look at this. The criminal matters pending at the Magistrates' Court as at July last year, 31st, 29,090 matters pending. In the Magistrates' Court, 29,090; 417 of them for murder; 300 attempted murder; trafficking in persons, 43. Let us look at the figures in larceny, 2,737. If we add more to the back of the criminal justice system, where are we going?

Now, Madam Speaker, the President of the Bankers Association, the Managing Director of Scotiabank, Anya Schnoor, mentioned in Friday's newspaper that there was a by far greater danger than FATCA lurking. FATCA, which has come into current discussion, is, in fact, a lesser danger to de-risking by the Financial Action Task Force.

11.15 a.m.

Now, Madam Speaker, Trinidad and Tobago, under the inherited position from the last Government, was three years behind the work it should have done. We had not done a national risk assessment. We had not implemented laws to follow money. We had not implemented laws to deal with masking of beneficial ownership. In the last year, Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to say, all of the work that was outstanding has been done, all, [*Desk thumping*] to the point where we are ready to deal with that.

But, Madam Speaker, we actually have another serious issue, which is in terrorism. Do you know that under the Anti-terrorism Act, amendments were made under the last Government, under the anti-terrorism legislation? Specifically section 22(b) of the Anti-terrorism Act was added in to deal with designation of terrorists. Do you know how many terrorists were designated by the end of the last Government? None, absolutely none. I can tell you, in the last 12 months we have designated 80 entities. We are at the cusp of designating a further 253. We are in

the process of drawing up the final papers to designate six Trinidad and Tobago citizens as terrorists, two foreigners, and we are examining the position with nine locals who are bound to return to our shores. That, Madam Speaker, is what you call production and work. [*Desk thumping*] Because you can have all these laws in the world, if you do not operationalize them, what are they worth?

Madam Speaker, in relation to anti-crime and criminality, it is important to note that we are implementing by January the first-step mechanisms to deal with the position of the procurement laws of this country, and by establishing procurements units and a procurement regulator that is where value for money transactions are going to be brought in. So whilst we follow the money the gap is being closed on how you spend money.

Madam Speaker, it is important to put on the record a very important amount of work that the hon. Minister of Finance, in conjunction with our offices, has been able to achieve. And that results in what we have done with the Judiciary.

Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to inform this honourable House that we now have the position of the Judiciary and the Ministry of Finance, having agreed upon—[*Interruption*]

Madam Speaker: Attorney General, your original speaking time is now expired. You are entitled to 10 more minutes if you wish to avail yourself of it.

Hon. F. Al-Rawi: Yes, please Madam.

Madam Speaker: You may proceed.

Hon. F. Al-Rawi: Madam Speaker, the Minister of Finance, the Chief Justice's Division and our Ministry, the Attorney General's office, I, sat with the Judiciary and we have worked out, from team to team, the expenditure for the Judiciary. So whilst we have seen a reduction in the judicial allocation, it is important to note that the autonomy for the Judiciary, which we undertook in last year's budget is

finally in its implementation stage right now, as it relates to matters which the Minister of Finance can lawfully pass over to the Chief Justice concerning virements or the transfer of moneys, concerning how the Judiciary manages its property portfolio.

Now Madam Speaker, as I mentioned properties, I want to put onto the record that I have received well the comments from the Member for Oropouche West asking about the status of the Family Court in San Fernando. I went back to look at the Family Court in San Fernando and I notice that AG Anand Ramlogan had come onto the Parliament record in 2010, in November specifically, to indicate that the San Fernando pilot project for the Family Court was a priority for the Government. Madam Speaker, I was very surprised, therefore, to hear the Member for Oropouche West talk about the position of the Family Court in San Fernando because the letters from the Judiciary show, and I want to read one of them into the record, parts of it.

On April 22, 2013, the Judiciary Court Executive Administrator was writing to the Ministry of Finance begging, Madam Speaker, that there be an acknowledgment that the Government had since 2009, dealt with the issue of the purchase of the property at St. Joseph's Convent on the Promenade in San Fernando and that notwithstanding repeated requests, the Cabinet Notes were faulty and there was this knock, knock, knock on to the door by the Judiciary to the Ministry of Finance to the Attorney General asking for the San Fernando pilot project to become a reality. And do you know what was done, Madam Speaker? Absolutely nothing. Five years of talking about the court, absolutely nothing.

Madam Speaker, I want to say with specific clarity, not only are we finalizing the arrangements for the Family and Children Division, for the placement of their courts, one in Fyzabad, two in Port of Spain, which we are

doing with alacrity. But, Madam Speaker, the issue of the \$150 million required for expenditure is a matter which I will take to the Minister of Finance for proper consideration as to how NIPDEC can be funded to take avail of a property which has been purchased at the cost of \$30 million, which is required for the improvement of administration of justice in San Fernando.

Madam Speaker, the pace and movement of the criminal justice system is another factor. Over the last year, I am very pleased to say that in a combination of effort between the Judiciary, the prison service, the Criminal Bar, the Law Association, the Attorney General's Office, the Office of the DPP, we have managed to crystallize a number of issues. And far be it from what the Member for Oropouche East has suggested to us that we need to work with night courts, that we need to build more positions—[*Interruption*]*—east then, west, forgive me, the Member for Oropouche West—[Interruption]*

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: I did not say anything like that.

Hon. F. Al-Rawi: Far be it in the suggestions that we look at it. Forgive me, it could have been the Member for Tabaquite. It was the Member for Tabaquite. I apologize. What actually is the case? The improvement to the speed of justice is had by doing what we did, number one, a rise and sit time analysis in the Magistrates' Court to understand how many hours of the day the court was in utilization.

The Member for Oropouche West was wrong. You do not actually use one criminal court for one trial. You use one criminal court for many trials at the same time. The point is whether we are dealing with the calculation of trials, which are ready and, Madam Speaker, by doing the rise and sit time analysis we have put, as laid, as passed, the Criminal Procedure Rules to become operative in January 2017. [*Desk thumping*] The Criminal Produce Rules will be the device which catalyzes

the pace of criminal justice system exactly as we saw happen in the civil arena. That is how you deal with it, not more laws, not more purposeful positioning, in terms of legislative tweaks, but by operationalizing.

I am very pleased to say that we went to Jamaica. We met with the University of the West Indies entity called CARIGENS. It is a wholly-owned genetic and toxicology research centre in Jamaica, which deals with DNA analysis and toxicology analysis, run by the University of the West Indies. Madam Speaker, by matching their procurement cycles with our procurement cycles, we have now identified significant savings that we can put into effect. We are in discussions with the University of the West Indies to replicate that model right here in Trinidad and Tobago so that our pace of analysis in DNA can be performed.

Madam Speaker, the forensics institute has laid, not idle but without support for many years and their physical infrastructure is something that is required to receive attention. We are in discussions with the Trinidad and Tobago forensics entity dealing with, not only their procurement but their plant and machinery and their location. Because the criminal justice system moves quickly, not only by manpower, not only by physical courts and allocations but by the interaction services in forensics, in witness evidence and other procedures.

Madam Speaker, we propose that the criminal justice system have improvement by the implementation of electronic monitoring. Of the 2,700 people incarcerated in Remand, 1,000-odd of them are for murder alone. Seventeen hundred of them, half of them have been given bail granted but they cannot access it, which is why we are bringing to this Parliament, in this year, the position where we are talking about plea bargaining and the implementation of electronic monitoring.

You see, since the passage of the Electronic Monitoring Act nothing has

happened. We have so far found a service provider that has indicated to us, after due consideration, that electronic monitoring can be implemented as fast as within a couple of months. And that will help us to deal with the situation in Remand itself.

Madam Speaker, permit me to just speak very quickly about San Fernando West. We had the Member for Tabaquite talk how many roads and bridges were built. I want to put on to the record that the record-breaking floods that we experienced in Bamboo this year, one of the actual contributors to that was a bridge built over a bridge. So quick was the contract to make sure that the bridge was built that they did not demolish the bridge underneath and so the water backed up and fell over into properties. That was dealt with by the OAS collapse at that point along the highway and the need to go and re-tender and manage it.

But, Madam Speaker, as I come to a quick end it is important to say to people who are crawling out now to talk about LifeSport, I would not be so comfortable if I were you to be talking as boldly as you are now, because I want to tell Trinidad and Tobago I will not do as Anand Ramlogan did, time and time again, to talk about “ah coming and ah coming and pre-action protocol and failed litigation.” We are very steady behind some very important cases, and I will say LifeSport is one of them and we are very close to dealing with action, which we will account to Trinidad and Tobago on. So that people that want to talk all of a sudden quite comfortably about what they think is forgotten corruption and forgotten criminality, just rest assured sometimes silence is golden because the intention is not to bore you to death with details but in fact to treat with you, through due process, by making sure that people are held to account to the law for their crime, corruption and criminality [*Desk thumping*] and we are confident that those examples will come shortly. Madam Speaker, I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Rudranath Indarsingh (*Couva South*): Thank you, Madam Speaker. After having listened to the Attorney General just a couple moments ago, and after 55 minutes of saying nothing to the population of Trinidad and Tobago I am a bit confused. In the last five years, there was no flooding in that area that he alluded to and he comes full of sound and fury. In five years there was no flooding because of the great work of the Minister of Works and Transport and MP for Tabaquite, but in one year he comes to tell us that in 13 months there was flooding in his constituency. It reflects the incompetence of him being the Member of Parliament for San Fernando West, because if he had the concern of his constituents and he detected this problem, certainly he would have gone to the Minister of Works and Transport and the Member for Laventille West to address this problem in 13 months. So he failed his constituents and he comes here full of sound and fury, full of statistics, attempting to mislead the population of Trinidad and Tobago, like what he has done for the last 13 months in this country in being the Attorney General of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker, the Attorney General launched a broad-based attack this morning on the Leader of the Opposition, in terms of attempting to question what was presented by the Leader of the Opposition from the point of view of the respective documents that she would have alluded to, the *Review of the Economy* and reports from the United Nations, and so on.

11.30 a.m.

I am sure that my colleague, the Member for Caroni Central, will go down deep as it relates to some of the economic data that was presented by the Leader of the Opposition, because what irritates the Government is that the Leader of the Opposition was the most progressive Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, [*Desk thumping*] between 2010 to 2015, Madam Speaker. [*Crosstalk*]

Madam Speaker, they had their say, and I listened attentively to the Attorney General, but if the Attorney General and his colleagues feel that they will derail the Member for Couva South, then they must think again. [*Desk thumping*] I want to say here this morning that he went into the realm of fact checking and used the term “fact checkers” and so on. I want to tell him, and I want to ask the Attorney General, is he aware that the murder rate is 497 in Trinidad and Tobago, [*Desk thumping*] and what has he done as the head of the bar, in reducing or attempting to offer advice to the three Ministers of National Security?

The three Ministers of National Security have surrendered Trinidad and Tobago to the criminals. [*Desk thumping*] The criminals are in charge of this country. The citizens of this country are on the run. They cannot come out of their homes, and the only people we can blame are the administration led by Prime Minister Keith Rowley and his failed three Ministers of National of Security. [*Desk thumping*] Four hundred and ninety-seven people have been killed, that is a fact, Attorney General. Four women were raped in central Trinidad; that is a fact, Attorney General; [*Desk thumping*] and in addition to that, only yesterday, a couple was brutally attacked in their home in Munroe Road in Cunupia. The woman’s throat was slit and she died and her husband is fighting for his life. That is the facts confronting the population of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

So to come with your statistics, which will not impact upon the well-being and the stability of the 497 people who have died in this country, their families who have been traumatized and so on, that is the reality that you and your Government must deal with, and do not come here with a number of statistics and so on, and attempt to mislead and seek to gain public sympathy. The public wants action [*Desk thumping*] and your Government has failed. That is what they want, [*Desk thumping*] and you must be willing to take part of the blame, and you must

be able to understand, Attorney General, that in addition to the 497 murders in this country, 45 people have been abducted. They have been abducted and what is your role? What advice have you given, again, to your Prime Minister and also your Ministers of National Security?

I want to tell the Minister of National Security here this morning, to come in this Parliament and talk about “an army base” in Couva or in somewhere in central Trinidad, that is bringing no sense of comfort to the people who are living in fear in this country. [*Desk thumping*] We will hear of an army base today. We will hear of an army base by the end of the year, and we will hear of an army base when you all are voted out of Government, and it will not become a reality. [*Desk thumping*] To tell the population about an army base, Minister of National Security, I want to ask you here today, and I want you to double-check, because you came to this Parliament and the Prime Minister would have indicated to the national community that there are joint army patrols taking place in central Trinidad. There is none in Couva South. There is none in Couva North. There is none in Chaguanas West and Chaguanas East. [*Desk thumping*] There is none in Pointe-a-Pierre. There is none in Tabaquite. There is none in Caroni Central. There is none in Caroni East. So the Government again, is misleading the population through a policy of public relations and mamaguy. I do not know if it is the new hairdo has affected—[*Laughter*] I do not know if it is the new hairdo, Madam Speaker, which has affected the ability of the Attorney General to analyze things properly here this morning. I do not know. [*Crosstalk*]

So, Madam Speaker, I want to again, deal—[*Interruption*]

Madam Speaker: Could you all please contain the crosstalk? Continue.

Mr. R. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Speaker. As I said, I will need no protection in dealing with them. I want to make that very clear; absolutely no

protection. [*Desk thumping and laughter*]

So coming back to the issue of fact checking and so on. The Attorney General boasted to this House here today that he went to the Industrial Court of Trinidad and Tobago to check the statistics about the collective agreements that were signed or the collective agreements that were registered at the Industrial Court of Trinidad and Tobago. You know what irritates them? The most progressive, worker-friendly Government that has ever existed in this country since political independence has been the People's Partnership Government. [*Desk thumping*] And Attorney General, let me give you a lesson in how to check statistics at the Industrial Court. [*Laughter*] If you need "ah lil bit" of advice, ask somebody who was there for over 25 years. [*Desk thumping*]

So to come and tell the country that it was not 135 collective agreements that were signed at the—during the five-year period of the People's Partnership Government, and when you went, you checked and you found 229 collective agreements. What you must tell the population of this country is the truth, and that is why you all will never be trusted. [*Desk thumping*] You have not been trusted since September 07th, and people will continue to not trust you, because again, you did not tell them that the 225 collective agreements was a combination of collective agreements signed in the public and private sector. [*Desk thumping*] The 135 collective agreements that were signed, were signed in the public sector and the Partnership.

I want to—you attempted to ridicule the track record of the Partnership as it relates to industrial relations practices and so on. The history of this country will tell you, and when go down deep into the records, it will tell you, Madam Speaker, that when the PNM was in Government, when the PNM was enjoying an oil price of US \$147 per barrel of oil, and when natural gas was fetching a price of US \$9

per MMBtu, they must tell you, what did they offer the trade union movement in the collective bargaining process? It was 0, 0, 0, [*Desk thumping*] and they had the money to pay. They had the ability to pay, but their anti-worker, anti-people, anti-trade trade union policy, that is the DNA of the PNM. [*Desk thumping*] That is the DNA.

So they did not even have one lack of commitment in settling these wage agreements, and it was when the Partnership came into the Government, we found the collective agreements languishing at the different stages of the collective bargaining process, whether it was bilaterally, whether it was at the office of the Chief Personnel Officer, or whether it was in conciliation level at the Industrial Court of the country, and as a result of that, 135 negotiations were settled during our tenure. [*Desk thumping*]

Again, we did not throw up our hands in the air and say we “cyar do de work yuh know”. “Or we cyar find” the wherewithal to deal with the settlement of public sector wages and salaries. We settled the agreements and we must never forget, this country must never forget, Madam Speaker, that when the Partnership came into office, we came against the backdrop of a global economic meltdown. For the first time in the history of this country, the economy had contracted by 17—the first time in 17 years, by minus 4.4 per cent, but based on prudent fiscal management, we were to find \$3 billion to allocate to pay the public sector wages and arrears. [*Desk thumping*] And, Madam Speaker, that is the state of play as it relates to this particular issue of fact checking and so on.

I want to refer the goodly Attorney General, and I want to go into this issue of these wage settlements and back pay and job losses and so on. The responsibility of a Prime Minister is to motivate all citizens of the country towards economic growth and development, whether you work for the public sector or you

work for the private sector. Whenever a Prime Minister speaks to the population at large, he is supposed to motivate the workers to the point of view that they want to come to work every day, they want to perform for the well-being of Trinidad and Tobago, but every time this Prime Minister speaks, he is attacking workers. He is threatening workers. He is instilling fear in workers. He is traumatizing workers, because whether it is an address to the nation, whether it is addressing the constituency of Diego Martin West, whether it is the mid-year review, whether you go into a public meeting, whether it is in Mount D'or, Champ Fleurs and so on. It is a constant—what we would call sustained attack on the working class and the workers of this country, [*Desk thumping*] and to what end?

Every time the Prime Minister opens his mouth now, is a question of job loss and threatening workers with losing their jobs, and calling upon workers to hold strain for their back pay, hold strain for their back pay, you know. But I do not know—and I want to read from the *Newsday* of June 13, 2016, Madam Speaker, and headline—I felt that the Prime Minister was on the picket line. [*Displays a newspaper*] And he read:

“Rowley demands salary for month of suspension...I want my money!”
—now. I felt proud of the Prime Minister being a trade unionist, a former trade unionist, and it sounded of fury, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Member, you would have to seek leave to display.

Mr. R. Indarsingh: Madam Speaker, I am reading from a national newspaper. It is in the public domain. I am guided—[*Interruption*]

Madam Speaker: I am not stopping you from reading from the newspaper. I am asking about the display.

Mr. R. Indarsingh: Well, I am guided, but I am—[*Interruption*]

Madam Speaker: You are guided, and you can continue.

Mr. R. Indarsingh: I am making the point that the Prime Minister sounded like if he was on the picket line. “Ah want mi money now”, as opposed to telling every citizen of this country, every public servant in this country, hold strain, job losses are on the way.

I want to know, when will the Prime Minister, leading from the front, will become creative, will become innovative in his utterances to motivate the population of Trinidad and Tobago, to move forward in the context of economic development for Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] During his tirade and when he went to St. Joseph, I do not know what the Prime Minister would have consumed on the night, but he sounded very vociferous, and he sounded very animated as it relates to making a call for his back pay, and the money and so on, that he wanted. But we have not heard from the Prime Minister, Madam Speaker, what is his Government's position as it relates to the collective bargaining process going forward. We have not heard from the Government because, it seems to me, that the overall thrust of the Prime Minister's utterances is setting the foundation for a wage freeze, setting the foundation to undermine the free and fair collective bargaining process in Trinidad and Tobago.

11.45 a.m.

And that is their DNA, you know, Madam Speaker, because the Minister of Finance, when he was in the Opposition, and a previous UNC Government would have introduced the occupational safety and health legislation into this country, it is on *Hansard* that the now Minister of Finance was not willing to support the legislation for the Occupational Safety and Health Act because he was concerned about the closure of businesses in the country, and he was not concerned about the small man, the ordinary man, the working class of Trinidad and Tobago. That is why the people of Trinidad and Tobago must never forget that the most oppressive

political party and Government as it relates to workers, trade unions and the working class in this country, is the People's National Movement, Madam Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker, I want to now turn to the issue of the budget that was presented by the Minister of Finance. Madam Speaker, after a budget or their first budget presentation of the Minister of Finance, after a mid-year review, after addresses to the nation and so on by the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, Madam Speaker, I want to take the opportunity to remind the other side and the Government, based on the results of the *Guardian* poll of September 04, 2016, the very first-year survey results, over 65.66 per cent of those polled were very dissatisfied with the performance of the Government led by Prime Minister Dr. Keith Rowley. After the presentation of this budget, I am sure that if they conduct a poll in Trinidad and Tobago, it would be 100 per cent and the population will be calling on all of you to demit office. [*Desk thumping*] It is just a matter of time. It is just a matter of time, Madam Speaker.

When the Prime Minister went into the constituency of my good friend, the Member for Laventille West and the Minister of Works and Transport, again, every time now the Prime Minister speaks to the population is either it is no longer, "Let's do this together". It is no longer a collaborative approach, it is one of talking down. It is as if the Prime Minister is now the monarch of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] He is talking down to the people of this country. He is speaking by decree: "I am in charge and whatever I say, you will have to listen."

And, Madam Speaker, I want to make the point that when he went and indicated to the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago—so it is not only journalist does get "boof" at the post-Cabinet meeting and so on, you know. He is "boofing" citizens in Laventille West. He told the people of Trinidad and Tobago, it is time

to wean yourself off the Government. I want to tell the Prime Minister and I want to tell the Minister of Works and Transport that it is the Government's responsibility to build roads, schools, hospitals, drains, you name it. [*Desk thumping*] That is your responsibility. And come whenever the local government elections are called, the people of Trinidad and Tobago will wean themselves off the People's National Movement. [*Desk thumping*] That is what will happen to you all whenever the elections are called. [*Crosstalk*] Whenever it is called, the population will deal and the population will wean themselves off of you all in every one of the regional corporations in Trinidad and Tobago.

And, Madam Speaker, as I said, the PNM has always been one of being against the small man, being against the ordinary worker, being against the working class and the labour movement of Trinidad and Tobago. It is a fact that since this administration has been in power, not one single job has been created for the benefit of the citizens of this country. [*Desk thumping*] Not one! The unemployment rate continues to grow at an astronomical rate. In five years, the People's Partnership Government held it under what we would call 5 per cent. We ensured that inflation was under 5 per cent. Today, food inflation is going beyond double digits all because of the failed economic policies [*Desk thumping*] of the PNM Government led by Prime Minister Dr. Keith Rowley.

I want to give—he is not here—but I want to give the Member for Moruga/Tableland a little bit of advice. You see, he is a fella—the Member, when he stood up, attempted to wade into the contribution made by the Leader of the Opposition. He indicated that he would not want to go down in a rabbit hole and he would not want to match the Leader of the Opposition pound for pound and so on.

I do not know if he watches sport or if the Member for Moruga/Tableland

ever played sport, but I want to give him a lil bit of friendly advice. If you are in the flyweight division, stay in the flyweight division [*Desk thumping*] and do not attempt to move up into the heavyweight division, because you might suffer a technical knockout in the first round. [*Desk thumping*] In addition to that, Madam Speaker, from the point of view of sports, again, “G-class horse doh run in A-class race”. So if your classification is G class, stay in the G class, stay in that classification, and “doh attempt to move into an arena that yuh will get lick up”. So, Madam Speaker, I want to give all my friends on that side a friendly word of advice, because we have competent people on this side who will demolish whatever arguments that you may put forward. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker, I wanted to deal with the issue of anti-worker, anti-labour, anti-union and so on. The biggest threat to any sector in this country, as a result of budget number two, a failed budget that will go forward, is the labour sector in Trinidad and Tobago, the trade union sector in Trinidad and Tobago. That is why the PNM Government, led by Prime Minister Dr. Keith Rowley, has engaged in day one from dividing the trade union movement—Member for Arima, the former President of the Trinidad and Tobago Unified Teachers Association. When he presented this budget presentation, the Minister of Finance, lauded the input of the Joint Trade Union Movement. Why would the Minister of Finance attempt to divide the trade union movement?

Again, I want to give them a little advice from the point of view of labour relations and industrial relations. The Trinidad and Tobago Government is a signatory to the International Labour Organization. [*Desk thumping*] You all attend the annual meetings of the International Labour Organization in Geneva, Switzerland. All I can tell you is that—and check the facts—the organization that is most representative of labour in Trinidad and Tobago is the National Trade

Union Centre [*Desk thumping*] which is recognized by the ILO, and then it is the Federation of Independent Trade Unions. I do not know if the Joint Trade Union Movement is a legally registered entity recognized by the International Labour Organization. So you all are undermining the principles of what we would call social dialogue and tripartism. [*Desk thumping*]

Do your research and do your checks and so on, and do not deliberately divide the trade union movement, because you are operating under the hand of the IMF, because the Prime Minister continues to sound of job losses, and we are not being told what will happen, because we heard it in budget number one. The Minister of Finance announced the Trinidad and Tobago Revenue Authority in budget number one. For 13 months, until budget number two was presented, we heard nothing of the Trinidad and Tobago Revenue Authority.

Where is the commitment to consultation? In budget number one, the word “consultation” was used over 32 times in budget number one, but in budget number two, I cannot say that I found the word “consultation” in budget number two one time. So, it is again, no longer, “Let’s do this together”. I want to tell you, and I challenge the Minister of Finance to tell us if, indeed, any consultation, any groundwork has been done with the Public Services Association, the recognized majority union for the workers and the employees at the BIR and also at Customs and Excise.

The Minister in the Ministry of the Attorney General has been attacking the public servants in these two entities, again, accusing them of corruption. I want to tell the Minister in the Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs, if there is evidence of corruption, let the chips fall where they have to fall. [*Desk thumping*] Do not come into this Parliament and use it to abuse and broad-brush all the hard-working public servants of Trinidad and Tobago.

The Minister of everything seems to take a cue from the Attorney General. You, the Attorney General, in a previous contribution in this House, told this House and told the national community that there were ghost employees existing at the Office of the Attorney General and ghost employees had cashed these cheques. I challenge you to produce the evidence [*Desk thumping*] and if you have the evidence, take it to the police [*Desk thumping*]

[*Mr. Al-Rawi on his feet*]

You have had your time, sit down. Sit down, you had your time. As I said, the hair dye is apparently confusing your mental balance this morning. [*Desk thumping*] So I want to ask you, you came and threatened, you dragged people's name through the mud, you called a number of monetary figures and so on. You must tell us if the attorneys-at-law whose names that you continue to call in this House, if you have found them guilty of any wrongdoing, and if you are prepared to take it further to what you are saying.

Mr. Al-Rawi: Madam Speaker, on a general privilege, if there is one against shouting.

Mr. R. Indarsingh: What is the Standing Order?

Mr. Al-Rawi: Standing Order 48(5) and shouting. Breach of privilege, good Lord.

Madam Speaker: All right. Members, as far as 48(5), I think that common sense will allow some use of the pronouns, he and she and you. I would not allow it if it is meant or said in a derogatory way and, therefore, I would ask Members to be guided by that. So that I do not expect that every time somebody would say the honourable whatever, but I would allow some flexibility with the use of the pronoun, because it would only make good sense. Please continue, Member for Couva South. [*Desk thumping*]

12.00 noon

Mr. R. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Again, I am guided.

As I said, the Attorney General came into this very said House and indicated about corruption at the Office of the Attorney General, and did nothing about it. The Minister in the Ministry of the said Attorney General again has been attacking public servants all over the place that corruption at Board of Inland Revenue, corruption at wherever, and nothing has been done.

Mr. Al-Rawi: Standing Order 48(6).

Madam Speaker: Member for Couva South, I believe it is the use of a particular word that you have used, and I would consider it unparliamentary. I think you can say it in another way.

Mr. R. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

As it relates to job losses, we want to know on this side what is the TTRA organizational structure; whether it is the old PNM proposal that they were rejected for at the polls that will be returning. How many workers will be re-employed or re-absorbed into this entity? Will there be a collective bargaining process to continue in this new entity? In addition to that, we want to know whether it would be solely contract workers who will be at the behest of the political manipulation of the Minister of Finance and the political directorate. There are a number of issues that we have not been told of and we will continue to demand answers in the interest of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

That leads me to the issue of Petrotrin. The Minister went off in his budget presentation and quoted a number of statistics as it relates to Petrotrin and what is happening as it relates to the debt situation at Petrotrin. He indicated from page 39:

International rating agencies have downgraded Petrotrin's debt and have

given warnings of further downgrades unless major structural changes are immediately effected. In this regard, Petrotrin faces the critical need to reduce operating expenditure by \$500 million over the next four years, or increase the profitability of the company commensurately. This will require a reduction in discretionary spending, as well as a review of the organizational structure, improved efficiency, and stringent control of operating costs.

Madam Speaker, all I could tell you reading into this particular statement, the time is coming where the Government will take the bull by the horns and administer the financial rights to the OWTU and dismiss all 5,000 workers at Petrotrin. That is why the Prime Minister continues to harp on the issue of job losses, whenever he mounts a platform or a public podium now.

In addition to job losses in Petrotrin and BIR and Customs and Excise, we have been told of private sector involvement at Lake Asphalt. There was a time when those on the other side and the operatives would have referred to Lake Asphalt as being "there was too much of Ram" in the operations of Lake Asphalt. I want to ask them: where has the consultation started? Who did the ground work? Lake Asphalt has a union that represents the employees, the Contractors and General Workers' Trade Union. Some of you may think that because the President General is a general council member of the People's National Movement that that will allow you to ride roughshod over the Contractor and General Workers' Trade Union and the employees at Lake Asphalt. So job loss is wide throughout the spectrum as a result of this budget, and that is why I continue to say that it is the biggest threat as it relates to the small man and the ordinary workers and citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

In that context also, Madam Speaker, I want to just re-emphasize something

that now is in the public domain, that was raised by the Leader of the Opposition. There are thousands of workers who have been retrenched in this country, and based on being retrenched and so on, in some instances—not as in the instance of ArcelorMittal and Centrin, where the Minister of Labour and Small Enterprise Development was too busy to engage the management of ArcelorMittal and the recognized majority union, the Steelworkers Union—but I am sure that if workers get their severance entitlement they would want to invest whatever they have. They would want the right to invest in IPOs and public offerings and so on.

The Leader of the Opposition took the opportunity to ask of the Prime Minister to halt the intended, what we would call, sale of assets of Trinidad and Tobago National Gas Company Limited and First Citizens Bank Holdings. To quote the Leader of the Opposition:

This appears to be a financial transaction designed by a few to benefit a few, at the expense of the law-abiding taxpaying citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. From this side, the Opposition wants to re-emphasize this, because we want a level playing field. We do not want preferential treatment for existing shareholders and so on, and we do not want that only the big and the rich and those at the upper echelons of society must benefit from this type of transaction.

In fact, we must be able to subject those who are holding office today to public scrutiny, [*Desk thumping*] to public scrutiny because “Let’s do this Together” was their mantra from their manifesto to ensure that there is accountability, integrity, openness, honesty and objectivity. Members of Parliament should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Members of Parliament must account to the public for their decisions and their actions and submit themselves to scrutiny necessary to ensure this. Members of Parliament must ensure that their obligation to people or organizations that might

try inappropriately to influence them in their work or act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefit for themselves, their family or their friends. They must disclose to the Parliament all possible conflict of interest.

This is coming from the manifesto of the People's National Movement. This is what they fooled the population of Trinidad and Tobago with in the run-up to the general election of 2015. Today we are saying, led by the Leader of the Opposition and Member for Siparia, that the Minister of Finance must tell the country what special arrangements have been put in place, if any, as it relates to enrich friends, family and financiers and so on of the People's National Movement as a result of this proposed sale. [*Desk thumping*]

I want to hear, because there are a number of voices that challenged the integrity, challenged the direction of the Government's policy as it relates to the initial public offering.

Mr. Al-Rawi: [*Inaudible*]

Madam Speaker: Attorney General, I will allow him to continue. Just be guided, Member for Couva South, on how wide you want to take this, but I will allow you to continue.

Mr. R. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The issue at hand is that when persons opt to get themselves involved in public life, and when they are in charge of billions of dollars larger than even Government Ministers and Ministries and so on, they must be willing to subject themselves to all forms of scrutiny and transparency. If your allowances in terms of your public engagements and so on are over \$120,000 in this country, then I am saying that you have a right to be subjected to public scrutiny. [*Desk thumping*]
What is good for one is good for all in Trinidad and Tobago. That is simply what we are advocating for on this side, because from a small man's point of view, we

want to ensure that workers, retrenched workers, the current work force and those who may have a couple thousand dollars, have the right to earn the assets of Trinidad and Tobago in whatever initial public offering that continues to be for the benefit of this country, and to be for the benefit of the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. That is the key. That is what we want as it relates to this particular piece of policy.

Well I should not say “this particular piece” because it is not something that is innovative. It is not something that is new. The Government saw that it was something revolutionary done by the People’s Partnership Government and as a result of this revolutionary approach what it brought to the table for the benefit of ordinary citizens of this country, what it brought to the coffers in terms of the revenue of Trinidad and Tobago which is utilized for the service of this country and its citizens, the Government trumped and followed suit as it relates to this particular issue of an IPO. To tell the country that you all are doing something new and something innovative, that is the furthest thing from the truth as it relates to the initial public offering.

Madam Speaker, in that regard, we also demand to know —whether it was five people or three people is irrelevant—we want to know how many people if, based on perception and so on, in the interest of openness, in the interest of transparency, in the interest of good governance, we want to know how many people will benefit from special allocations as it relates to this particular transaction, [*Desk thumping*] that is being put into the public domain based on the policy position of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago.

Madam Speaker, that is the key. It is not five or three, it is who stands to benefit, if there is any conflict of interest. And the people have a right to know in the context of good governance in Trinidad and Tobago, Madam Speaker.

The issue of further job cuts can be found in the details of this budget. That is why the Prime Minister is obsessed with speaking about job cuts. I want to turn to the Draft Estimates and details of Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure for the financial year 2017. It is important to know what is in the details of these documents that were tabled by the Minister of Finance.

The Minister of Finance and I thought that the Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara who touted and regaled himself in saying that we will stamp out corruption at WASA, there has been a decrease in the allegation to WASA for 2017—[*Interruption*]

Madam Speaker: Hon. Member, your original 45 minutes are now expired. You are entitled to 10 more minutes if you so wish to avail yourself of it.

Mr. R. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I will so avail myself.

As I said, there is a reduction—[*Interruption*—you have a vested interest in WASA. “You was a firearm or something of that regard.” [*Laughter*] Until you can tell us about the findings of that fire, then I will advise you to—

Madam Speaker: Address your contribution, please, to the Chair.

Mr. R. Indarsingh: So there is a reduction in the allocation of over \$452,475,000 at WASA. That tells me that there are thousands of workers to go home at WASA, and they must tell us. They must tell us what is the true intention of this reduction.

12.15 p.m.

In relation to CEPEP which has now gone to the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government, there is a reduction in the allocation to CEPEP of over \$106 million. How many contractors will be sent home? How many workers will be sent home? This is what we want to know in the interest of the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

In 2016 estimates at the Ministry of Works and Transport, at the Traffic

Warden Division there is a decrease of \$3 million. How many traffic wardens will be sent home, Madam Speaker? At the PTSC, the Public Transport Service Corporation, a decrease in the 2017 estimates of \$56,521,000. How many workers will be sent home based of the announcements of the Prime Minister that job losses are coming?

On the issue of PTSC and ICT development and so on they boasted and they touted and they thumped the desk and so on. The Minister with responsibility for ICT, the Member for La Horquetta/Talparo; the Member for St. Joseph and the Member for Laventille West, I could remember vividly in the papers, in the newspapers they were on a bus and they crouched up next to each other, Madam Speaker, and they were smiling broadly and they were boasting about ICT in 13 buses. But they will not tell you that while they were boasting about ICT in 13 buses, all the rural bus routes in Couva South have been removed by the PTSC [*Desk thumping*] and that reeks of political discrimination, Madam Speaker.

So in Windsor Park, in Phoenix Park, in Bastar Hall, in Indian Trail and so on the people who are subjected to inflation because of your taxation, your increases in diesel, in the property tax, in super gasoline and so on, in VAT at 7,000 across the board and to tell you, you all boast about being concerned about the people and the ordinary people, you have restored VAT on school books, on computer supplies. That is a callous, that is an insensitive act, that is an uncaring Government, Madam Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

And I want to tell you in addition to that, the Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs boasting about his commitment to sport and so on, you know it is his Government that restored VAT on football and cricket supplies and so on? So the cricket club down in—the Calcutta Cricket club and so on, they have to fork out more money. The games that ordinary people play, they have to fork out more

money to play these sports.

And in relation to that, the Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs and in their achievements boasted of the National Aquatic Centre and the Cycling Velodrome. The only thing the man had to do was buy a length of ribbon, the Member, and cut the ribbon. [*Desk thumping*] That was the only thing that he had to do.

And in addition to that, you know what? At the opening ceremony of the Cycling Velodrome, he boasted and told the national community, that was the vision of Roger Boynes; former Ministers of Sport under the PNM: Roger Boynes and Gary Hunt. You know what that reminded me, Madam Speaker? The PNM promised this country the Point Fortin Highway since Dr. Eric Williams in 1960. [*Desk thumping*] They promised this country the Mayaro Fire Station since the days of—my good friend, the Member for Oropouche East, will tell you, that the Prime Minister Dr. Eric Williams went down to Mayaro in a DeSoto motor car to promise the people of Mayaro a fire station. You know who built all of this, Madam Speaker?—the People's Partnership Government [*Desk thumping*] and every time I get the opportunity to speak, Madam Speaker, the population of Trinidad and Tobago will be told of the legacy of People's Partnership Government led by the hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar.

And I want to continue my issue as it relates to constituency matters. How much time do I have, Madam Speaker?

Madam Speaker: You are up at 12.23 p.m.

Mr. R. Indarsingh: At 12.23 p.m. Today I want to read into the record as it relates to the performance of the Minister of Works and Transport and Member for Laventille West. This is a Minister who is traversing Chatham and La Brea and so on and finding the allocations to repair roads and build roads and so on in parts of Trinidad and Tobago. I have no problem with that. Because as a Government you

are supposed to look after the well-being of all citizens across the board. So that is why we built the Diego Martin Highway. [*Desk thumping*] That is why we finished the highway to Wallerfield. That is why we built the bypass road; that is why we built the Couva Interchange and so on.

But I have been writing on behalf of the over 1,000 residents of Buccarro to the Minister of Works and Transport since 2015 and I have written based on a petition. This was not something concocted by Rudranath Indarsingh. It was done by the Freeport, St. Mary's Village Council and the Buccarro Village Council. And the response of the Minister of Works and Transport dated June 27, 2016 re: Buccarro Road:

Please indicate truthfully to the residents that I responded to you on the said matter in the Parliament only a few days ago and that we will abide by our stated commitment.

Further, please tell them that our country is short and saddled with a severely battered economy. You may tell them the details as to the causes, if you so wish.

And hear this one, in relation to an invitation to conduct a site visit on the Buccarro Road:

Please be advised that I am indeed aware of the circumstances of the roadway in question and that of many more others all over Trinidad and Tobago. Be assured that I have asked the officials in my Ministry to exert their best efforts to address the issue raised.

And the final line:

While I am willing to undertake a site visit, I cannot now find the time, but I give you an assurance that I will keep it in view.

I am still looking out through the view of my constituency office, Madam Speaker,

[*Desk thumping*] for the Minister of Works and Transport to visit because his actions is in keeping with the DNA of the PNM: political vindictiveness, political spite. [*Desk thumping*] That is why he can find the time to go to Chatham and he could go to La Brea, but going down the highway he cannot find the time to veer off and come down to Rivulet Road and come down into Buccarro Road. So it is vindictiveness, it is spite, [*Desk thumping*] it is one of acrimony, it is one of hate against those who would have voted for the People's Partnership Government.

The only hope, the only sense of resurrection that can be found for the well-being of the "state of ship" of Trinidad and Tobago is to ensure that whenever the local government elections are called in Trinidad and Tobago that the people of Trinidad and Tobago wean themselves off Prime Minister Dr. Keith Rowley and the People's National Movement. Madam Speaker, I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker: The Member for Arima.

The Minister of Education (Hon. Anthony Garcia): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It really gives me great pleasure and satisfaction to be part of this debate. But before I go into my contribution, Madam Speaker, allow me a few moments to respond to some of the things that have been said by my very good friend, the Member for Couva South.

Madam Speaker, this morning before this session started I had the opportunity of meeting and greeting a number of schoolchildren who were present here to witness the debate. What I found very strange was that while my good friend from Couva South was speaking, the schoolchildren who were there to listen, principally, to the debate were ushered out. [*Desk thumping*] It tells me therefore [*Crosstalk*] that my good friend from Couva South was not making—
[*Interruption*]

Madam Speaker: Member for Couva South, please. Do you intend to make an

interruption under the Standing Orders?

Mr. Indarsingh: No, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Okay. Thank you.

Hon. A. Garcia: It tells me that my very good friend from Couva South was not making much sense and therefore, he was boring those students who were there really to learn and to listen.

The Member for Couva South began his ranting and raving by saying that there are 497 murders so far this year. That is not true. That is blatantly false. The number is 356. But I do not understand—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Indarsingh: Madam Speaker, would you give way?

Hon. A. Garcia: You are my friend, I will give way.

Mr. Indarsingh: Madam Speaker, just on a point of clarification. I stated 497 murders since the PNM has been in power since September 7th, 2015.

Hon. A. Garcia: Madam Speaker, it is nice to know that he has changed his tune. I thought that the Member for Couva South and I shared quite a large number of things including being the recipients of an education from the same college. But in hearing him this morning I am sure the teachers at Hillview College would be really sorely disappointed, especially those teachers who were teaching people how to debate. Because his contribution was really one of shouting and talking in such loud tones that sometimes I was wondering whether he would have gotten a heart attack because he began to sweat. He began to sweat and it became very uncomfortable.

In his contribution, he accused this Government of being anti-labour. Far from the truth. There are two Ministers in this Government who have a foundation in the labour movement. *[Desk thumping]* There is no need for me to call the names, but everyone knows. Therefore, when he says that he is going to offer

advice on how to deal with labour relations, I simply say, thank you very much, but we decline your offer. [*Crosstalk*]

Madam Speaker, I want to begin my contribution, first of all, by thanking our Minister of Finance, the hon. Colm Imbert, for the type of budget presentation that was made here a few days ago. [*Desk thumping*] We all know that we are experiencing economic difficulties, but I am sure that the entire country would see the wisdom of the measures that the hon. Minister of Finance has presented in this budget.

I also wish to thank and show appreciation to the senior officers of the Ministry of Education who have assisted over this last year in ensuring that this Ministry of Education remains viable, remains one that is really doing the job that is intended, and later on in my contribution I am going to explain exactly what I mean.

I want to express, publicly, thanks and appreciation to the hon. Dr. Lovell Francis, Minister in the Ministry of Education, [*Desk thumping*] for the tremendous support that he has lent to me over the last year resulting in a high-performing Ministry of Education.

All was not as rosy as they are now. When we assumed office in the Ministry of Education we met a situation where the staff was demotivated. We met a situation where the staff was discouraged and, in many instances, we met a situation where members of staff were even ostracized; therefore, we had a responsibility to ensure that we would bring back that sense of belonging to all members at the Ministry of Education. I am pleased to say that, to a large extent, we have succeeded. [*Desk thumping*]

12.30 p.m.

Soon after assuming office, Madam Speaker, we presented to Cabinet a 12-month action plan, which we were able to roll out in ensuring that our education

system remains vibrant, remains viable, and a Ministry that continues to cater to the young people in our charge, and I am pleased to say that over the last 12/13 months, to a large extent, we have succeeded. Our plans, really, took into consideration six major areas. We looked at governance—

Madam Speaker: Leader of the House.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Madam Speaker, I beg to move that the House now suspend for one hour for the lunch period.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, this House is now suspended, we will resume at 1.30 p.m.

12.31 p.m.: *House suspended.*

1.30 p.m.: *Sitting resumed*

Madam Speaker: The hon. Member for Arima has 38 minutes left of his original speaking time. Member for Arima. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. A. Garcia: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Before we took the break I was commenting on the six major strategic goals that we have set ourselves at the Ministry of Education. Let me therefore take the opportunity to share with you these six goals:

1. Governance and administration;
2. Advancing curriculum planning and development;
3. Ensuring access to quality education and training;
4. Providing quality infrastructural and other educational facilities;
5. Advancing curriculum service delivery; and
6. Providing continuous teacher education.

Madam Speaker, in order to achieve success where these goals are concerned, we at the Ministry of Education have developed certain strategies, and programmes, and policies that will assist us in this direction. We recognize the

fact that there must be stakeholder buy-in and, towards this end, we have forged very close relationships with our major and our key stakeholders. For example: the Trinidad and Tobago Unified Teachers Association, the National Parent/Teachers Association, the denominational boards who play an important part in the education of our country, and, of course, our parents, and with this collaboration with our major stakeholders we would ensure that our education system is modern, is relevant, and it is inclusive and accessible.

Madam Speaker, permit me to identify some of our strategies with respect to goal number one: Governance and administration. I am pleased to state that one of our major achievements is the relocation of our main offices to St. Vincent Street. Madam Speaker, as you will be aware, offices of the Ministry of Education were scattered all over Port of Spain and as far as Sangre Grande, Aranguez, Couva. We have been successful in ensuring that more than 95 per cent of our Ministries' offices are now housed in one area, and with the modern facilities that are now available, our staff is poised to give to the national community, in general, and to our teachers, in particular, the type of service that they deserve.

Another important aspect of governance and administration is our school-based management policy. And this is really in an effort to ensure that at the level of the school we give to our main players; for example, our principals, our heads of departments and other actors in the education system the opportunity of putting into place strategies that will assist our students to ensure that in the delivery of the curriculum it is quality focused, to ensure that we enhance the internal management arrangements that operate at the school, to ensure that we provide the school with greater flexibility and the support. With this school-based management system, it will require those in charge to be accountable for all the actions and, as I have stated before, to give us an opportunity of ensuring

participation by our major stakeholders.

Madam Speaker, earlier on this year, in fact when the SEA results were announced, I publicly expressed concern over the performance of our students, of many of our students in the SEA exam. I was very appalled over the fact that so many of our students continue to operate below, much below the acceptable levels of achievement. As a result, I had asked the principal officers of the Ministry of Education, and together with Minister Francis, we set about to develop a programme where we would assist our students in our primary schools so that there will be some improvement in the level of their achievements. In conducting a research, what we were able to do, we were able to map the performance of students at the level of standard one over the last four years, and we were able to transpose that at standard five, and what we found was that there was no improvement in the performance of those students. In particular those students were scoring at levels that were unacceptable.

We have decided that we have now to shift the focus from apportioning blame to really putting things in place. And, therefore, at the levels of standard one, we have decided that we are going to put things in place, we are going to institute a system of critical supervision so that our teachers will have the necessary support that will allow them to produce to the best of their abilities. At the secondary school level, there are 56 secondary schools that we are looking at very closely. And these schools are schools where children who have been scoring consistently poorly in the SEA exams are housed. The school-based management system that we have embarked upon will assist the school administrators in ensuring that those students would have their areas of deficiency attended to. And again, as I mentioned just now, the clinical supervision system that we have put in place, we are going to ensure that that is done competently, and we have engaged

the assistance of our school supervisors and our curriculum officers who will be visiting our schools on a more regular basis, meeting with our principals, meeting with our vice-principals, heads of departments, and teachers to ensure that the curriculum is implemented in the way it is supposed to be implemented.

1.40 p.m.

Madam Speaker, I come to the issue of violence and indiscipline in our schools. I am pleased to report, Madam Speaker, that this Government, in general, and this Ministry of Education in particular, we have all been able to ensure that the incidence of violence and indiscipline in our schools has been on the wane.

[Desk thumping]

When I look at the number of requests for extended suspensions that come before me, I have noticed a general decline and this did not come about just like that. It was not a flash in the pan. Minister Francis and myself had to make personal interventions where that is concerned. We visited schools that were exhibiting behaviour that was unacceptable and we took certain decisions. In fact, I remember quite clearly two schools, in particular, where we decided that those students whose behaviour was not consistent with what we expect of a secondary school student we had to have them removed. But, we just did not leave them to pasture. We ensured that they were given the requisite support, encouragement and guidance. And towards this end we had established Learning Enhancement Centres. I am proud to say that in Trinidad we now have seven Learning Enhancement Centres in operation, in all of our seven education districts. *[Desk thumping]*

Again, the Learning Enhancement Centre is a component of the school-based management model. It is to ensure that there is personal intervention so that our schools can be safe. It is important that our schools are safe for all those who

operate within. We have decided that there will be a zero tolerance on indiscipline and violence in our schools. We have engaged the assistance of our Student Support Services Division of the Ministry of Education to assist us where that is concerned. And therefore what we have found as a result of that intervention is that, first of all, the children, the students who were placed in those Learning Enhancement Centres when they complete their programme of support that they were able to return to the school system in a better frame of mind, and from all reports that we have been receiving from our principals and our teachers, those students' behaviour has improved tremendously.

Madam Speaker, I now move on to the school improvement project, emphasizing what I refer to as the "Laventille Initiative". We have decided that this programme must begin in the Laventille area involving 25 of our schools, 20 primary schools and five secondary schools. We will be putting in place strategies to ensure that our schools are safe, that these schools are secure, these schools operate in an environment that is pleasing to the eye. We want to ensure that there will be an overall improvement in the academic performance of our students. We want to ensure that there is what we refer to as successful completion rates in our schools. As you know, when we examined those schools we have found that so many of our students dropped out, even at the primary level, more so at the secondary level. In some of those schools when we look at the results at the CSEC level, either one or two students were able to achieve a full pass and that is five O'level subjects.

The School-Based Management Component will assist us in this initiative so that the performance of our students could be enhanced. We launched this programme on Saturday, October 1st and, in fact, I must say that the Prime Minister has been most supportive. I make bold to mention that perhaps it is the

baby of our Prime Minister who has been giving us all the support that is necessary. So we are hoping that over the three years, over the life of this project we are going to see tangible results.

Madam Speaker, I think I need to make the point here that this project is going to be used as a template for other schools. It will not reside only in the Laventille area. We are going to monitor this programme and in areas where we have similar difficulties and similar problems, similar challenges, we are going to use this project as a template so that other schools can benefit and other areas can benefit. We are very excited where this project is concerned and we want to assure you, Madam Speaker, that when we speak about this programme again in three years' time we will be able to say confidently that this programme was very successful. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker, in February this year, we embarked on a National Consultation on Education. It was held at three venues. In the north, at the University of the West Indies, in the south at SAPA and in Tobago. And during these consultations and during these sessions we afforded the national community to make inputs with respect to their views on how education should progress. We had contributions being made by a wide range of persons from the community. In fact, when I looked at the report, more than 1,000 contributions were received. This consultation and the results of this exercise will now form part of a White Paper which will be discussed at Cabinet before it is presented to Parliament.

But, may I point out just two aspects of this national consultation which we have been able to pick out and really implement. And the first one is the removal of the Continuous Assessment Component of the SEA exam. We took this decision because of very many reasons. First of all, we found that it was burdensome. It placed an unnecessary burden on the shoulders of our students, on

the shoulders of our teachers and on the shoulders of our parents. And in fact, many persons had been asking us to remove this component from the SEA exam.

I have heard, Madam Speaker, a number of criticisms levelled by the former Minister of Education where this programme is concerned. But I want to address this House on the very important issue that before we took this decision we engaged in discussions with all our stakeholders. It was not done “vaille-que-vaille”. As a result of these consultations and as a result of the contributions that were made at the National Consultation on Education, we felt confident that the time came for us to remove this albatross that rested on their shoulders. [*Desk thumping*]

But, Madam Speaker, allow me to quote from the *Guardian* article that appeared on April 02, 2016. And I use this opportunity to debunk the statements that have been made by the former Minister of Education and others with respect to the CAC component. Let me quote from the comment that has been made by the Trinidad and Tobago Unified Teachers Association. And I quote:

“TTUTA, since the inception of CAC in 2012, would have called for multiple consultations on the matter...There was a lack of resources, a lack of proper thinking for our teachers and it created undue stress for our teachers and students...”

This is TTUTA making these comments. Let me quote, Madam Speaker, from the president of the Primary Schools Principals' Association, Mr. Cogland Griffith. And I quote:

“Primary School Principal's Association president Cogland Griffith also welcomed”—the—“removal”—of the CAC—“saying it will allow students to be students instead of children who are forced to learn through rote methods. He emphasised that while the students may not be tested in the

eight subjects, they will now be able to learn and appreciate them without pressure.”

I now quote again from the National Parent Teachers Association. And here is where the first Vice-President, Mrs. Maureen Taylor-Ryan, she states:

“National Parent Teachers Association...first vice-president Maureen Taylor-Ryan agreed”—that—“the move was best for the students...”

Let me repeat. She agreed as a parent representing the parents association that this move was best for the students.

Madam Speaker, allow me to quote from a member of the wider community. A parent who has had children writing this exam, whose children were exposed to the stress of the CAC.

“Yesterday”—and that was April 1st—“Candice Assee, whose ten-year-old daughter attends Arima Presbyterian Primary School, expressed her relief that CAC would no longer influence student placement.”

Madam Speaker, when I speak about consultation and decisions that we take on the basis of consultation, this really spells out exactly what we have been doing. All major stakeholders in our education system were critical of the CAC component. And this is the reason why this Government and this Ministry of Education decided that we are going to remove the CAC component.

Another area that came out of the National Consultation on Education was the national test. And we have decided that we are going to review this national test. Because what we have found is that the national test has morphed into almost another SEA exam. The original purpose of the national test seemed to have been abandoned and students in the primary schools were being forced to prepare for these national tests as though it was another placement examination. Let me, for the purpose of the national community just state the reason for this national test,

the original reasons. It was supposed to assess students' performance, it was supposed to track students' performance, it was supposed to identify the challenges students faced in the particular subject areas, it was supposed to track the performance of the schools in particular and the districts in general. As a result of that it was supposed to identify those areas that were in need of remedial action. But because, as I stated earlier, it has now moved into a different area, we have decided that we are going to postpone national testing for one year. [*Desk thumping*] And this would give us the opportunity to do a comprehensive review of this programme so that when we restart it will return to its original moorings.

Madam Speaker, going to No. 3, that speaks to achieve curriculum planning and development, to advance curriculum planning and development, I would like to start with the decision that we have taken with respect to the ICT initiative. Again, this was another area that was the subject of a lot of criticism from Members of the Opposition. And they were saying that we were taking away from our students the laptops. That we were saying, that we were denying our student population the opportunity to be abreast of the technological advances that are taking place in this country.

1.55 p.m.

When we entered the Ministry of Education, Dr. Francis and myself, we found that there was no ICT policy at the Ministry of Education. There was no ICT policy in the Ministry of Education. We found that in the case of laptops, that the laptops were being used by students as toys and to play games. We found that there was an absence of an ICT policy, which I just stated. We found that there was a lack of governance structure for the management and monitoring of the ICT programme in the schools. We found that there was inadequate ICT-supported infrastructure in the schools.

We found that there was limited access to Internet services; there was inadequate preparation and training for our teachers; and there was an inadequacy in terms of the laptop repair programme.

As a result, we found that the laptops were not used for the purposes for which they were intended. In fact, Dr. Francis always jokes that at the Ministry of Education we have a graveyard where hundreds of laptops are stored simply because they could not be repaired. And part of this reason was that the laptops were of a poor quality—very poor quality.

Hon. Member: Cheap “ting”.

Hon. A. Garcia: Very cheap things. We have come up, therefore, Madam Speaker, with a five-star policy on ICT in education. We have decided that we will ensure that there is connectivity in our schools. We will ensure that there is sufficient support for our teachers in terms of training so we are going to expose our teachers to training. We are going to ensure that the laptops that are made available would be able to be serviced by competent persons. And most of all, Madam Speaker, we are going to distribute in each school at the level of Form I, 50 laptops which will be kept in the school as the property of the school. Children will no longer be required to take the laptops home and play with them as toys. [*Desk thumping*] What we have been able to achieve so far in the 13 months that we have been in charge of education, where the ICT policy is concerned, is that every secondary school in Trinidad and Tobago now has Internet connectivity—every secondary school. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker, in terms of curriculum review, we have appointed two committees to look into the curriculum and the teaching of history in our schools. Both committees are headed by Prof. Theodore Lewis and they are

working very hard, and I am sure in the not-too-distant future you are going to hear much more about it as they present their reports.

In terms of the teaching of history in our schools, it is very important that we teach our history; [*Desk thumping*] that we do not teach a history that is written for us by outsiders. It is important for us to teach a history that really tells us from where we came and will allow us to chart a course for our future. It is to be a history that will not be distorted by some Members on the opposite side.

And as a result, Madam Speaker, we are going to ensure by the teaching of history that our curriculum in our schools is enhanced. We are going to ensure that we build a culture that emphasizes the richness of our cultural heritage. We are going to ensure that we are going to eliminate any dissidence that may arise from ethnic, cultural, religious and class differences. We are going to do everything to ensure that our rich history—the rich history of Trinidad and Tobago—is taught in our schools.

I now move on to goal number three, and that is to ensure access to quality education and training. As we examine this, the first thing that comes to mind is the decision that we came to with respect to GATE. We have had a lot of discussion where GATE is concerned, and all of us know, each one of us here is really familiar with the decisions that we have taken with respect to GATE. Recently I attended a meeting of the University Council that was held in Jamaica, and during the discussions at that meeting every member of the University Council and of the university hierarchy complimented the Government of Trinidad and Tobago for the decision that it took with respect to GATE—every member. [*Desk thumping*] Because everyone was clear that there was too much wastage where GATE was

concerned. And our decision will result in an elimination of the massive waste. And in addition to that, we will ensure that those students who have access to GATE funding will equip themselves diligently to their tasks so that when their courses come to an end they will be able to graduate with full honours.

But as I said, I would want to just highlight three areas of recommendation that, again, I would like to share with the national community, and that is: One, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago will consider additional funding, including education saving bonds. Arrangements will soon be provided. Two, this Government will establish a national education savings fund where we will encourage the participation of the private sector who will be encouraged by tax incentives to make fund contributions on behalf of the children of their employees or to engage in other initiatives that build the fund. And three, this Government, this progressive Government, will consider fiscal incentives to encourage insurance companies and credit unions to invest in the development of education savings products. These are some of the things I would like to share with you with respect to GATE.

Madam Speaker, with respect to scholarships, I want to inform this House that CAPE scholarships will be announced shortly and the national community will be assured that we are doing everything so that our scholars are rewarded for their diligence. This Government has taken a decision to put a cap on scholarships, and we will be awarding no more than 400 scholarships this year. You are going to hear much more about it.

So far, 1,870 of our national scholars have benefited from this programme which costs approximately \$170 million. We have a concern,

and that is the reluctance of some of our scholarship winners to return to the country to serve the country in accordance with their contract and we are doing everything possible where those students who are errant, where this is concerned, are made to pay the full cost of their tuition and other expenses.

Goal number four is to provide quality infrastructural and other educational facilities. Minister Francis mentioned some of these on Thursday. I would just like to elaborate on one or two. We have a company, a special purpose company that has been put in place to ensure that our schools are built; that our schools are renovated; that our schools are maintained, and that is the EFCL. But, again, when we came into office, we found that there was a breakdown in communication between the Ministry of Education and EFCL, and this resulted in poor supervision, poor management and the large variances in school construction costs.

As a result of that and as a result of the many complaints that we have received, we had two audits being carried out. We had a forensic audit being carried out by the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service and we had our own internal audit. We are still paying attention to the results of these audits and that is one of the reasons why there was some delay in the resumption of the construction of our schools. But I want to give you the assurance that as soon as all avenues are cleared, the school construction will continue. And I would like to say that that is going to continue very shortly.

At our tertiary level, we have gained many advances. For example, at the University of the West Indies, which we fund to a large extent, we have been able to achieve the completion of the north block of Canada Hall. And in terms of COSTAATT, the new COSTAATT campus in Chaguanas has been completed. It has been handed over to COSTAATT and we are going

to have a formal opening and commissioning of that COSTAATT campus in a few weeks' time.

Goal number five: to advance curriculum service delivery. We want to ensure that we provide support to our students with special education needs, and I am sure this is going to interest the Member for Tabaquite. We want to ensure that special education personnel are placed in our schools so that they can give the requisite attention to students who have some learning disability. What we have found is that we were able to increase the cadre of special education teachers in our primary schools—

Madam Speaker: Hon. Member, your original 45 minutes have expired. You are entitled to 10 more minutes if you wish to avail yourself of it.

Hon. A. Garcia: Yes, please.

Madam Speaker: You may continue.

Hon. A. Garcia: Thank you very much. We have been able to increase the cadre of special education teachers in our schools and they have been providing yeoman assistance. One area of assistance, Madam Speaker, is in the area of the provision of student's aides, so students who are afflicted with many types of disabilities, they can have a student's aide seated next to that student who will provide the information and the support.

I now come to the HDHD disorder.

Hon. Member: ADHD.

Hon. A. Garcia: Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder that my friend from Tabaquite spoke about. And I want to assure you and assure the House that we have prepared a revised programme to identify students who suffer from ADHD.

2.10 p.m.

We have decided that we are going to embark on a programme of teacher training so our teachers will be able to manage such students afflicted with this disorder, and we are going to ensure a long-term strategy to assist students so identified.

Madam Speaker, because of the constraints of time, let me move as quickly as I can. We have put into place a National Parenting in Education Programme. During the period September 2015 to May 2016, we have had 222 parenting in education workshops. We have worked closely with the National Parent Teacher Association and this resulted in the facilitation and the engagement of 12,051 parents, or guardians, or caregivers. This programme will continue in fiscal 2017.

In terms of the National Schools Dietary Services Limited—and again, Madam Speaker, we have heard so much talk, falsely, saying that we have stopped the school feeding programme. I have heard again, the former Minister of Education, Member for Caroni East, stating publicly that we have curtailed the school feeding programme. This is not true. I want to lay bare the facts where this is concerned. In fiscal 2016, we delivered to our schools 59,246 breakfast meals. [*Desk thumping*] In this same period, we were able to deliver 91,837 lunches to students in our schools, [*Desk thumping*] and in fiscal 2017 we will be delivering no less. In fact, so successful is this programme that at the beginning of the academic year, on September 5th, the school feeding programme started. That is a major achievement. [*Desk thumping*]

I now turn briefly to the Textbook Rental/Loan Programme. Again, this is an area where persons, either trying to achieve their own ends, continue to furnish the population with inaccuracies. I make bold to say that in our school system there are adequate books at every level. [*Desk thumping*] I say this not only

because I want to talk, but it is because we commissioned an audit of all our schools where our school supervisors visited the schools, they met with the principals, they met with the teachers and we have found that there was an adequate supply of school books. In fact, Madam Speaker, at one of our visits to one of our secondary schools, we entered into a room—not a classroom, a room—that was stacked with hundreds of textbooks, and therefore, it is not true for people to say that our schoolchildren are going to school with their school bags empty. That is not true.

Madam Speaker, allow me at this point to speak briefly with respect to my constituency, the Arima constituency. I represent a constituency that is very diverse. It spreads from La Fillette, Blanchisseuse in the north including rural villages like Morne La Croix, Aripo, Brasso Seco Paria, and it stretches right down to the Churchill-Roosevelt Highway where we will include a village that is now referred to as—what is the name here? Okay.

Let me state that I have been meeting regularly and consistently with my people from Arima, my constituents. At first it was every Thursday. Now it is every Tuesday, and to a large extent on Saturdays where I meet with my constituents in an effort to hear their views and their cries. Madam Speaker, when I meet with my constituents there are three areas that stand out. Three areas of support that the constituents really want, one is jobs, the other is housing and the third one is school places for their children. As far as possible, I have been able to meet some of their requests especially with respect to school places for their children. Where jobs are concerned, most of the persons who come to see me would like a job either at the Arima Borough Council or the Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation, and when I ask what is the reason, some of them would tell me, “Well you know we can finish work at seven o’clock in the morning”.

We want to ensure that our people are empowered and, as a result, I have been emphasizing to them that we do not lean, or they should not rely on a job at the Arima Borough Council for their sustenance, that they should become adequately trained. And towards this end, we engaged the University of Trinidad and Tobago and we had an all-day session where UTT was able to showcase all the opportunities that are available to our young people and not so young people, so that they can be enrolled in the university and improve themselves so that they would be better able and in a better position to provide for their families, and that is an initiative that is working very well.

Madam Speaker, in the area of education, I have been able to visit most of the schools, both primary and secondary schools in Arima. I have met with principals, I have met with the students and we have been working together to ensure that in our schools learning and teaching would take place in an environment that is really conducive to these two important components of our education system. I have had meetings with the Board of Management of the Holy Cross College in an effort to assist them in the construction of a sixth form block that will provide more space for those students and, in particular, to allow them to enhance their curriculum offerings. Again, that has been working very well.

Madam Speaker, the construction of the Arima hospital is an area that we are working to ensure that our people in Arima will be able to benefit from health services. Madam Speaker, because of time constraint, I think I need to wind up now, and I want to thank you and thank others for giving me this opportunity of speaking on the budget.

Thank you very much. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Fazal Karim (*Chaguanas East*): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Before I get into the substance of my contribution, may I request the use of

Standing Order 44(10) because I may have some materials to display? Thank you very much.

Madam Speaker, let me thank you for the opportunity to allow me to participate in this debate, the 2017 budget debate, and to start immediately by commending the Leader of the Opposition, our leader, for the erudite contribution, [*Desk thumping*] very comprehensive, excellent, well-researched, in-depth that set the stage for the rest of us. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker, this budget by me could be described as a “D” budget. It is a deficit budget yes, but I want to add some other “Ds” as I go along, and I will prove to you what the “Ds” are: dishonest, [*Desk thumping*] discriminatory, [*Desk thumping*] and draconian. [*Desk thumping*]

My colleague, the Member for Tobago East is not here and I took note when she spoke last week. She referred to the hon. Prime Minister as Moses and the hon. Minister of Finance, Member for Diego Martin North/East, as Joshua, and I heard my colleague, the Member for Diego Martin North/East saying that you must remember that Joshua led the people into the promised land, Moses did not get there [*Desk thumping*] and therefore—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Imbert: I never said that.

Mr. F. Karim: I heard you say that. My dear, Madam Speaker, let me take this opportunity right away to be first for the day to congratulate the Chinese community on recognizing Double Ten [*Desk thumping*]*—and we have a Member of the community here—and to recognize the members of the Chinese community for the contribution—and my colleague, MP for Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West—that they have made to Trinidad and Tobago.*

Madam Speaker, very briefly I want to just remind us that this 2017 budget in many ways—[*Interruption*]*—I am hearing them too. It is the usual—I will not*

use the word “suspect”, usual colleagues. This budget 2017, when you examine it from 2016, in large measure has a lot of regurgitation. It is very disappointing in terms of the philosophy and lacks direction, and therefore, it really in a sense is devoid of strategies for moving us from where we are to where we ought to be. [Desk thumping] In a sense we described it, and some of my colleagues would have described it, as blame, betrayal, cut and paste.

Madam Speaker, I think this population of Trinidad and Tobago has really gotten fed up of hearing about the People’s Partnership “tief”, mismanagement and wastage. This is a very sad thing, and therefore, in order, we have found to cover up your inefficiency, lack of vision, no capability and lack of competence, no plan, as my colleague the Member for Naparima would have said time and again; you have to attempt to make the Opposition look bad so that you could look good, the PNM, but you do not deserve that. The evidence does not suggest that.

I want to ask my friends on the other side, the PNM-led Government, to stop talking and start working. [Desk thumping] I want to tell them that only this morning, with your permission, I came across *The Economist* magazine, and it might be one that you might be worth the while to read. It is headed the “Art of the lie” and let me just indicate so that you will be able—[Interruption]

Madam Speaker: I know it is after lunch, we might be a little distracted, but I would ask us to please pay attention in silence. Continue please, Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. F. Karim: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I think they need to pay attention to this part I am going to quote from page 9, the “Art of the Lie” in *The Economist* magazine. The subtitle of this paragraph is: “Lord of the lies”. It says:

“Dictators and democrats seeking to deflect blame from their own incompetence have always manipulated the truth;”

Sounds familiar? [*Desk thumping*]

“sore losers have always accused the other lot of lying.”

And therefore, when you cannot achieve, what you do is you blame other people.

Madam Speaker, I just want to remind all of us, and I have a very good friend, the Member for Tobago West, I just want to remind her, we are taking notice. A year has gone, you cannot say this anymore to us that we were in charge. You said you were in charge and we have to make sure that we deal with it. [*Desk thumping*].

Madam Speaker, I now just come to make some brief comments and I agree with you, you know. It is very difficult after lunch to listen to a contribution from the other side, but you know I am very kind and generous.

2.25 p.m.

Madam Speaker, on Thursday last, after an erudite presentation of three hours and four minutes by the very distinguished Leader of the Opposition, the first PNM person to respond to that from the Government Bench was the Member for Moruga/Tableland who unkindly described the Member for Siparia's contribution in Latin as non sequitur. He knows what that is and I know what that is. Well, I was fortunate—I hope my other colleagues who went to the same school with me did Latin too. I was fortunate in my first year at Presentation College, San Fernando, to do Latin and after listening to him for 55 minutes, I have no choice but to describe his comments also in Latin and this is ignoratio elenchi. [*Desk thumping*] And if you want to know the meaning because I know, Madam Speaker, you may want to ask me to give the meaning.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Member, I was going to tell you the language of this House is English so—[*Laughter*]

Mr. F. Karim: Yes and I was just saying that my friend used Latin in this very

House and maybe he did not explain it and really let me translate what non sequitur is so that he will be able to confirm. He was saying it was incoherent but I also want to tell him that what this says, ignoratio elenchi says, it really comes from, it is ignorance of the nature of refutation. [*Desk thumping*] And Madam Speaker, just to ensure that my friend from D'Abadie/O'Meara, he said something about a book in terms of going back to the future and coming back to the present and thing. He did not give us the title of the book but let me give you the title of the book so those on the other side could read it. It is from Arthur Ernest Davies, fallacies, *A Text-Book Of Logic*.

Madam Speaker, I just want to briefly make a comment on my colleague, the Minister of Education and you know, I was trying to take some notes to respond in terms of the tertiary sector and all I could come up with is NATO and it is not the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, it is No Action, Talk Only. [*Desk thumping*] You know, when I look back earlier on, I saw a number of students from the Youth Parliament but after my colleague from San Fernando West was finished, "they gone". They were gone before anybody else talk. And then the hon. Minister of Education, Member for Arima, was saying, in response to my colleague from Couva South, that they did not want to listen to him.

But you know what happened, Madam Speaker, I now realize why they left. The students left because they recognized that there was not worth the while to wait for the hon. Minister of Education, Member for Arima, to say anything because he was in deep slumber, deep meditation. [*Interruption and laughter*] And therefore, I want to tell you, as I stand here to respond, I am feeling it very difficult to respond to what they had both said, two Ministers in one education Ministry, and therefore, what has happened is this Ministry of Education, it is very clear to the national community, has gone into slumber. [*Desk thumping*] That is what it is.

Madam Speaker, I want to tell you that our vision in the People's Partnership, under the very distinguished hon. Prime Minister at that time, Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar, was for the best quality and access of opportunity for the people and the students of this country. We have heard about human capital development and we had said that that it is the single most critical success factor for transformation and diversification of the economy. You know, Madam Speaker, when you look at the cover of the 2017 budget, it talks about transformation, but when you look at the amount of cuts—and I will come to that just now—it is clearly diametrically opposed to the intention of what this budget has for the people of this country. In fact, the budget is entitled, your theme: Transformation and Growth.

Madam Speaker, what we had in mind as well and our philosophy was for a very numerate, literate society: one that will possess critical-thinking skills; one that would have addressed labour market information, so that we will be advising people as to what to go and study. You know, talking about advising people as to what to go and study, my very distinguished friend, the Member for San Fernando West, attended—and I have a photograph of him—a career guidance seminar at my college.

Mr. Al-Rawi: Six years in a row.

Mr. F. Karim: At my college, Presentation, San Fernando.

Mr. Al-Rawi: Our college, our college.

Mr. F. Karim: Our college. And you know one of the colleagues on their side, the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries, and I am advised now, I did not know, that he also went to that school. And his advice to the students was this: best things in life, a cold beer and a good laugh. You know something, I will introduce—you had a great opportunity at that career guidance seminar, at that

session, to advise students in the secondary schools as to what they should pursue when they go into the tertiary sector—[*Desk thumping*]*—*what are the jobs.

Madam Speaker, one of the things that we had and we said we will do and we did is to achieve and attain a 60 per cent participation rate in the tertiary sector. We did that and exceeded it. [*Desk thumping*] We rationalized the sector. We avoided duplication and wastage; they will have us believe differently. We were moving in the principle from low wage and low skills to high wage and high skills. [*Desk thumping*] It was always about creating a 21st Century workforce, a more competitive nation—not one that in one year drops five notches in the GCI, the Global Competitiveness Index. That is what we have seen, that is what we have witnessed. [*Interruption*]

Well, as you talk about vision, I am also reminded that a people without a vision, we are warned, will soon perish and there is an interpretation of that, you know, Madam Speaker, I am advised. It says that a vision—the people without that vision, the people cast off restraint. If they have a vision, they cast off restraint and lawlessness. Every day it seems as though that vision perpetuates itself on the airwaves. Every newscast item here begins in a way, sadly and unfortunately, with who has lost their lives, many are perishing. But you know, the point of departure, the difference between the PNM and us is that they promise; we deliver. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker, I want to get into some significant statistics and information now. I want to also indicate that before I go there that I listened attentively to the hon. Prime Minister when he went to launch—as my colleague, the Minister of Education, and we have been colleagues for very many years in the teaching service. In fact, at one time, he was President of the union in which I joined.

Mr. Garcia: Your boss.

Mr. F. Karim: Well, I would not say you were my boss because when I listened to you today in terms of the contribution to the tertiary sector, I really want to know who is student and who is the boss. [*Desk thumping*] “Doh go down that road.”

You know, Madam Speaker, I was listening to the hon. Prime Minister launching the SIP programme, School Improvement Programme and he was saying that you have to wean off from us as the Government. In other words, what he is saying is you cannot depend on us anymore although the State is the major provider of goods and services to the public. Madam Speaker, he said I am not carrying anybody, I am not carrying anybody; people have to wean off the Government. But you know, Madam Speaker, since I have noticed recently, the hon. Prime Minister is one who likes to sing, I want to remind him about a song that he should be singing regularly, and that is one made popular and I remember it in my time by the Hollies and I am sure you remember it, too, Madam Speaker, it is from the '60s. And you know what it says? “He Ain't Heavy, He's My Brother”:

“...I'm strong

Strong enough to carry him”

And if he really remembers that song and remembers “Let's do it Together”, he will not have that mindset to tell people, you are my brother, I am strong to carry you to the voting station and once you vote me into Government, I will forget you, I will throw you off “meh” back. [*Desk thumping*] That is not the kind of thing that we want to perpetuate in this country.

Madam Speaker, I want to put on record some information and some statistics, particularly for the tertiary sector and the skills training sector. When

you listen to some of my colleagues on the other side, I can only describe that as circumlocution and oratorical gymnastics. Let me tell you why. In 2016, the tertiary sector, the Tertiary Education and Skills Training got a budget of \$9.7 billion—education; in 2011, the allocation was \$8.32 billion; in 2012, it was \$8.7 billion; in 2013, it was \$9.1 billion. So for three years during our time, the 2016 allocation to education and training was larger than three years of us. Under the PNM in 2016, I remind you, it was \$9.7 billion and in the fourth year, which would have made it four consecutive years, it just came at 9.8. How it is that you were unable to do the things that we could have done with the amount of money that we had [*Desk thumping*] and you are almost there and you surpassed the amount of money? I have the documents and I have the percentages. But, you know, what is really distressing about all of these is that the PNM, in the run-up to the general election, spoke highly and loudly about preserving, maintaining and expanding education and training.

Madam Speaker, I listened to the Member for Diego Martin Central in his contribution and he says and I quote, Dr. Rowley:

“...loves young people.”

Well I want to show you—[*Interruption and desk thumping*]—I do not think you should thump that desk. Madam Speaker, my friends—not as yet. I know there was a colleague of mine on the other side who used to sit here, right here in this very side and say to us when we were there, sip your porridge slowly, cool, so that you would not know. [*Laughter*] Let me just—

Madam Speaker, I want to go down into the estimates. The point I want to make is that in this last budget here, you had a shortfall of \$569 million. Madam Speaker, this is all in respect of education and training only. My colleague, Dr. Gopeesingh, Member for Caroni East, will deal with some other matters with

respect to the ECCE, early childhood, primary and secondary, so I will contain myself to the information with respect to the tertiary sector.

Madam Speaker, I did indicate just now that there is a cut of \$569 million in the tertiary sector. How is it possible for you to have such a deep cut into many and most, if not every single institution, under the heading Transfers and Subsidies and yet still profess that you love children, that you love the young people? That the young people, you continue to say, is the best and the most important resource, they are the future of our nation, but yet still with respect to YTEPP, in 2016, YTEPP was allocated \$94.5 million; in 2017, \$45.0 million. That represents a decrease of \$49.5 million or 53 per cent cut.

As we here, I want to tell you that YTEPP does not have enough money to pay its annual wage bill. YTEPP, as we speak, cannot start cycles 41 and 44 today, Monday 10th. It was supposed to start these cycles and are unable to start these cycles. They have now called on their tutors, their centre managers, their technical coordinators, everybody, the community-based coordinators and told them: "Hold strain, we are restructuring and we will now start those cycles in January of 2017." What is going to happen to all of these young people who had registration and orientation and who will no longer be getting any stipend to pursue their courses at any YTEPP centre?

I want to tell you, Madam Speaker, I want to warn this country, I want to warn my friends on the other side, that of all the people who are unemployed in this country, 50.6 per cent of the unemployed is in the age bracket 15 to 30 years old.

2.40 p.m.

I think I want to warn the Government that if you do not pay close attention now to these things that I am going to tell you about, and the national community,

you are holding a ticking time bomb. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker, as we are here, information is going out to YTEPP centres that you must now move away from your offices in south Trinidad, San Fernando, in the constituency of San Fernando West, my friend, in parts of north Trinidad and in central and your head office will now be located, thanks to Mrs. Bissessar and the People's Partnership, at the integrated facility at Woodford Lodge where we have three YTEPP buildings. [*Desk thumping*] The administration is going to be located there now, and those buildings were allocated particularly for administration, culinary and cosmetology. But I suspect they are going to use all of it for the administration.

Madam Speaker, this is going to have an effect, in terms of closure of centres. This is going to have an effect, in terms of administrative staff and technical staff. More people will go on the breadline. And I want to say to you today, those of you who have jobs and do not know what it is to be without a job, when that occasion comes it might be a very unfortunate and sad thing for many people who will not be able to cope with that kind of depression in this country. I am going to show you today how many more programmes like these have been cut and the deleterious effect they will have on young people in this country and their parents. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker, I want to turn now to UWI, the University of the West Indies. Let me just, as I am passing here, indicate to my friend who went to the University Council Meeting, which is normally chaired by the Chancellor of the University. I want to quote from reports of Campus Council in St. Augustine, in terms of the expenditure. He said that the University of the West Indies and Council, all, every single person agreed with the cut in the GATE programme. But you know when we were there they were complimenting us on the expansion of

the GATE programme. I read:

The contribution of the Trinidad and Tobago Government has surpassed those of the region and was money well spent.

[*Desk thumping*]*—*under Mrs. Bissessar.

One of the cuts I want to draw reference to, my friends next door, is the direct university service of the University of the West Indies. Madam Speaker, this move from \$763 million to \$675 million, representing an allocation in 2017 of \$652 million, the cut to the University of the West Indies is \$22.7 million or 3.4 per cent. But I want to indicate the impact of this cut. This cut really affects the University Centre. It affects the University hospital, Mona, Jamaica, and salaries. Lecturers are now carrying heavier workloads than before. There is less opportunity for employment, even as tutors and demonstrators at the University of the West Indies. People are not being hired. This cut will impact upon repairs and maintenance, general operating expenses, and, therefore, it is going to impact upon the efficiency of the University.

Madam Speaker, still with UWI, the Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex has now moved from \$45.3 million in 2016 to \$30 million in 2017. What is this allocation for the Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex? What is this 33 1/3 per cent cut in the allocation to the—[*Interruption*]

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, I would want to hear the contribution of the Member for Chaguanas East, please.

Mr. F. Karim: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I was just making reference to the cut that the hon. Minister of Finance, Member for Diego Martin North/East made, to the University of the West Indies, Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex and I was going to explain what that cut is, that 33 1/3 per cent. What is it for? Madam Speaker, this is for scholarship winners.

As I talk about scholarship winners I want to ask, through you, Madam Speaker, the Member for Arima, the Minister of Education, you said that the list will be released soon. The academic year is now six weeks old. Every single year, while we were there in Government, we released the list before the academic year started. [*Desk thumping*] Why is it not being released? We got the results from CXC, the CAPE results and the CSEC results and the country. We have students who are now abroad who did not wait for these results and scholarships. They have gone on their own. Listen, there are some cases where people are now being denied one year of their life in education. Why are we doing that? I want to indicate that there are approximately 450 scholarship winners at the University of the West Indies right here and this cut is going to very significantly impact on them. They are in years one to five pursuing medical sciences degrees. And, therefore, we have to ensure that we address these needs.

Madam Speaker, I want to go on to another part of the University of the West Indies they cut, and that is in 2016. It moved from \$39.5 million to \$20 million, a cut of almost 50 per cent, \$19.5 million. And what is this for? This is for the non-scholarship students at Mount Hope where they are subsidized and part of it is GATE. What will happen to these students when they are unable to continue with their education? I will show just now this fallacy that we are not opening this hospital and you are not opening that health facility because you do not have sufficient manpower. I will show you from the data that we have enough doctors and nurses in this country to run these institutions. [*Desk thumping*] I will show you the figures.

Madam Speaker, I want to ask the question, in terms of we are talking about UWI. I want to raise the issue of the Penal/Debe Campus, the South Campus. The question I want to ask is: What is it that the PNM has against University of the

West Indies, Penal/Debe Campus? What is it that the hon. Prime Minister has been talking about, in terms of this campus? Madam Speaker, when a study was done in 2007/2008, over 30 per cent of the students registered at St. Augustine came from Couva and onwards, south. And, therefore, we had over 5,000 who would have qualified with the CAPE, ready to access tertiary education. If you could have universities in the north and you could have in Tobago, what is wrong with the rest of the country? [*Desk thumping*]

The question I want to ask is this: when we left office—and with your permission again I raise this to show that 80 per cent of that campus was completed, 80 per cent. And guess what, Madam Speaker? In 2016, \$43 million was allocated by the hon. Minister of Finance for the completion of the UWI Penal/Debe Campus. Madam Speaker, you would not believe and I want this to be recorded for the national community to know that out of an allocation in 2016 of \$43 million, they only spent \$9.6 million. [*Desk thumping*] Why did you not use the \$33.4 million? And had you used the \$33.4 million we would have had classes starting there six weeks ago, the academic year. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker, I want to tell you that it is very sad when we have to stay here and see people who are politicking punitively, discriminating wilfully against citizens of this country whose parents and who themselves are taxpayers, who could benefit from an education and training. This is the future of our country. This is the future of families.

You know, Madam Speaker, I notice that some persons in the public domain have been talking about the UWI Penal/Debe Campus as only a law faculty. I notice even up to yesterday one commentator was saying that and I want to quote that commentator. The person was saying that the previous Government would only house a law faculty there. I want to put this to rest. The time has come for

me to clear this air, as the former Minister of Tertiary Education and I hope I am going to say this very clear for all and sundry to understand. Madam Speaker, the University of the West Indies, south Trinidad had its genesis with UWI-ROYTEC in 2008, at the Naparima College and I want to thank the Naparima College for hosting the University of the West Indies, UWI-ROYTEC in San Fernando. At that facility, and it continues to be the evening part of the University, you have certificates, diplomas, degrees and yes even postgraduate, a Master's in Education, through New Brunswick University, is offered now as we speak in San Fernando at Naparima College, through UWI.

Madam Speaker, I want to tell you, when we came in Government one of the dreams our hon. Prime Minister and we pay tribute to her, is that she indicated and insisted we must have a university presence in south Trinidad. [*Desk thumping*] There must be equality of opportunity and was confirmed by a survey in 2007, a planning report, a national survey, to measure public perception of the University of the West Indies, and that survey found that 67 per cent said a campus should be established in south Trinidad.

Hon. Member: How much?

Mr. F. Karim: Sixty-seven per cent.

Mr. Lee: What year? What year?

Mr. F. Karim: In 2007. Madam Speaker, I want to tell you, for those who do not know, the concept, for those who would want to argue against the University of the West Indies having a facility in south Trinidad, the concept is no different to what happened in Jamaica and I would remind my two colleagues whenever they go to the F&GPC and the University Council meeting to apprise themselves.

The University in Jamaica, UWI had as its main base, Mona Campus but they felt that there was a need for the people who were under-served in the western

part of the island to so be exposed to university training and they started the second campus at Montego Bay. That was the principle that our hon. Prime Minister as well noted and insisted that there should be equality of opportunity across the board. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker, in putting this to rest, I want to tell you that in 2008, and this was confirmed in the speeches by the Chancellor, the Vice-Chancellor as well, Professor Nigel Harris and the Principal of the St. Augustine Campus, former one, Professor Sankat that the courses that will be available in the south campus was not only going to be the law faculty. Let me tell you some of the programmes: management studies. I also want to take this opportunity to commend my colleague, the Member of Parliament for Oropouche East, for his steadfastness in ensuring, together with the hon. Prime Minister, that this project came on the way. [*Desk thumping*] It continues: psychology, economics, law was one, social work, information technology, nursing, finance and accounting, and energy-based courses like manufacturing and engineering and agriculture.

You know, Madam Speaker, let me just indicate that the Chancellor of the University, Sir George Allen, said on Thursday, February 24, 2011:

Mr. Chairman, a flagship faculty, (the first) not only to be established here is that of the law faculty, in part because of the demand for that discipline.

Madam Speaker, he made the point that after 54 years at St. Augustine, since its inception in 1948, this was the first time the campus was moving to any significant part of Trinidad and Tobago to have a facility that will be on par and equal to and have a delegation authority from UWI, St. Augustine. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker, we have no problem at all, in terms of geographic spread. In fact we perpetuated that. But I want to make it abundantly clear as well because you know there will be some commentators who may say otherwise. The

completion of the University of the West Indies Penal/Debe Campus is not being stymied because of a lack of funds. All the moneys have been given to the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, to disburse and make sure that that campus is completed. Let me just quote here, with your permission, Madam Speaker. Principal Sankat on Wednesday, September 28, 2016, in the *Guardian* was saying that this has nothing to do with money. He is talking about the lack of completion. He talks about all the infrastructure, the Moot Court, Madam Speaker, I am sure you would be very happy to see it. It is a wonderful state-of-the-art facility, you yourself being an attorney.

2.55 p.m.

All the infrastructure, swimming pool, canteen, 100 beds of dormitory located there, playfield, green spaces. It is going to be a state-of-the-art facility, but why is the PNM denying the people of this country access to good education and good jobs? Why? [*Desk thumping*] Madam Speaker, and if that is not sufficient, we constructed under our tenure, under the leadership of my colleague for Oropouche East, Dr. Moonilal, who was responsible for UDeCOTT and we have as well the very distinguished former Chairman of the South West Regional Health Authority. We had—it is there for everybody to see, the Teaching Hospital in San Fernando. [*Desk thumping*] Madam Speaker, three floors were designated to the teaching hospital. You know, they take an entire floor now, under this administration and put HR in there? Well, that is the kind of displaced priorities that the PNM has.

Madam Speaker, I want to come to a critical issue about the shortage of medical staff. We have all these complaints, and I heard my friend, the Minister of Health, saying, as well, you want to open a hospital, but we “eh hah no staff”. I challenge them, why do you not put out an advertisement for people to work and

tell us how much “yuh get”? [*Desk thumping*] Because I will tell you, that according to the graduation count I have here from the University of the West Indies, graduation count, MBBS, 2010, 165; 2011, 130 and so on; coming up to 786 graduates; doctors. I only hear—at Mount Hope—where are these people? When they cannot get jobs and you will not employ them for whatever reason, best known to you, they have to leave this country. [*Desk thumping*] Scholarship winners cannot find jobs. I know of persons who are Open National Scholarship winners, came back to this country and cannot get a job, and the contract is so written and so determined, that if you do not find a job here in six months, you are free to do what you want. We had indicated, Madam Speaker, to keep our talent here that even if you had to find a job in something that is not related, stay and work in Trinidad and Tobago, [*Desk thumping*] until you get a job.

I have the figures here for nursing. “Dey say dat we doh have” enough nurses. I have a total from one institution, from 2010 to 2015, persons who would have done the Associate Degree, 393 nurses; who would have graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Nursing Degree, 262, making it a total of 655 persons. [*Desk thumping*] Psychiatric nursing—I hope the media will carry these stories, you know, this information, because it is important for the national community to know what is happening in this country. Psychiatric Associate, 75; Psychiatric Bachelor’s Degree, 50; 125 psychiatric nurses in this country. How many of them are employed? I could go on and tell you a little more about the data, but I want to deal with some other matters quickly.

You know, whenever we talk about UTT on this side, the other side, my friends on the other, Madam Speaker, always boast, “Dat is we university. We de PNM created that.” Well, I want to tell you something, if you created a university, and you put \$107.7 million cut on that university, I want to know if you really have

any faith and confidence in that institution. When you cut a university like UTT over \$107 million, what do you think will be the impact of people on programmes, on students, on faculty, on research and development which continues to be at less than 1 per cent of GDP in Trinidad and Tobago?

Madam Speaker, I want to tell you something, when I inherited under Mrs. Bissessar— and I want to thank her for having the foresight to place me in the Ministry. [*Desk thumping*] This is not a boast. I do not think any Government has performed in the tertiary sector, like we under Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar. [*Desk thumping*] When I inherited, I inherited a university head office, UTT at Arima. So that is the line campus if you want. There was a C Campus Chaguaramas, and I said to myself, “If this is our only national university we must not only stay on the land and only in the sea, we must go in the air, and we constructed the first UTT Aviation Campus at Camden. [*Desk thumping*] I will tell you what I think maybe affected some people and hurt some of them. I coined the phrase “From cutting cane to flying plane”. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker, I want you to know what also pains me: we talk about young people. We talk about the School Improvement Programme in Laventille, about 25 schools and so on, but not a word and not a mention about SERVOL. SERVOL, Service Volunteered for All. A really innovative and very purposeful programme. I want to pay tribute in this House today to the late Fr. Gerry Pantin and Sr. Ruth Montrichard. [*Desk thumping*] I have been associated with SERVOL with the first Life Centre in Chaguanas with Bro. Dominic Brunnock, who taught me at Presentation, San Fernando. I do not know if the Attorney General will recall Bro. Dominic at all.

But the point I want to make to you, Madam Speaker, SERVOL faces a cut of \$6.9 million in their training, with their life centres, \$2.5 million and the high

tech centres, \$1.1 million. Madam Speaker, SERVOL, as a very important institution, started with Wes Hall walking up the Laventille hills with Fr. Gerry Pantin, has a cut of \$10.6 million. [*Holds up a document*] And the Member for Diego Martin Central is saying Dr. Rowley loves young people. I make a plea to the hon. Minister of Finance. He just left the Chamber, but I am sure the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West will tell him. I am making a plea now for him to reconsider some of these cuts to these institutions, because of the considerable, purposeful work that they have done.

When I became Minister, in commemoration of Fr. Gerry Pantin's contribution to this country, I asked Sr. Ruth Montrichard, I said, "Sister, tell me, what would you like me to do to recognize the name of Fr. Gerry. And she said, "You know, Minister, you could build a centre in his name". I said, "Well, I had that in mind." I said, "Now, tell me, where do you want this centre?" I want to say that the centre is built in the constituency of Point Fortin, in Strikers Village. We built that centre. It is opened, the SERVOL Point Fortin Life Centre. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker, my friend from La Brea will like this one, the Member for La Brea; NESC. [*Holds up a document*] The Member of Parliament for La Brea is the only person in this House who has two NESC Centres in her constituency: one at Vessigny and one at Palo Seco, but it is not only about that. It is about the cut they have given to the NESC.

Madam Speaker, NESC has a shortfall of 57 per cent, over \$100 million of their budget. I am advised that the NESC would now have to consider cutting staff by 36 per cent, closing four campuses and displacing 566 students. I am telling you, you see, you know, our political leader indicated in her—and Leader of the Opposition, that the details were to come and that the devil was in the details. I

want to record and I want the national community to know all these figures. They must know how much they cut NESC by. We talk about the apprenticeship programme. Everybody talking about trade school, apprenticeship programmes.

For the first time we had a PLIAP, a Point Lisas Industrial Apprenticeship Programme, everyone commended it. You have now cut this and jeopardized the lives of 256 apprentices for the energy sector. Yes, we are having a declining situation, but energy is not only for Trinidad and Tobago. It is for the rest of the world. Trinidad and Tobago needs to see itself as an export nation for education and training. [*Desk thumping*] Why you must confine yourself? The drilling school is a foreign exchange earner. After 100 years of oil, and to a lesser extent in gas, you were in Government for so many years, you never saw the use and the importance of a—[*Interruption*]

Madam Speaker: Member, your speaking time has expired. You are entitled to 10 more minutes if you wish to avail yourself of it.

Mr. F. Karim: Thank you, very much.

Madam Speaker: I just want to, as an observation—it might be your style, but I hope all these things are not intended to be visual aids. Okay? All those papers being held up, because there is a specific rule with respect to what visual aids do, and some of those papers could not be, but I take it that it is just your style of holding up paper.

Mr. F. Karim: Yeah. Madam Speaker, thank you very much. It is just because I served as a teacher for many years. [*Desk thumping*] It is all part of the teaching/learning environment. It is never intended to be classroom management or instructional leadership.

Madam Speaker, my friend from Arouca/Maloney always says “what” whenever I mention the word “CVQ”. You will hear it just now. [*Interruption*]

“You see, ah tell yuh. She say, Oh gosh.” But I want to tell you, the CVQ is the Caribbean Vocational Qualification, which is under our administration, and we have been the first in the Caribbean to award the CVQ. Let me tell you what the CVQ is. The vocational qualification will replace, as my colleague from Arima will know, the NEC, National Examinations Council. Therefore, it really applies to a lot of the craft programmes in the secondary schools, but you know what we use the CVQ to do as well? For the first time an initiative we started called the WAC. I will not hold up anything. I will talk from my head now. The WAC is really the Workforce Assessment Centre.

Madam Speaker, I am sure you would have seen on cable television Angie’s List. You could find a plumber, a mason, a carpenter, a hairstylist. Talking about hairstylist, it seems as though the Members for San Fernando East and West may have gone. I want to know “who is dah hairstylist”, because they may have gone to the same hairstylist. [*Laughter*]

Madam Speaker, I want to say as well, that the WAC—[*Interruption*] I see the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West wants to get it too. [*Laughter*] The WAC really, there are thousands of persons—I am very serious about this point, eh? People are being laid off. In fact, we have figures for thousands of persons who off the job. What will they do? Where will they go and work? When we ask the Minister of Labour and Small Enterprise Development what is the exact figure, “she say, it is a supposition”. I suppose it is. Yeah, it is a supposition. I suppose it is more than so and so. Madam Speaker, do not play with the lives of people in this country. [*Desk thumping*] If you cannot—“yuh doh have ah job, but you have ah skill”, you will be able to be assessed and be awarded this certificate. There are many plumbers and masons and carpenters and hairdressers who are good at what they do, they have competence but they have no qualification, and

that is what it is about; thousands.

I would have talked about the National Training Agency, but what I want to come to is the MYPART Programme. The MYPART Programme received a cut, and I know my colleague from Naparima spoke about it, but I just want to say another—a different angle of it. The MYPART Programme received a cut of 59 per cent. I want to tell you that many of the things that are being cut or we are experiencing now, under the People's Partnership with Mrs. Bissessar, we would not have engaged in that kind of thing. We would have improved the effectiveness, the efficacy, [*Desk thumping*] and the efficiency of the programme. The MYPART Programme, I was amazed to learn that the intake of October 1st this year, this month, 100 per cent, Madam Speaker, believe it or not, and all the trainees enrolled came from single-parent homes, every single one of them, and you are cutting a programme like this?

We expanded the programme into Presto Praesto Youth Camp and Chatham Youth Camp. Why can you not do it? There are dormitories there left idle doing nothing. Why can you not look at these programmes? It is about getting people off the streets and in school. It is about addressing those who belong to the NEET category—those who are neither in education, employment nor training—therefore, it is important for us. I want to ask the Minister to consider all of those.

Madam Speaker, another thing I want to make reference to, as I said, the budget belongs to a number of Ds. One is discrimination. Why is this PNM Government discriminating against people who are 50 years and older? Why? It is before the Equal Opportunity Commission. We have a number of persons—and I will tell you something as well. Let me just indicate some figures for the benefit of all of us. The last census, population census, showed that there were 87,000 persons in this country between the ages of 50 and 54, 87,000; between 55 and 59,

there were 73,000; and between 60 and 64, there were 58,000. When I go through the list for 80 years and plus, there are 300 nationals who would be discriminated against, if you really take this policy on.

You know what is hard about it? The PNM talks about that they are a Government that consults. Well, the representative organization, Trinidad and Tobago Association of Retired Persons, says, "They were never consulted". It was simply a unilateral decision. That is why I am saying that there is another D word in terms of discrimination, and in terms of dictatorial tendencies. You cannot mount a political platform in Laventille—and let me just put this one time as I am talking about this, and I have limited time. For my constituency, just as you have the Laventille initiative which I applaud and I support, I am asking in Chaguanas East for the Enterprise Initiative.

3.10 p.m.

I continue to make the request to the hon. Minister of National Security, through you, Madam Speaker, to reconsider placing a physical building called a police station, not a post, not a mobile, not an eye-in-the-sky with glaucoma. [*Laughter*] We want a police station in Enterprise. Since he answered the question, I thank him for the answer, murders continue unabated every day, every weekend.

Madam Speaker, I quickly want to go to accreditation. In terms of the Minister of Education and the GATE programme, he says that one of his decisions will be that only institutions that are accredited will receive GATE funding. Madam Speaker, I want to put on notice that the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago has an Act of Parliament, Chap. 39:06 and it makes a fundamental difference between a registered institution and an accredited institution. [*Desk thumping*] A registered institution has to go through certain criteria, and it is on

that basis that you will be given the GATE assistance, but accreditation is voluntary, registration is compulsory. Read the Act. [*Desk thumping*]

And, therefore, I want to indicate that we have 12 accredited institutions. I want to again compliment the hon. Prime Minister, former, Mrs. Bissessar. Only under the People's Partnership Government did we have 12 institutions accredited in this country. Never before! [*Desk thumping*] The records are there to show. [*Desk thumping*] We have 56 registered institutions, 56. Madam Speaker, when you cut the Accreditation Council's budget, the Minister will have to explain to this country and to tell us, how and where he is going to get the resources to ensure that between now and October and September next year or August next year—the next academic year—that all 56 or very many of these 56 will move from registration to accreditation? He has to explain that. How much more speaking time do I have?

Madam Speaker: Two minutes.

Mr. F. Karim: Two minutes, okay.

Madam Speaker, it is really going quickly. Let me just get to the winding-up stage. I wanted to say a lot more about what we would have done during our time. But it is very clear, Madam Speaker, it is very clear, that our young people in this country were duped into voting for the PNM. Many people are now regretting that they placed there X at that balisier. Many people! [*Desk thumping*] They never thought that they would see the hardships as they are experiencing.

Madam Speaker, I want to tell you that in terms of our young people, what is happening now—and I am showing you just a little bit. It has a lot more I could talk about in terms of the various cuts in the tertiary sector—it has destroyed the opportunity for a good education. Madam Speaker, it has given them no hope for jobs and the jobs that they always wanted. Jobs do not come by drinking a cold

beer and having a good laugh. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker, what has happened with their experience is that it has ended their dreams to improve the quality of their lives and that of their future families. It has most importantly—I want to make this point—increased the potential—I am saying the “potential”—for them to be engaged in illegal and nefarious activities. Many of them will have to return to the streets because they have no stipend, they have no training programme and it has simply been cut from them. The future of our nation, Madam Speaker, we are destroying, in a sense, the generation of the future.

I do not think anyone of us would have expected that this would happen. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Esmond Forde (*Tunapuna*): Thank you, Madam Speaker. I seek your leave in getting Standing Order 44(10), permission in order to read excerpts of my speech. The Member for Chaguanas East, I have a prepared speech, you know, but I would leave the comments, the necessary comments that you would have made to my more learned colleagues when they are summing up. The hon. Minister of Finance, I know he will have the opportunity in order to make the necessary responses to your various comments. I would just like to make one statement though. You said that the UNC/PP administration delivered but, at what cost? [*Desk thumping*] That is the question. At what cost? [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker, as I stand in this honourable House to make my contribution to the Appropriation Bill, 2017, as always I give thanks to the Almighty God. I must congratulate the hon. Minister of Finance in his presentation of the 2017 Bill. When I sat and listened to the Members of the opposite side, I recalled a statement made by one Christopher Cozier. In his tribute to Mr. Lloyd Best, may he rest in peace, that outstanding thinker and economist

from Tunapuna, Mr. Cozier states:

Right before my eyes as in a B-class movie, the good, the bad and the ugly, but it has now transformed to the greedy, the anxious and the desperate.

[Desk thumping]

To my colleagues on the other side. *[Desk thumping]*

Madam Speaker, as I begin my contribution on this Appropriation Bill, may I boldly say that transformation is on the way. And I repeat, transformation is on the way. *[Desk thumping]* The seemingly immovableplantation economy, the plantation of oil and gas, is being rolled away to reveal our future. In this new era, the light being shone is blinding those who continue to sit in the old paradigm of traditional mercantile-based economy reinforced by our energy sector. Nevertheless, those who are willing to step into the era of innovation, production, import placement and export generation are being ready to undertake the race to the new place of promise.

Madam Speaker, we in the constituency of Tunapuna are like Joshua in the journey. We have heard our Finance Minister. We trust our leader, the Right Hon. Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, Dr. Keith Christopher Rowley *[Desk thumping]* and we are assured of the vision. It is attainable. We would not adopt the false prophet's posture and suffer that consequence, but receive the promise of a bright future.

Madam Speaker, Tunapuna has always recognized the need to embrace and harness the contribution of all. This Government is non-partisan. In this regard, during the past 12 months, as our modus operandi, we have reached out and continue to reach out to all the stakeholders in identifying and finding solution to issues, be it infrastructural or process in nature from the standpoint of the whole community. Among the vexing issues being tackled using this method is that of

traffic and traffic congestion in the area very soon, or may I say the immediate future. It is the community's intention to find and offer something easily implementable and a solution that exhibits cost efficacy.

Madam Speaker, as an aid to the issue of traffic and our approach to community cooperation and stakeholders solving the resolution of problems and issues, I am sure the constituents of Mohammed Trace, St. Augustine, would attest to its workable and benefits. Almost overnight, a sinkhole developed and in the only access road to the community, Madam Speaker, all stakeholders were consulted, a solution was found and it is being implemented as we speak. For this, we would like to thank the landowner who volunteered the use of a property for the construction of a temporary road, the Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation, for the construction and the provision and positioning of the Bailey Bridge to ensure continued vehicular access for the community, not forgetting the Minister of Works and Transport, under the PURE division, for the provision of engineering and advice and the programming of the rebuilding works for this said road. [*Desk thumping*] Madam Speaker, this is not the only instance. We already has similar offering in the area of the Acono Maracas area to assist in pedestrian traffic in the vicinity of a primary school.

It must be iterated that the human resource is the greatest resource of any nation and the youth are our future. In my contribution to the 2016 Appropriation Bill, I stated that there had been little development, if any, in the area of community and other facilities in the Tunapuna constituency— that was during the last five years 2010 to 2015. However, in keeping with the policy of our PNM Government of provision for the future, the needy and the dispossessed, the Division of Gender and Child Affairs of the Office of the Prime Minister would undertake the Tacarigua-based St. Mary's Home for the Children Modernization

Programme. The programme would involve new construction and modernization of the facility during fiscal 2017.

Madam Speaker, we take care of all the children. Think of the many Roy Capes and others waiting to arise, participating if not only in Trinidad Carnivals, but in the Carnivals and concert halls of the world. Madam Speaker, invisible exports of the new era Trinidad and Tobago human resource. How can I expand what the scope of the modernization of the St. Mary's Children's Home offers to the nation in terms of governance and volunteerism in the person of Edward "Eddie" Hart? [*Desk thumping*] A man who has contributed to the governance [*Desk thumping*] structure of this nation for 17 long years [*Desk thumping*] and 50 years, yes, 50 years of sporting and community development. It is history that 22 members of Trinidad and Tobago 2006 World Cup National Football team, only three never participated in the Eddie Hart Football League in Trinidad. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker, I lamented the 63 months of the UNC/PP administration. We saw no movement regarding community facilities in the constituency of Tunapuna, part of the most populated region of Trinidad and Tobago and the home of the largest municipality, the Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation. We are indeed grateful that our PNM Government is removing that deficit.

The Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs and the Sports Company of Trinidad and Tobago have programmed the upgrading of community recreation grounds throughout the region of Tunapuna/Piarco. This includes at least two in Tunapuna, the St. Bede Recreation Ground in Mount St. Benedict and the Martin Street Recreation Ground in Tunapuna. In the St. Augustine constituency, the Sir Learie Constantine Park and the Eddie Hart Sporting Facilities Grounds which we are all familiar with in Tacarigua.

3.25 p.m.

Madam Speaker, the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs programme also speaks of increasing participation of schoolchildren in the sports and exercise of all of Trinidad and Tobago. This would yield great dividends, not only in terms of sports and sporting disciplines but also health and general discipline among others. Keep in mind this will be unlike the lifeless LifeSport Programme. Madam Speaker, I am indeed, excited by this new programme, given the history of the Tunapuna constituency in the sporting life of the nation, and coupled with the fact of Tokyo being the next venue of the 2020 Olympics.

Let us remember a former Member of this House, Finance Minister and economist, Olympian Wendell Mottley, Olympic gold medallist Hasely Crawford, triple medallist Ato Boldon, gold and bronze medallist our own Keshorn Walcott, shot-putter extraordinaire, Cleopatra Borel, we already at present have Lendore, Cedenio, St. Fort and Jehue . We just need to source the rest, Mr. Minister, in time for the 2020 Olympics. I am saying that the Tunapuna Piarco region can be of that source. [*Desk thumping*]

We envisaged this programme of consistently sowing and nurturing the seeds of the future scholars and athletes. We have teams such as the St. Augustine Green Machine for soccer, the El Dorado Blue Thunder in soccer and athletics, Hillview College in cricket and academic scholarships. We have jurists such as Brooks, Moosai, Des Vignes, Karamath and Ventour. Sportsmen and -women as Anil Rajah , Burns, Steve “Dark Horse” Pierre, Pollard, Harold Joe, Thora Best and others too numerous to mention. We intend to let the flowers bloom again. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker, unlike those on the other side, so as to ensure the flowers and future of our nation bloom, this Government, despite the trying times, will

hold true to our promise of providing a safe and secure environment by the Ministry of National Security, providing the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service with the necessary infrastructural and equipment upgrades, refurbishment and expansion of facilities, thereby ensuring adequate accommodation, equipment and other material provisions for the existing, new and expanding units, sections and branches of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service.

Madam Speaker, the western reaches of my Tunapuna constituency are eagerly waiting to realize the expected benefits from the imminent completion and commissioning of the new St. Joseph police facility 2017, which construction commenced since 2009. We will not degrade the capacity of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service to meet the rising tide of crime in our society. By this I mean all infringements of the criminal code of Trinidad and Tobago, whether it is violent crime, and more so the increasing evidence of unbearable and destructive white-collar crimes with its multiplicity of victims. We on this side would never, and I repeat, never dismantle working apparatus of the nation's security to ensure the success or non-detention of others, and I quote "in others' endeavours".

Madam Speaker, it is said if you want to know if there is water in a well or in a particular facility all you have to do is throw a stone. Recently our Government announced the purchase of equipment requested by the security services to assist in the fight against crime. I am not sure whether it is the fact of the purchase or the FATCA Bill, but there have been loud and screeching consistent sounds coming from the direction and only from the other side.

Our Government in its quest to ensure the continued blooming of our youth while cutting waste and improving efficiency of resource utilization, will be among others engaging in the renovation and refurbishment of the old and now unused El Dorado Health Centre on El Dorado Road, as the facility for the Tunapuna Police

Youth Club which had been established in the constituency. Madam Speaker, the sowing and nurturing of the flowers of our future, the youth, can only be assured by the husbandry of the elders and the elderly in our society.

Today, cross-fertilization of ideas and transfer of institutional memory is increasingly accommodated and accomplished by the digital platform. Moreover, life is a continuous learning curve, experiences, upgrade of skills and knowledge. It is in this light the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and the Arts will be providing educational space and increasing accessibility for computer facilities for persons in rural areas across Trinidad and Tobago. In this journey no one shall be left behind. All citizens are being provided with an opportunity to travel into the new era of the digital age and access and utilize the possibility of such products as e-government.

Madam Speaker, this is being facilitated by the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and the Arts in conjunction with the University of Trinidad and Tobago and WAND, a woman NGO within our society, among other agencies and institutions. In the constituency of Tunapuna this programme will commence at the Upper El Dorado Community Centre in fiscal 2017. This particular facility was only opened and operationalized in 2016, some five years after the construction commenced. Madam Speaker, I must remind the other side that hardware cannot work without software. You would only end up with junk.

We on this side are conscious of the need to manage and recycle waste into needed products, enterprises and endeavours. In this measure we are therefore providing another avenue for greater interaction, cross-fertilization, skill and institutional memory transfer among the basic unit of the nation, the family.

Tunapuna contains the highest intellectual capital. Tunapuna possesses the intellectual capital and the structural facilities: the University of the West Indies,

SAM, SBCS, USC in Maracas and many other tertiary level institutions, the human resource and required public/private capital partnership, and the potential to become the invisible capital of Trinidad and Tobago post the energy era. I look forward to the advent of the continuity of the University City, St. Joseph, St. Augustine and Tunapuna.

Our flora and fauna in riverine valleys and existing local knowledge of the areas, particularly Acono and Caura, offer opportunity for the development sector related to the MSME, micro, small and medium enterprises, NEDCO and the new incentives for agro-processors. There are benefits for all in the 2017 budget of Trinidad and Tobago.

Madam Speaker, the Ministry of Agriculture, Lands and Fisheries is our Government's main agency with responsibility for, inter alia, the management and standardization of agriculture products, food security, land management and development, agricultural entrepreneurship and extension services. In this fiscal year 2017, this budget has signalled—mind you, not light up, according to my colleague from Princes Town; it has signalled, not light up—bush and bush fires which are ever so present on the other side, and also without permits. We now have a rhythm in our strides to ensuring all available agricultural lands, as far as possible, are kept in constant and expanding production. You heard that? Constant and active production. This being achieved by the review and the adjustment of existing incentives and development of new ones, alongside the mechanisms and for their delivery and monitoring in the agricultural sector of Trinidad and Tobago.

Madam Speaker, other incentives include the development of agricultural access roads and other infrastructure in areas such as ex-Caroni workers' lands in Macoya and the Caura Valley. Work is presently being completed on the new

bridge and roadway at Concordia Road in the Caura Valley, in order to facilitate farmers' accessibility in the valley for farming.

Madam Speaker, on the issue of Caura, in keeping with the environment, the wishes of the residents, the Caura Village Community Council, the long-muted ecotourism thrust, the Ministry of Agriculture, Lands and Fisheries in conjunction with the residents and other stakeholders have been developing—and I dare say—fine-tuning over the last year an environmentally sustainable friendly development in the beautiful and sensitive watershed area of the Caura Valley. The plan is now ready, the funds will be made available on a phased basis from fiscal 2017. You all will hear more of that as the year progresses. Thanks to the Minister of Agriculture, Lands and Fisheries and the Cabinet of Dr. Keith Christopher Rowley.
[Desk thumping]

This development will ensure the modernization of the Caura experience in an equitable manner; the maintenance of the environment for enjoyment by both residents and visitors local and foreign. And generation of employment and entrepreneurial opportunities for all in a sustainable manner. The preservation of the major watershed, the history of the area, increased knowledge and information on its flora and fauna, and the expansion of agriculture, some foods and other medicinal products.

Madam Speaker, the success of this development or developmental model would then be duplicated with required adjustments in the other areas of the constituency such as Acono, Mount St. Benedict, if possible, and adjacent areas as Lopinot and Maracas.

While some on the other side have been shouting, in the words of the hon. Opposition Leader, and I quote, “the mad man’s rant”, others in our Tunapuna constituency, including private investors and those adjacent have already seen the

light and have been developing and operating recreational, seminar and retreat facilities within these areas already. [*Desk thumping*] The development of this ecotourism thrust would greatly assist in reducing the frequency of the need to desilt our rivers and main watercourse within the constituency.

In the constituency of Tunapuna we must express gratitude to the Ministry of Agriculture, Lands and Fisheries and the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government, in the proposed upgrading and maintenance of the drainage infrastructure in the Caura Valley. To the Ministry of Works and Transports, Drainage Division, in desilting the three main watercourses in the constituency, and I name them: the Caura/Tacarigua River, the hospital drain at Balthazar Street and the St. John's Road River by Exodus Pan Theatre. This will certainly generate savings and work opportunities which could be more efficiently used in other areas as priority by the Ministry of Finance. As a result, flooding has been minimized in the constituency of Tunapuna. [*Desk thumping*]

3.40 p.m.

Madam Speaker, whilst still on the location of Caura, for some reason prior to the last elections the bus service, yes, the PTSC bus service to the Caura community and by extension the wider community of Trinidad was discontinued. On this Government assuming office and as the Member of Parliament for Tunapuna which includes Caura, the bus service was resumed immediately thanks to the Minister of Works and Transport [*Desk thumping*] and the management of the Public Transport Service Corporation of Trinidad and Tobago. On behalf of the constituents of Caura and the wider community we wish to express our sincere thanks.

Madam Speaker, the Caura community seems to be on a roll. Recently the same community emerged as one of the communities selected by a leading

communication provider, the Digicel Foundation as an epic community project recipient for a ten 1,000-water tanks project for the Tombasson community. This is all under the call for volunteerism and for the Government private partnership agreements [*Desk thumping*] of Trinidad and Tobago. I say sincere thanks to the Digicel Foundation.

Madam Speaker, earlier I alluded to the fact that my constituency resides in the highest per capita intellectual capacity in the nation and its potential to become the invisible export capital. The budget emphasizes the necessity to shift our paradigm for revenue and foreign exchange generation and expenditure prioritization. This budget offers many opportunities for new streams of revenue, foreign exchange and export generation, entrepreneurship and development of public/private partnership. The times are tough, therefore the tough must get going and others must be helped to take steps to toughen up and get going also. This is what the budget Bill of 2017 caters to, as laid by our hon. Minister of Finance.

In closing, Madam Speaker, it would be remiss of me if I did not congratulate the hon. Minister of Finance in his approach to playing the Opposition's usual ball bowled by those on the other side and the existing environmental conditions in its own immutable style. The Minister of Finance has positioned his bat to treat with it in the appropriate manner in order to benefit Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker, I represent the Constituency of Tunapuna. I am not a Cabinet Minister, I am the Deputy Speaker in this House in order to ensure that decorum is maintained. As the Member of Parliament for the last year there have been some achievements. Yes, I would have liked them to be more, but as we say, we can eat little and live long. [*Desk thumping*] And as the Member of Parliament that is what I plan to do.

In terms of achievements with the Tunapuna constituency for the 2016 fiscal year, the HDC, Housing Development Corporation, El Dorado Heights apartments, painting for the first time in 14 years the seven building apartment blocks totalling over 200 housing units. And I must say thanks to the Minister of Housing and Urban Development for the painting of those seven blocks. Again, there seems to be some first-timers. First time for the main road being paved in the Home Construction Limited Vista Heights housing development. Again, it is a housing development that is just over 17 years old and it is the first time that any paving would have taken place within that. And again, to the Minister of Works and Transport [*Desk thumping*] I thank you for delivering.

To the Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation and the three councillors who work within the electoral districts within the Tunapuna constituency: for all the local government goods and services that they would have delivered; for good sanitation; for good health; for the abandoned lots being cut. Simple, but yet effective in order to ensure that all recreational facilities are maintained; to ensure that roads are maintained; all drainage infrastructure are cleaned and cleared to minimize flooding within the area. To the Chairman, Alderman Edwin Gooding of the Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation [*Desk thumping*] and to Minister Franklin Khan the Minister of Rural Development and Local Government, I thank you. Simple as it may seem, wheelchair distributions, social grants and needs and benefits delivered by the Minister of Social Development and Family Services to all the infirmed, the elderly and needy persons within the Tunapuna constituency, I thank you for the delivery, the Minister of Social Development and Family Services.

Again, to the Minister of Housing and Urban Development for, simple as it may seem, the HDC housing grants in order that individuals can maintain their

homes and houses within the constituency. To him I also extend my sincere thanks on behalf of the Constituency of Tunapuna.

Government private partnership: to the Digicel Foundation, again, for the supply of ten 1,000-water tanks in order for the Tombasson community of residents and farmers to ensure that water is supplied on a daily basis. I again thank you for the input of that private partnership working along with the Water and Sewerage Authority under the Minister of Public Utilities. I thank you, Sir.

The reinstatement of the Caura Valley PTSC bus service, again, simple things, but these are the things that go a long way within the Tunapuna constituency, the reinstatement of the bus service into the Caura Valley.

The delivery and opening of the National Racquet Sports Centre of Trinidad and Tobago at the Eddie Hart facilities ground by the Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs. Thank you. We need to ensure that our sporting youth have their benefits maintained at this facility. I thank you, Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs.

The new floodlighting at the Eddie Hart football ground for its 50th year of existence and commitment to sponsor the league for the 2016 and 2017 season; again, to the Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs.

The completion and opening of the El Dorado Community Centre by the Minister of Community Development, Culture and the Arts for use by the residents of the Tunapuna community. Again, I thank you. Very modernized, very updated facilities.

To all the social and relational needs and services provided by my MP Tunapuna and Maracas sub offices, staffed on a daily 24/7 basis to the constituents from far and wide of the Tunapuna constituency. To my staff I say thank you, thank you, thank you. [*Desk thumping*] All the social and other relational needs and services provided by my MP Tunapuna office and the Maracas sub office, to

you all I say thank you. To my Tunapuna constituents for the faith and confidence that you have shown in me, Esmond Forde, for being your Member of Parliament.

At this time I thank my Leader of Government Business for the opportunity in order to contribute to this debate. I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. David Lee (*Pointe-a-Pierre*): Thank you, Madam Speaker. As I rise to contribute in this budget debate 2016/2017, firstly I will like to seek your leave and exercise 44(10). I have some notes that I will be referring to and also from the budget speech presentation by the hon. Minister of Finance, the PNM manifesto and some media clippings. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: To refer to them, not display them?

Mr. D. Lee: No. No. I am not a teacher, Madam Speaker. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Firstly, I would like to take the opportunity at this time, being of the Chinese descent, to wish my brothers and sisters of the Chinese community happy Double Ten [*Desk thumping*] of the Chinese diaspora throughout Trinidad and Tobago.

I listened to the hon. Member for Tunapuna and if I can make a plug for him and I know the hon. Prime Minister is about to do a shuffle in his Cabinet and I would like to, after listening to all the sportsmen that he called out, I would like to seek and see if he might be the next Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs. [*Desk thumping*].

Madam Speaker, the past days that we have been here have also been very important to our nation as citizens, I have been learning of the changes, projects and policies that will impact their lives for the upcoming fiscal year. Years ago when our nation gained independence one of the greatest freedoms which we were afforded was the ability as a nation to decide on our own best combination for the allocation of our natural resources.

Fifty-four years later, the citizens of our country through our republican Constitution have placed that power into the hands of the Parliament and the Government and the power of allocating the resources in the best possible way to allow for their own growth and success. Therefore, Madam Speaker, as the Government's financial plan for the upcoming fiscal year sits before this House the question must be asked: are the resources of our nation's citizens being utilized in the best way to ensure their success, safety and prosperity? But how does one answer that question? The question, Madam Speaker, is only correctly answered when every elected Member of this House can say that the nation's resources have been equitably allocated to the benefit of the constituents that they represent and uphold the Constitution's right to life, liberty, enjoyment of property and safety. A budget can only be called a budget when it meets the needs of a population while protecting the most vulnerable of that society. Anything other than that is simply meaningless.

Madam Speaker, it is on this note I would like to congratulate all my colleagues who have spoken before me, especially the Leader of the Opposition, and they have restored the hope of our population, but more so to seek to remind this Government about the real issues which need to be addressed. The Leader of the Opposition's contribution was potent, commanding, compelling and dynamic. [*Desk thumping*] And I would just like to remind, refer back to my Member of Parliament for Chaguanas East, my colleague. He was very dynamic in his contribution and he made a plea for the young people of this society.

One year ago the present administration, this present administration themed their budget, "Restoring Confidence and Rebuilding Trust: Let us do this together". However, after a fiscal year which was absent of vision, lacking in compassion and abundant in national neglect, all of those opposite us managed to accomplish what

was demoralizing the confidence of our citizens and betraying the trust of the people of Trinidad and Tobago which they have placed in our independent Westminster institution of government over 54 years, Madam Speaker, while all the citizens did together was see their standard of living, conditions of comfort and sense of security diminish at an alarming high rate.

Madam Speaker, I would like to refer to a quote from the hon. Minister of Finance, the Member for Diego Martin North/East. He gave an address at the American Chamber at the Hyatt on October 3rd, Monday, October 03, 2016. And he says and his quote is:

I have always found that in all my years in public life, this mystique about finance in the Ministry of Finance always hides things and I have always complained to the Ministers of Finance that I was in government with: why don't you just level with people and tell them what is going on. So that is what I am trying to do.

That was his quote, Madam Speaker, at the Chamber of Commerce.

It is ironic that he presents a budget here today, on September 30th, which is more confusing for Trinidad and Tobago than anything else. Ironically, Madam Speaker, they have come now, this present Government, in an effort to hoodwink our nation once more into thinking that they are undertaking spending and policy implementation for the country's benefit with the new theme: "Shaping a Brighter Future - A Blueprint for Transformation and Growth."

3.55 p.m.

But, Madam Speaker, how that is possible? How could this Government want to shape a brighter future when in the past year they did everything possible through policies and legislations to ensure a very grim state of affairs? How is it possible to inspire transformation and growth when for 12 months they governed

recklessly resulting in contraction in the morale, confidence and opportunities for expansion at the human level, the economic level, and the social level? [*Desk thumping*] Madam Speaker, it is like bulldozing a building and coming one year later to paint that same building. Utter madness. [*Desk thumping*] You cannot break the lives of our citizens, break the framework of our development which our nation was pegged on and then come and say one year later, let us grow together, let us transform together.

Madam Speaker, when we review the budget statement of 2016 which was delivered in this honourable House, a blind man could see that not one single objective was accomplished by the Government in the past 12 months. Let us for one minute review page 19 on the Minister of Finance's budget statement, it speaks about stakeholders' consultation within the energy sector, and what we have seen for the past 12 years and their style of consultation is that they release information prior to when they are going to take action. So, we have been hearing in the media the hon. Prime Minister talking about job losses and job cuts, and I am going to tell this nation that is going to happen very shortly under this Government. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker, when we look at page 5 in the hon. Minister's budget statement, page five says:

“We are more fortunate”—and I quote—“than many because we built up some buffers in the good times, but we are not immune from the current global situation.”

I want to ask the hon. Minister of Finance, those buffers that he is talking about, we under our leadership, under the PP Government we built up the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund to US \$5.8 billion. [*Desk thumping*] That is the same fund that they are tapping into to meet their deficit spending.

Madam Speaker, when they talk about mismanagement of the PP Government, that same Heritage and Stabilisation Fund that we built up over the last five years is the same fund that this PNM Government is going to utilize to run this country. [*Desk thumping*] Madam Speaker, as we continue to assess or benchmark last year's statement, we see on page 22 in his budget presentation, under the manufacturing sector, they committed to the same operationalization of the Tamana Intech Park as well as the creation of special economic zones. After one year nada, nothing has been achieved. [*Desk thumping*]

They carried on with this same approach in both the agricultural sector and the maritime sector pledging but not delivering. In the agricultural sector they pledged land tenureship which was not initiated under their tenure in the last 12 months. The moved to the new headquarters from St. Clair to—Chaguanas West when he was the Minister of Tertiary Education that was supposed to be the new building for the Ministry of Tertiary Education and Skills Training, that move has not happened. They talked about it over a year.

Mr. Singh: They only put up the sign.

Dr. D. Lee: They only put up the sign. So that that has not happened. Everything they have said in the past 12 months has not materialized.

Madam Speaker, on this budget statement, in agriculture where we saw cuts, when you listen to the farmers, one of the biggest things for them is praedial larceny policing. Nothing has happened under this Government in the last 12 months and nothing is in place for the next 12 months under praedial larceny. They may attempt to fool the population with achievements in sport and information technology. As mentioned by the Leader of the Opposition in her contribution, turning the key to the infrastructure which was constructed by the former administration is not an accomplishment. They also clearly missed their

target of implementing a nationwide broadband network. As we saw so many Ministers, the Minister of Works and Transport is here right now, I think he was on the bus from San Fernando where along with other Ministers, and I think they were looking for Pokémon.

So, Madam Speaker, the question must be asked [*Interruption*] once more, what has this Government truly done in the past 12 months? Nothing has happened in sport, nothing has happened in manufacturing, nothing has happened in the energy sector. I must admit that this present Government is a record-setting one. They have indeed set some benchmarks that few governments rival. They have become the first Government to say that they have reduced VAT on food prices, but yet the cost of food has nearly doubled in one year. [*Desk thumping*] I just want to show you an article on the *Sunday Guardian*, on September 25, 2016 on food prices, and it is a grocery list: Saltfish, a five-pound pack of saltfish in 2015 was \$97.50, that same five-pound pack of saltfish is \$135 today; five pounds of cheese was \$74.75 in 2015, that same five-pound pack of cheese is \$99.85; [*Desk thumping*] garlic that we all use, which is good for pressure, 500 grammes of garlic was \$9.99 in 2015, today that same 500 grammes of garlic is \$20.

So, you see, Madam Speaker, this Government has set a lot of benchmarks. They are also the first Government to preach that they have the answer for crime, but in one year the crime rate has doubled, and you heard from the Member for Couva South from September 8th to date is 496 murders and climbing. They are the first Government to say they have a vision for youth yet they have stopped free textbooks, altered GATE and stopped the laptop programme.

They say they have been the first Government to say they care about citizens' health, yet our hospitals are without medicine. That being said we must reflect on why each one of us decided to enter the political arena, and that was to

make our nation a better place and to allow for those who live in it to reach their full potential. Our role as representatives has been and always will be to serve and serve with equality and equity. That is why when I reflect on the national state of affairs I ask the question, does this administration really care?

Madam Speaker, all we hear from those on the Government Bench is that it is the former administration's fault. Let me remind you, Madam Speaker, or remind us here, you are the Government, you have the responsibility to create a safe and productive environment for all, which you have clearly disregarded and abandoned, yet you speak about growth and transformation. Madam Speaker, let me present a summary of our national state of affairs, crime is rampant as you all know, cost of living has skyrocketed, the impact on the foreign exchange shortages on businesses, you said let us do this together, they said they had to solution for the forex crisis, up to today there has been no solution to the drastic decline in the foreign exchange supply.

Businessmen are struggling, they are complaining that their businesses face closure. The only thing this Government has done was the firing of the last Central Bank Governor. They lack confidence in the system, mass unemployment. The hon. Prime Minister did however stick to his word. On the political hustings he said not a single person would lose their job. He was right, it was not a single person but over thousands. [*Desk thumping*]

When we talk about under skills training, I would like just to expand on what my colleague said in Chaguanas East, he talked about NESCC and YTEPP, but as the last chairman at MIC there are two social programmes, the HYPE programme, Helping Youth Prepare for Employment, and the MuST programme, the Multi-Sector Training Programme. Two very critical, social programmes for the youths of this nation. Those figures, those subvention transfers have been cut

by over 50 per cent for these two programmes, and what will happen, Madam Speaker, you will see that the young people would not be able to get the training, centres will close down as my colleague from Chaguanas had alluded to, and there will be job cuts from the MIC sector. Massive job losses.

Madam Speaker, I want to just spend a little time on the budget expenditure for 2010—2015 versus the PNM budget expenditure. During the 2017 budget presentation the Minister of Finance noted that upon assuming office in September 2015, one of the challenges the Government was confronted by was the growth in annual government expenditure under the former administration, from \$47 billion in 2010 to \$63 billion in 2014. Similarly, during the 2016 budget presentation the Minister of Finance condemned the PP Government for their expenditure patterns, noting that it must be emphasized that public expenditure rose considerably over the last five years from \$46.7 billion in 2010 to \$62 billion in the fiscal year 2015, an increase of 33 per cent.

Madam Speaker, it is indeed the reality that under the PP Government expenditure rose for that period from 2010 to 2015. However the former administration can boast of numerous people centred accomplishments for its levels of expenditure. Unlike this current administration who revised its expenditure from \$52 billion down from \$63 billion in 2016, and has absolutely nothing to show for it besides the thousands of citizens who are currently struggling due to their policies. [*Desk thumping*] I would just like to list some of the former administration's, the PP Government, accomplishments: poverty was reduced by 7 per cent, eight new police stations at Arima, Maloney, Piarco, Cumuto, Brasso, Oropouche, La Brea and Moruga were constructed; 500 new vehicles were provided to the police service; 12 community centres were built in Gulf View, Marac, Waterloo, Union Claxton Bay, Malabar; foreign direct

investment increased by over 400 per cent under the PP Government to almost \$16.1 billion; 95,000 laptops were distributed for Form 1 students; the GATE programme was expanded to include vocational degrees for the first time under the Member for Chaguanas East; installed lights at 160 recreation grounds. [*Desk thumping*] We increased the minimum wage from \$9 to \$15 under our tenureship; we completed the long-awaited Tobago hospital thereby improving health care in Tobago; we opened gas stations in Roxborough and improved the bus service throughout Tobago. We also opened the first state-of-the-art MIC institute centre of technology in Canaan Tobago.

Madam Speaker, however, after spending \$52 billion in the past fiscal year, what does this current administration have to show? After \$52 billion: one, crime is out of control, they stopped the baby grant, they stopped the laptop programme, free textbook programme was stopped, cut-back on the GATE programme, the used-car industry they are on the verge of collapse, they reduced fuel subsidies three times since PNM assumed office.

Madam Speaker, it is horrendous under their tenureship. Thousands of jobs are being lost, unemployment rate is on the rise, the prolonged foreign exchange crisis and increasing devaluation of the TT dollar, TT economy downgraded by Moody's and Standard & Poor's, failure to implement diversification strategies and policies, absolutely no work was done on the San Fernando to Point Fortin highway project since September 8th. A failed health sector, no drugs and equipment in hospitals, no beds, limited space. One can see that the increase in expenditure was as a result of increase services on the areas of development towards our citizens by the PP Government.

Madam Speaker, on the borrowing ratios, I know my colleague, the Member for Caroni Central will talk a bit on that. But, Madam Speaker, I want to turn a "lil

bit” on the Sandal resort that was so—*[Interruption]*—well, some people—I say the Sandal resort, Madam Speaker—was part of the Minister of Finance’s presentation. The Opposition is in favour of any initiative that will serve the people of Trinidad and Tobago and this beloved country.

4.10 p.m.

I ask the question, what is the dollar value of the Sandals investment? Is this Government going to be the minor partner or the major partner, Madam Speaker? If Government is going to be the major partner, why was a search for a partner not a transparent, equitable and objective one? Sandals is not the only successful hotel chain operating in the Caribbean space. How much cash equity would Sandals be injecting? What is the total number of rooms to be constructed? I hear it is somewhere around 750 beds. At a capital cost benchmark for a four to five-star resort hotel, the development of a room is somewhere between US \$400,000 to US \$500,000 per room for a four and five-star hotel. That project has estimated a capital cost of nearly TT \$2 billion. What are the room rates and hotel occupancy rates required for this project? Let us not forget that the Tobago Hilton failed because the hotel could not deliver the room rates and occupancy required for profitability. Hilton was eventually sold for US \$1, Madam Speaker.

So, Madam Speaker, I ask these questions about the Sandals project. Sandals is an all-inclusive hotel. The premium products that they import are not produced in this country. I ask, what is the benefit for the people of Trinidad and Tobago? Again, the Opposition is not adverse to the development of Trinidad and Tobago. But I ask, what is the relationship between the Sandals Resorts International and the new ANR Robinson International Airport that is talked about in the budget?

Madam Speaker, I want to turn to the energy sector for a bit. As one

continues to analyze this haphazard set of energy sector that the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries talked about, she gave no plans, nothing at all. But further to this, Madam Speaker, as a patriot one grows more disheartened given the level of expertise, commitment and trust that has been delegated towards our national sectors and the revenue-earning industries by this current administration.

As a nation, Madam Speaker, we all accept the volatility caused by the global conditions, but as a nation we must ask the question, are we doing enough to protect ourselves from the ripple effects? As a nation we must ascertain if the Government of the day is living up to its duty to cushion the nation from the repercussions of these effects by protecting those sectors which are critical while trying to expand on it or are they sitting idly by?

Madam Speaker, this Government's record would suggest the latter. They have proven to be an administration of many words but few actions, as opposed to the former People's Partnership administration led by Kamla Persad-Bissessar, [*Desk thumping*] who saw the need to ensure, not only to begin the process of diversification to expand our economy, but worked to expand and innovate and develop our energy sector so as to protect our GDP.

Today, I stand in this House and confirm that the work done by our past Government, the PP Government, and specifically our former Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs, Kevin Ramnarine, was not only revolutionary, but beckoned the dawn of a new beginning [*Desk thumping*] in this country's energy economy that placed this nation on a renewed pathway of exploration for downstream activities and revenue generation.

Madam Speaker, in 2014 the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs won the cleaner energy initiative which was stated in a David Renwick column in the *Trinidad Express* of December 24, 2014. One therefore sees the calibre and

quality of our performance. Our polices made a global impact, that is indeed the responsibility of a Government to create policies which will have resounding success and can be benchmarked by international standards, which unfortunately cannot, and I repeat, cannot be said about this current energy Minister or energy policy of this current administration.

Madam Speaker, when the Minister of Finance presented on energy I was confused. I thought to myself, certain parts of this sounds like it has been extracted from the achievement booklet of the past PP administration. The Minister began his energy subsection by saying and I quote:

“...gas production is expected to recover after three consecutive years of decline...”

As he attempted to let this House and the wider nation believe that this was as a result of his administration. I want to remind him that exploration in the Angostura and Sercan fields began under the PP's administration, Madam Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

As a matter of fact, Madam Speaker, let me put it on record that all of the natural gas projects that are currently in gestation have emerged from the incentives from the past PP administration between 2010 and 2014. [*Desk thumping*] While the new discoveries, as we forecast, will lead to 1 per cent economic growth in 2017 and 2 per cent in 2018 to 2020, it is due to the new gas productions coming on line in 2017 as a result of the People's Partnership policies. This was initiated by us. So I ask the present Government, please do not take this credit.

The Minister further speaks about discussions on the Loran Manatee fields which are also ongoing and plans for the development of these two fields could be ready as early as the first half of 2017. While the People's Partnership had

discussion to get this field going in 2013, is the Minister aware that Chevron and Shell are not eager to develop this field? Let me refer to a *Guardian* article on June 16, 2016.

“Chevron, Shell not anxious to develop...”

This is the belief that the company probably sees those reserves as more valuable on their books than being produced, Madam Speaker. So there is some sentiment that gas may not be produced.

So, Madam Speaker, I do not think we should count on this as a certified form of production. What is even more alarming is this masking of the People's Partnership energy accomplishments has been going on for the past year in every presentation that has been brought on energy to this House. What does that say to us as a nation? It says they have done nothing as a Government. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker, this is a dangerous trend. As stated before, energy is our bread and butter. If as a nation we are failing to enhance and protect the sector then we run the risk of one day waking up and going hungry. I am putting it to our nation, Madam Speaker, today, that the People's National Movement in 12 months has done nothing for our energy sector. [*Desk thumping*]

In the Minister's budget contribution, the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries, in her budget contribution of 2015, in the House of Representatives, the hon. Minister gave a number of commitments to develop the energy sector which she said was based on the energy sector proposals of the PNM manifesto. The *Hansard*, page 127 states:

“The policy positions agreed upon have been well articulated in our manifesto...It is on those stated prescriptions that I...seek to build upon and provide a guidelines for the”—new—“way forward in the energy sector.”

The Minister of Energy and Energy Industries goes on further to state on page 130

of the *Hansard*:

“...we on this side have been analyzing the situation and in keeping with our diagnosis have come up with clear prescriptions for the way forward.”

One year later, Madam Speaker, all words and no action. [*Desk thumping*]
In the PNM manifesto they condemned and blamed the decrease of both oil and gas production on poor management of the People’s Partnership. I quote from the PNM manifesto:

“Through bungling incompetence on the part of the UNC-led Government, we have lost 25% of our oil production since 2010, and the sector has been characterised by natural gas production shortfalls and extremely poor decision-making.”

Yet, Madam Speaker, the Minister comes to this House and says in his presentation, the Minister of Finance, page 10, and I quote:

“And the latest bulletin from the Ministry of Energy shows production declining even further in 2016 to 66,000 barrels per day in July 2016! Similarly, the production of natural gas has declined from an average of 4.3 billion standard cubic feet per day in 2010 to 3.2 billion standard cubic feet per day in July 2016.”

So the question must be asked, what did you do to restore the production in 2015/2016? What did the People’s National Movement do in the last 12 months, as the Government, to curtail the decrease that they were so critical of as when they were in Opposition.

In short, Madam Speaker, I now want to turn to an article from David Renwick, but before that I would say, after all those pledges, in one year the Government has had no new bid rounds for further exploration. No new fiscal incentive packages to encourage investment. No indication to any new exploration

and production will be undertaken. They have claimed no fixed deal with Venezuela to buy natural gas from the Dragon fields but no tangible evidence of such, Madam Speaker. All they continue to do is speak and repeat the accomplishments of the People's Partnership. The work which continues to hold the energy sector today was part of the visionary plan of development which was implemented in the past five years under the People's Partnership and it is critical I remind this House and our nation of those achievements. What did we achieve as a people's government in energy? In 2012, Trinidad and Tobago recorded the most successful deepwater bid round in 14 years, Madam Speaker, a total of six blocks were offered which were received in September 2012.

Madam Speaker, to add this accomplishment it was hailed as a major achievement which many PNM Governments have failed to undertake.

The *Trinidad Express*, December 24, 2014 an article by David Renwick. And I quote:

“Taken as a whole, this is a remarkable achievement, especially since previous...(PNM) governments have tried, and failed, to attract international companies into the deep water...”

On May 14, 2012, the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs signed three production sharing contracts with BP and BG, thereby contributing to our active energy sector. Madam Speaker, we truly understood the need for innovation in the sector if we were to truly increase production, hence we sought to increase our rig days. Our rig days were up, our production sharing was up.

Madam Speaker, there is a time for politics, rhetoric and political jab. However, my contribution today is crafted out of a pure concern, anguish and disappointment on behalf of our entire population due to the rapidly approaching danger which is a result of the Government's lack of urgency, commitment and

vision for the energy sector, which has been this nation jewel of the Caribbean.

In the past years while in Opposition and now in Government, they criticized the capital allowance which was given to companies enabling them to write off their capital investment for that particular year. Of course, it will affect the revenue in the short term, but in the long-term value it is unprecedented as that would show in the latter half of 2016, 2017 and 2018. This is part of business. You have to give something to receive something and the hon. Minister himself admitted in his contribution and I quote from his budget speech:

“By and large, these changes have had a”—very—“positive effect.”

Madam Speaker, I want to turn a path to local content. As we delve further into what we can describe as non-accomplishments of this administration—because quite frankly they have accomplished nothing—we reflect on their commitments to the local private sector. In their manifesto they gave an undertaking to secure a larger share for the local private sector in the activity generated by the energy sector, yet they re-established a local content committee. But we are yet to hear any single report, any findings or recommendation of this committee. As this takes place, a number of local service providers and local energy contractors are feeling the pinch from the global downturn.

Was this not the responsibility of the committee to protect the local interest, fight for local interest and suggest buffers as well as cushion methods to protect those involved in the local energy sector? Again, all talk by this administration and no walk.

What we did: Under our tenure we did a Wind Resource Assessment Programme called WRAP on the east coast of Trinidad and Tobago as awarded. The PP Government also launched a national energy community campaign. The Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs also shared an ESCO Certification

Committee, Madam Speaker. The PP Government was able in their term to enable the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs to outfit three buildings with solar and wind power. UTT O'Meara Campus, the Mt. Hope T&TEC building and the Islamic Home for Children, they were all tied to the grid, using solar panels and wind turbine to generate electricity from renewable energy and supplement the electricity supply for these buildings. In 2014, 21 schools were outfitted with water stills for free distilled water for their laboratories and solar panels to power their libraries.

4.25 p.m.

In 2015, Madam Speaker, 15 community centres across the country had solar PV lighting installed to provide external lighting. Therefore, it is quite laughable when this Minister of Finance in his contribution said, "The Government also plans to promote energy efficiency and greater use of renewable energy, including wind and solar sources as a means of increasing energy security and reducing our reliance on fossil fuels."

Madam Speaker, they talked about CNG vehicles, but we were the ones that initiated that. In their PNM manifesto, it does not list any means for CNG. Yet, I would like to inform the Minister and the Parliament that every single accomplishment that is related to the Government's CNG thrust was started by the People's Partnership. They talked about hybrid vehicles. They follow the same pattern when they accounted for hybrid vehicles. Once more, they are taking credit for a project which they did not initiate.

It was the People's Partnership who, in the 2014/2015 budget presentation proposed the removal of the VAT and motor vehicle taxes on all hybrid electrical vehicles, Madam Speaker. [*Desk thumping*] This was to be reviewed after one year with a view of removing customs duties.

Madam Speaker, fuel at the market price. We have seen the price of fuel increase within the past month based on the removal of fuel subsidies. But it would be important for the Government to state if there is still a subsidy on super gasoline. From what I understand, all premium gas subsidies were removed in the last budget in 2015/2016. The question I would like to ask the Minister of Finance: when does the premium gas attract a subsidy? Or if at all, when the price of oil increases, would the price of premium at the pump also increase? If that is true, the other side should also hold true. That means when oil prices are low as they are now, we should be paying lower prices at the pump for premium gas, Madam Speaker.

I also want to ask about gas station operators. The gas station operators, when they increased the business levy and Green Fund, were having a hard time trying to make ends meet, and I am asking this Government: is it the plan for this Government to shut down, or ask gas station operators to return their gas stations and then they will increase the profit margin to give those gas stations to their friends and families? [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker, under trade and industry, nothing has happened under trade and industry. The only thing that happened under trade and industry is where they tried to shut down—and they have shut down the used-car market. So that I would like to ask the Minister of Trade and Industry, when she comes and presents, what has she done in her Ministry?

Hon. Member: She will cry.

Mr. D. Lee: Madam Speaker, I have an issue I would like to discuss. We talked about the online tax and that is something that is—there is an online

petition to ask the Minister for removal or not putting that tax. I have an issue. We have so many international franchise companies in this country. Do you know that these companies pay a royalty on their gross sales and then that income has to be repatriated in foreign US dollars? And there are so many international franchises that have mushroomed over the years in Trinidad and Tobago, and the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Trade and Industry should pay some particular attention to see how they can help the locally grown small and medium businesses because they are suffering.

Madam Speaker, I would like to raise an issue here. I see the Minister of Works and Transport is here. I know my colleague, the Member for Tabaquite in his last contribution, talked about a company that has gotten the contract for the Bay Ferries—for the water ferries to operate between Trinidad and Tobago, and that company is called Magellan Maritime Services headed by one Alfred McMillan. Madam Speaker, from my understanding, this company, Magellan Maritime Services, subcontracted the maintenance and repairs of these high-speed ferries to a—

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, it is 4.30. May I have the concurrence of the House to sit for a further three minutes to allow the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre to exhaust his original 45 minutes speaking time? Yes?

[Assent indicated]

Madam Speaker: Continue, please, Member.

Mr. D. Lee: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, as I said, there is a company that has gotten the contract to operate the island ferries between Trinidad and Tobago, and that company is called Magellan Maritime Services Limited headed by one Alfred McMillan. And do you know that that company has subcontracted the maintenance and repairs of

these Rolls Royce engines that operate in these high-speed ferries to a company called Bellana Marine Engineering, a two-man operation? And the address is Lampost 298, Chaguaramas Main Road.

These two individuals are in charge of repairing and maintaining the island ferries that take passengers between Trinidad and Tobago and Tobago and Trinidad. I ask the Minister of Works and Transport if he can check into that and see that these people have the experience, [*Desk thumping*] because we are talking about people's lives.

The other issue, Madam Speaker, is that Bay Ferries was the original provider that had the contract—international company. They have now given—that contract was not renewed to them and they have removed certain critical pieces of equipment that belong to them that is no longer on those vessels, and this new contract company, Magellan Services, has not replaced that equipment to make the ferries operate safely between Trinidad and Tobago. So I ask the Minister of Works and Transport if he can use his good office to check into that, because we are talking about people's lives.

Madam Speaker, so that company, Bellana, I ask the question: do these individuals have the experience and expertise to maintain Rolls Royce engines? And the lives of people between Trinidad and Tobago are at risk. So this is something that is very concerning for us on the Opposition, for the safety and lives of people. And I also want to find out about the process that this happened. [*Desk thumping*]

Because from my understanding, if the hon. Minister of Works and Transport does a check on the head of this company, Magellan, headed by one Alfred McMillan, he would be surprised to know that he is the same gentleman that was part of the *Panorama* dry docking a few years ago when

the hon. Minister of Finance was at the time the Minister of Works and Transport, and he had to resign that position, Madam Speaker. And we sold off that *Panorama* for next to nothing and that vessel right now is operating in the Greek waters, very successfully. So I ask the question—

Madam Speaker: Hon. Member, your 45 minutes have expired. You are entitled to 10 minutes. I propose that we take the suspension now and we resume at 5.10 p.m.

4.33 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

5.10 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

[MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Good evening. As we resume, I recognize the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre and you have your additional 10 minutes. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. D. Lee: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Before we broke for the tea break, I was on my legs and I was discussing the issue about the inter-island ferry service and the safety of passengers. I want to elaborate a little bit, and I am glad to see the Minister of Works and Transport is here.

Bay Ferries Management of Canada had the contract to operate and maintain the inter-island ferry services between Trinidad and Tobago. That contract ended—expired—and was not renewed as at September 30, 2016. Somewhere in the month of August, a company by the name of Magellan Maritime Services Limited was awarded the contract for a 10-month period to manage and operate the high-speed ferries between Trinidad and Tobago.

Now, Magellan Maritime Services is headed by one Alfred McMillan. Alfred McMillan was a consultant on the port since 2012 and his purpose was to transition a team when the contract expired with Bay Ferries Services

Management of Canada, back to the port. So at a point in time Captain McMillan was heading a team to transition—for the port to be able to handle the running and operating and maintenance of the inter-island ferry services—the HFS, the high-speed ferry services. That contract was awarded in August to Magellan, headed by Alfred McMillan.

Now I ask, through you, to the Minister of Works and Transport, how that contract was awarded? Because there are many ship management companies—experts—in Trinidad and Tobago that were not given the opportunity to tender for that contract. Going further, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Magellan Management Services Company subcontracted the maintenance and running and maintaining the repairs of the engines of these high-speed ferries to a company called Bellana Marine Engineering Services, located at Lampost 298, Chaguaramas Main Road, Carenage.

It is a two-man company. So the question that I would like to ask: what is the experience of this company in maintaining and operating the engines for these high-speed ferries? What is their financial and expertise in this area, I ask? Because no tendering contracts were awarded or went out there in the public domain for the contract—for the tendering of running the high-speed ferry services. So I ask, through you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to the hon. Minister of Works and Transport, if he can investigate this matter. Because we are talking about the lives and safety of passengers that commute between Trinidad and Tobago.

So I ask, through the Minister of Works and Transport, if he can give us some clarification on that contract that was awarded for Magellan Maritime Services. And I also ask: is Captain McMillan still a consultant on the port authority? So we await his answers.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to turn, in my last few minutes, to my constituency, and I am glad to see the Minister of Education is here, because when I reviewed the PSIP for 2016/2017, in the PSIP for 2015/2016 they had an appropriation in my constituency for the building of a primary school, Macaulay Government Primary School.

5.15 p.m.

When I reviewed the PSIP for this year, 2016/2017, there were no appropriations for the building of that Macaulay Government Primary School, Deputy Speaker. So I ask, through you, if the Minister of Education can give some clarity and clarification. From where I stand, it appears that that school has been taken off and not going to be built. [*Desk thumping*]

Deputy Speaker, we have the same issues, of infrastructure issues, that were neglected in the last 12 months in the Pointe-a-Pierre constituency. We have one of the major roads, the Hermitage/Macaulay Main Road. Thousands of people use that road to access the highway from the Southern Main Road. That road is in a deplorable state. I have written to the Minister of Works and Transport as we all have here, and I am yet to get a favourable response. WASA at some point in time had done their work on that road. It has been completed so I am asking and I am imploring that the Minister of Works and Transport can start repairing that road for the people of, not only Pointe-a-Pierre, but the people of San Fernando East, San Fernando West that traverse that road as a shortcut to the highway.

Deputy Speaker, as I conclude, the Government's performance in the past year, coupled with its lack of vision for 2017, has cemented what our entire nation has known. This Government is bankrupt for ideas and vision, this Government lacks the compassion needed to effectively govern a nation, this Government lacks the political will and determination to propel our nation forward, but more so, this

Government has abandoned its constitutional duty of serving each and every citizen of this nation equally, equitably and to the best of their ability due to its continued incompetence and inaction to make proper decisions on issues which critically affect our citizens.

I must, however, congratulate the Minister of Finance for setting the record as the first person to speak so long, and yet say nothing. [*Desk thumping*] They have mentioned nothing sustainable to develop our economy. He has mentioned nothing to protect and maintain the right and liberties of our citizens, he has mentioned nothing to enhance the lives of our youth, nothing to maintain and protect the health of our citizens. As a matter of fact, Deputy Speaker, the budget presented here in this august House for the upcoming fiscal year is quite similar to the accomplishments of the Government for the past year, which is nothing.

Thank you, Deputy Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of Health (Hon. Terrence Deyalsingh): Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As I start my contribution, I want to thank and congratulate, first of all, the hon. Minister of Finance, and also the Minister of Planning and Development for the work they would have done in preparing this budget. It is a budget which is realistic and fit for purpose for the fiscal period 2017.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the comments I am about to make about the health sector, I want to exonerate the Member for Barataria/San Juan from everything that I have found in the health sector. He had absolutely nothing to do with the mess that the health sector was in because he had neither the support of his Prime Minister, nor the support of his Cabinet to facilitate any change in the health sector. [*Desk thumping*] I am putting it to the population he was not trusted, nor was he liked by his own members to bring about change in the health sector, and the proof of that is to be found in a headline, “Fuad sidelined. Health Minister Dr.

Fuad Khan has been sidelined...”—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: Source?

Hon. T. Deyalsingh: Oh, this is the *Express* of Sunday July 27, 2014—with the formation of a new Cabinet Health Committee. Do you know who the chairman was? Mr. Vasant Bharath. Do you know who the members were? Hon. Fazal Karim. Do you know who another member was? The hon. Roodal Moonilal, Mr. Winston Peters and Dr. Tim Gopeesingh.

When Minister Fuad Khan was asked about his comment on this health committee, to show you how sidelined and marginalized and rendered impotent—and for an urologist to be rendered impotent, that is not a good thing. Rendered totally impotent was his reaction to the media when asked, “You should ask Vasant about it, he is the chairman.” That is what my friend had to say.

“The Sunday Guardian understands that Khan is unhappy with the move”—which—“makes him almost redundant.”

That is what my friend had to contend with. So any comment I make here today is not directed to the Member for Barataria/San Juan. It is directed to the Member for Chaguanas East, directed to Caroni East, Oropouche East and the person who I vanquished in St. Joseph, Vasant Bharath, because they are the ones who left the health sector in a total and complete mess.

Dr. Rambachan: How many people dying of cancer in this country?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hello Members. Members, please the crosstalk across the floor—

Hon. T. Deyalsingh: I will make a statement—sorry.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Go ahead.

Hon. T. Deyalsingh: Sorry, Deputy Speaker. The way to fix the health sector—because Members of the Opposition say how I could “boof up” the RHA. You see

they do not understand the RHA Act. The Minister exercises his authority through the RHAs. A Minister cannot walk into a health facility and direct a doctor, direct a nurse, direct a wards maid. Whilst the buck stops with me as Minister of Health and I accept the responsibility, a buck or a dollar consists of a hundred cents. So there are 100 people who share that responsibility, and my management style is not to run roughshod over doctors, nurses and everybody else, but to exercise my authority through the RHAs who are responsible for implementation and they will then hold executive management to account for day-to-day operations.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I recently had an RHA coordinating meeting, which I have the first Saturday of every month, and I asked each RHA, show me your organizational chart. Four RHAs for 1.3 million people and if you see the organizational chart, you would think—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: Five.

Hon. T. Deyalsingh:—five—we are running a country of 300 million people. It is layer upon layer upon layer of executive management, and the former Minister of Health is saying yes. It is the most dysfunctional executive structure I have seen in any organization. Not only is it multi-layered and dysfunctional, the variations between each RHA is stunning. For the example, internal audit which is a crucial component, in some RHAs internal audit reports to the board with secondary reporting to the CEO. In another RHA, they report primarily to the CEO with secondary reporting to the board. That is what I inherited. I have to fix that and I will fix that by holding the RHAs accountable, and all my chairmen know that and all my chairmen accept their responsibility. [*Desk thumping*]

So I am not “boofing” the RHAs. They have volunteered to be a part of that buck. The buck stops with me, but each RHA, five of them, have their 20 cents worth of that dollar to account for and I will hold each RHA responsible, and each

RHA knows if they do not come up to scratch, the RHAs will be the first ones to go.

Dr. Moonilal: Before you.

Hon. T. Deyalsingh: Before, after, it does not matter, it is who you hold accountable. [*Desk thumping*] And since I held North Central RHA responsible last week, because I said the issue was not a bed for that man because I know there are beds, but you have a callous management structure in Eric Williams and I say it openly. I said openly that Eric Williams has to get up to the same minimum standard of administration as Port of Spain, San Fernando and Sangre Grande, and all of us know what the elephant in the room is. All of us know, but no one has dealt with it, but I will deal with it in my own way, in my own time.

But since I read the riot act to North Central Regional Health Authority Board and the chairman, they have miraculously found 30 new beds and now available for A&E patients to go on a ward. It is a matter of holding people accountable. So the buck stops with me, but a dollar is made up of 100 cents and I have five RHAs. They are each responsible for 20 cents of that dollar and they have my full support and full commitment to get the job done. So I continue.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, you would think that all the ills in the hospitals only occurred since September 7th. You would not think that another Government was in office for five years. No, never! There were no maternal deaths—
[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: Zero.

Hon. T. Deyalsingh: Zero maternal deaths and I will come to the figures—there was no infant mortality, there was no drug shortage.

Hon. Member: Cataract.

Hon. T. Deyalsingh: Cataract. Nothing! It only happened since September 7th.

The Member for Barataria/San Juan knows and if he is honest he could tell me, he could tell this population, my style in Opposition when there was a problem was not to go to the media. I could have stood up in that chair and brought a Motion because he was faced with a particular problem, and do you know what I did? My style is not to be confrontational and go to the media. I brokered a meeting with the Member for Barataria/San Juan—and he is nodding yes—and a particular entity that was giving him some problems. That is my style. Non-political, fix the health system. [*Desk thumping*] I brokered that. I had just won the by-election. I could have sunk my teeth into that issue and embarrassed the Member for Barataria/San Juan, gone to the media, but I called the Member. I said, “Minister, we have this issue. I am willing to bring in the other party and let you sit down, mano a mano a mano, three of us and solve the issue.” Is that correct? Correct. That is my style.

But the public health sector, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we need to understand this creature. First after all, this is not a for-profit organization and we need to understand that. This is a place of great triumph, a place of conflict, a place of high emotion, a place where we celebrate the miracle of life, but we also have to go with this dance of death which is the human condition. But to hear our friends opposite, nobody died in the health sector between 2010 and 2015. The public health sector is also non-discriminatory. We do not turn away anyone because we have no record to protect.

Let me give you three examples of what I mean because I am going to deal with maternal deaths, but let me leave it for when I come. There is somebody who sits in a high office in this land who told me she was eight months pregnant and asthmatic, and she went to a private facility because she was having an asthma attack about to give birth. You know she was turned away from a private facility.

I do not want to call the facility because they said her case is too complicated, go to the hospital. So they would not take it because they have a record to protect, but go to the public facility. And if God forbid anything had happened to her, you would have heard the media and everybody jump down on the public health sector. I am not defending it, but we have to be honest about what the public health sector means to Trinidad and Tobago.

The same way I will not defend what transpired at the A&E in Eric Williams but I will explain to the population what the public health sector accepts. We cannot refuse anybody. We cannot refuse anybody, we are not profit-oriented.

5.30 p.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me tell you and as I said, I do not hold my friend responsible, he had no support from his Prime Minister or Cabinet. I hold Vasant Bharath, Member for Chaguanas East, Member for Caroni East and Member for Oropouche East accountable for this. I found a Ministry where the Pesticides and Toxic Chemicals Control Board was not functional since September 2013. We had to fix it. I found that the Blood Bank, the Member for Caroni East will remember when he berated me for not having reagents for the Blood Bank. You know what I discovered? Your administration did not appoint a medical director to the Blood Bank since 2011. Five years, no director at the Blood Bank, institutional collapse. We have to fix it. Quality department, defunct since 2012. No Chief Nursing Officer. We are now seeking to fill those highly technical posts. Chemistry, Food and Drugs and Trinidad Public Health Laboratories, no attention paid to it. There was a fire, in 2014, at TPHL and Chemistry, Food and Drugs was rendered OSHA non-compliant.

Instead of putting a piecemeal effort, this administration, under a new line item, has taken the decision to build a brand-new Chemistry, Food and Drugs

Division and Trinidad Public Health lab [*Desk thumping*] with oil at between \$26 and \$48. Why did you not do that when oil was \$124? We will do it because these are the underpinnings of the Ministry of Health that are important. Insect Vector Control Division: Point Fortin, Siparia, Penal, Barataria, left to rot. Left to rot, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The dialysis units, we had a joint venture, a PPP, with a partner to get two dialysis units going since 2009. Our friends opposite did absolutely nothing with it. The hoardings at Mount Hope and San Fernando were there for five years, they did nothing and I asked myself why. My view is to open up the market, I do not want to protect any dialysis providers. I want to know why your administration sought to put on a shelf for five years, two PPP projects for dialysis. Answer me that. Why? I took the contracts, I had a meeting with the providers, and guess what? The two projects are back on track so the taxpayers of this country can benefit. [*Desk thumping*] But their only mantra for the past year is, “open the Couva hospital” as if opening Couva hospital will fix the dialysis centres, as if opening Couva will get you somebody to head up the Blood Bank, as if opening Couva will solve the problem at Chemistry, Food and Drugs. Their total solution for the past year is only open the Couva hospital, the Children’s Hospital, which is a construction site.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, my friend from Fyzabad, somebody told me he is a nice man. [*Interruption*] I said he is a nice man. They say he is soft-spoken, he is not a politician. Let me disabuse everybody here, once you enter this arena, you are a politician. Soft-spoken or thunderous like the Member for Couva South, you are a politician but you will get a political response from me today.

You spoke about putting the care back into health care. *Newsday*, November 09, 2014, in a detailed report, which you lauded, putting the care back

into health care, you know what the article goes on to say? Your CEO had to lament that somebody had to wait from 11.00 a.m. to 8.00 p.m. in A&E. That is how you put the care back into health care. Right? Talk. And one day, I will expose the past South West board and other boards for buying Mercedes Benzes, for travel. The South West Regional Health Authority, when you see what they spent on travel: overseas travel, it is phenomenal. Talk about a waste of money. I will come a next day. [*Interruption*] I will come a next day with that.

My friend today, the Member for Chaguanas East and everybody speaks about nursing shortage and doctor. Let me tell you something. The shortages of nurses and doctors which the Member for Caroni East champions is not at the lower levels, my friends. It is inconceivable that you come here and you make this generic charge about doctor shortage and nurse shortage. Why did specialty training for nurses stop in 2013? Do you know what we need? We do not just need nurses, we need neonatal nurses, we need midwives. Ask the Member for Barataria/San Juan the numbers of midwives that have been going down under your tenure and the Member for Fyzabad wants to talk to me about maternal health. Look in the mirror, my friend, look in the mirror. You are directly responsible, directly, for the lack of midwife training.

We need theatre nurses, we need oncology nurses, haemodialysis nurses, trauma nurses and talk about the total fall-through of district health visitors to go and visit people in their homes. All this happened under the tenure of the Members for Chaguanas East, Caroni East, Oropouche East, headed by Vasant Bharath. This health commission where you side-lined the Member for Barataria/San Juan.

And we say take all these young doctors and open Couva. This is the only country in the world that is going to run a hospital with interns. Imagine that. That

is their solution. Take all the interns and run Couva with no registrars, no consultants, no specialists. That is their solution. [*Interruption*]

Dr. Gopeesingh: Would you give way?

Hon. T. Deyalsingh: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I did not interrupt anybody across there. Let me come to the issue of maternal and infant health. [*Continuous interruption*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member for Oropouche East, I am hearing you all at the top here, please.

Hon. T. Deyalsingh: Mr. Deputy Speaker, at the start of my contribution, I said that we do not discriminate, but all of a sudden, our friends opposite, the Member for Fyzabad who is an obstetrician, has great concern about maternal deaths in this country. Great concern. As if under their tenure, there were no maternal deaths. For your five years, there were about 25 maternal deaths, peaking in 2014 with seven maternal deaths. But you see we, in Opposition then, did not seek to have this macabre intervention and treat maternal death like political blood sport. We are more responsible. It peaked in 2014 under your tenure with seven.

But let me go back to how the public health sector is non-discriminatory and the Members for Fyzabad and Caroni East could bear me up on this. We recently had two cases at the Port of Spain Maternity Hospital, where two women in their 30s presented to the hospital. They were sent there by the private sector and coincidentally, each was on their fourth pregnancy and listen to this. Each of their prior three pregnancies was caesarean and the private sector took a decision, we do not want that risk. Sent them to the public hospital, sent them without their chart, sent them without their medical history. That is what the public sector has to contend with because the private sector does not want to accept the risk.

We had to put together teams to safely—and all of them, both of them,

coincidentally were obese, diabetic, hypertensive. Uncontrolled diabetes, uncontrolled hypertension. We cannot refuse that. But if anything had gone wrong, the media and everybody and yourself would have come down on me, worse Minister of Health. But when my friend, the Member for Barataria/San Juan, had to deal with baby Cottle, did we come and call him the worse Minister of Health? Did we come and call him the worse Minister of Health, in 2014, when he had to deal with baby Cottle? No, we did not. We are more responsible, we do not see these things as blood sport to make political gain over.

Does the Minister of Health guide every surgeon? No. Does the Minister of Health guide every operation? No. You have to depend on the professionalism of people along the way. The buck stops with me, but as I said, a buck consists of 100 cents and everybody has ownership of their part of the health landscape. But to hear the Member for Fyzabad talk, it is only now you have maternal deaths. What happened in 2014 when you had seven? Did you call the Member for Barataria/San Juan to account? No. Your eyes have only been awoken now. [Desk thumping] So let us deal with—[Dr. Bodoë stands]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: You are up on a Standing Order?

Dr. Bodoë: Standing Order 48(6). Mr. Deputy Speaker, in my contribution, I spoke about throughout—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Standing Order?

Dr. Bodoë: Standing Order 48(6).

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With regard to? What aspect of his discourse?

Dr. Bodoë: Accusing me of improper motives.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Proceed, Member.

Hon. T. Deyalsingh: Thank you. You see this is the hypocrisy of the UNC when it comes to anything. One minute, they want Caribbean Court of Justice, when

they are in Opposition, they do not want it. Same thing.

I have charged the regional health authorities and every obstetrician that they have agreed that by the year 2020, we would try to get maternal deaths down in this country to develop country status. What does that mean? In developed countries, maternal mortality rates are 13 maternal mortalities per 100,000 live births.

Dr. Gopeesingh: No, you are wrong. That is not the right [*Inaudible*]. Over 100,000 pregnancies.

Hon. T. Deyalsingh: In Trinidad and Tobago, if we scale that down, we should not have more than three to four maternal deaths per year, right?—and that is what we are aiming for. No country in the world I know of has zero maternal deaths. As a matter of fact, the United States' maternal deaths are actually going up. In Texas, maternal deaths have actually doubled. Our trend is coming down, support us, do not make political hay out of it.

But you see, what our friend, the Member for Fyzabad, would not talk about is our infant mortality rates at Port of Spain in the period January/June 2015 to January/June 2016 have come down by 50 per cent through policy intervention. [*Desk thumping*] Infant mortality in this country in Port of Spain in one year, under my stewardship, has decreased by 50 per cent in one year. [*Interruption*] Go ahead.

Dr. Khan: Point of clarification. Could you just name the months you just named?

Hon. T. Deyalsingh: Sure. January/June 2016 over January/June 2015. Infant mortality at Port of Spain has decreased by 50 per cent by simple things like hand-washing, by simple things. So that is what is happening. Proper management.

Every single person opposite has spoken about drugs, shortage of drugs.

Appropriation Bill, 2016 (cont'd)
 Hon. T. Deyalsingh (cont'd)

2016.10.10

Shortage of drugs has only existed in this country since September 7th and I am the worse Minister of Health. Princes Town, let me light you up now. [*Desk thumping*] “Leh meh light you up now.”

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member, Member for Princes Town, please.

5.45 p.m.

Hon. T. Deyalsingh: Thank you. Through you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, *Express* page 7, April 21, 2015:

Patients panic over CDAP drug shortage

Thursday, November 20, 2014:

Fuad denies Opposition claim no drug shortage

But the hon. Member for Tabaquite made an intervention in Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex where he put something in the suggestion box. Hear the response of his colleague:

He placed his suggestions in the comments box. It is like comments box at KFC.

That is how your own colleague treated your intervention. How could you relate a comment by your colleague being put in a comments box in Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex to KFC? The last person that did that left the bench in horror and shame. Where he told somebody: “If you are going to rape somebody, oh God yuh could get a woman for a box of KFC.” That is the UNC.

Dr. Moonilal: Who said that?

Hon. T. Deyalsingh: He was one of—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Gopeesingh: Standing Order 48(6). Withdraw that statement.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Withdraw that statement, please. I am on my legs. I am on my legs. Just withdraw the statement, please.

Hon. T. Deyalsingh: Withdrawn. But it was before he was a Member of

Parliament.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I want it expunged from the *Hansard*.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Members. Proceed, hon. Member.

Hon. T. Deyalsingh: I take back “the UNC” but it is well known in the court documents that former High Court Judge Herbert Volney told somebody before him: “Why yuh rape somebody? Yuh coulda go and get a woman for the price of a box of KFC.”

Hon. Member: He said so.

Hon. T. Deyalsingh: He said so.

Hon. Member: Public record.

Hon. T. Deyalsingh:

Sunday, August 09, 2014:

Cancer patients beg for help.

Friends opposite called names of cancer patients. Tell me if these names mean anything to you, Member for Fyzabad because you are a politician. You could be soft-spoken but you are a politician. Tell me if this name means anything to you, Azad Hosein. Does that name mean anything to you, Sir? The same drug shortage I was faced with for oncology is the same thing you had to face in 2014. But you will come to Parliament and your colleagues and say I am the worse Minister of Health.

So, what are we doing about drug shortages? We are taking steps at the Ministry to have a very strong management and evaluation committee oversight. We are making use of the PAHO Strategic Fund, which your administration never did and we are going to save hundreds of millions of dollars. We have started to come up with prescribing protocols in conjunction with the Trinidad and Tobago Medical Association and the University of the West Indies and we have completed

prescribing protocols for both oncology and HIV/AIDS. That is what we are doing.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Dr. Protocol.

Hon. T. Deyalsingh: You see, you are calling me Dr. Protocol. That is the only way you can run a Ministry, by protocols and you know that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, hon. Members. Member. Member for Caroni East and also Member for Oropouche East both of you have not entered the debate as yet. You both will have your opportunity when the time arises. Please do not interrupt. Proceed hon. Member for St. Joseph.

Hon. T. Deyalsingh: In dealing with oncology drugs, let me light up again, because the Member for Princes Town quoted \$2 million Benz and how much cancer drugs he could buy.

“\$34 million is no money. Doh ask meh back for the \$34 million.” The sum of \$34 million, using the calculations of the Member for Princes Town, can buy 11,300 doses of the same cancer drug he was talking about. LifeSport, \$500 million, we could have bought 162,666 doses. The wastewater project, which is \$500 million over-priced, we could have bought 162,666 doses, and the \$5 million we gave to Machel Montano for a CD, which we never got, \$5 million, we could have bought 1,626. So Member for Princes Town, if we had saved all that money we could have built a hospital and we could have bought 326,000 doses of the same drug that you are complaining about now. [*Desk thumping*] That is the absolute hypocrisy of the UNC in politicizing health. Absolute, absolute hypocrisy.

The Member for Tabaquite berated me, poor people going blind in San Fernando, they cannot get cataract surgery. Let me elucidate and educate, fact checking. In Port of Spain for the period January/June 2015, 486 cataract surgeries

were done in Port of Spain under my tenure, because I have doctors who want to work in the public sector. We have increased that by 30 per cent. [*Desk thumping*] In San Fernando, Member for Tabaquite, we are our victim of our own success in San Fernando, because in the period January/June 2015, under your watch, 565 cataract surgeries were done. Under my watch, we did 842, an increase of 50 per cent. [*Desk thumping*] And you know what? Each one of those, the Government pays \$8,000. I would have saved this country \$3.29 million. [*Desk thumping*] So the shortage that went on recently, it is because we are working in the public sector to provide services in the public sector for people. We are not farming it out as easily to the private sector. All right? I have doctors who want to work and all they are asking, they say: “Minister, give us the tools. Give us the equipment, we never had this kind of support before, and we will work in the public sector.” That is what I am doing.

But the biggest scandal of all is the Children’s Life Fund. The biggest hypocritical scandal is the Children’s Life Fund. I am coming to everything. The Member for Couva North, the Member for Siparia, the Member for Princes Town would have you believe that it is only under the PNM a child would die under the Life Fund. Let me give you the statistics. I do not want to call names because I do not want to burden the people with their names. You all love to call names and make political hay out of people’s names.

In 2012, one child died while awaiting updated medical report. But hear this one, another child died because the file could not be located. Did we in Opposition accuse you of killing children? They lost the file, and not once. Another child died while awaiting hospital acceptance, while awaiting referral letter, file cannot be located. But to hear the Members for Princes Town, Couva North and Siparia speak, children are only dying under the Life Fund today and we did not make

political hay about it, not once. But you all treat people suffering, for political gain. You all see this as blood sport and that is regrettable. It is despicable.

But let me read the *Hansard* of Friday, November 12, 2010, from the person who piloted the Children's Life Fund, so we could understand why people do not get a second bite of the cherry always. This is her *Hansard*:

“Clause 20 provides that a person who is eligible under section 19 may apply through his parent or guardian to the Life Unit for a grant. However, in this regard, it is material to note that as provided in subclause (3)—where—“a beneficiary has received a grant under this Act, no further application can be made on his behalf for the same medical condition for a period of two years from the date of the grant.”

And that is the qualifying statement. Your Minister of Health went on:

“This is to allow for us to help as many children as possible.”

It is under this administration that we have taken a very liberal view to exceptional circumstances and we are giving many more children a second bite at the Life Fund within two years. But you all treat death and suffering as political sport and this hypocrisy has to be exposed for 1.3 million people to see. [*Desk thumping*]

But the biggest hypocrisy, the biggest hypocrisy, the biggest hypocrisy about the Children's Life Fund—[*Interruption*] I know, I know—is this, the contributions to the Children's Life Fund, contributions. My then leader, Opposition Leader, when you all challenged us to put in 5 or 10 per cent of our salaries, he always said the Consolidated Fund and the taxpayer funds this thing. He always said that and there is no need for MPs to do it. But you all on your political merry-go-round spin the wheel, spin the wheel and fool people to think that MPs are financing the Children's Life Fund.

In 2012, the contribution of MPs amounted to \$1.1 million or 3.65 per cent of the Life Fund, 3.65 per cent.

Dr. Moonilal: “But we put money. Give meh back meh money.”

Hon. T. Deyalsingh: Hold on, hold on. In 2013, you put 2.75 per cent or \$1.5 million. When I asked for the figures for 2015 and 2016, do you know what I was told? I was told that the former Government Ministers, now Opposition Members of Parliament no longer put money into the Children’s Life Fund. “They stopped. They stopped.” So children meant something to you in office. Right? You made a big song and dance about the Children’s Life Fund. The Prime Minister putting 10 per cent and you all putting. We said from the beginning the taxpayer will fund it. But why did you stop putting it once you lost an election? [*Desk thumping*] Right? Explain to the people why you stopped making your contribution to the Children’s Life Fund once you lost an election? Is it that you have no more caring for children, or you use them conveniently? Where is the money? Is it in a mall in Holland? Right? Bring back the money. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member, please. The Member is doing his discourse, please.

Hon. T. Deyalsingh: But that is the hypocrisy of how our colleagues opposite use health and use suffering. It was convenient for them in Government to make a big song and dance. We are putting the money into Children’s Life Fund but once they lose an election their love for the children of Trinidad and Tobago evaporates into thin air. Right? Yeah?

So let us go now to the Couva Hospital because I have so much to say about the Couva Hospital, it is a particularly nice topic to light up people on. There is a plaque in the Couva Children’s Hospital, “opened on August 14, 2015”. That day will live in infamy as the biggest hoax perpetrated on the people of Trinidad and

Tobago. It was a day when an elected Government hoaxed this people, played a practical joke, a jest on your own population for election gimmickry. The hospital has no incinerator. So what you opened? No mortuary.

Dr. Gopeesingh: When Mount Hope had an incinerator?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member. Again, Members for Caroni East and Oropouche East, you all will enter the debate very soon. Since after tea, you all have been constantly giving crosstalk across the floor.

Hon. T. Deyalsingh: No pharmacy. You could not even get an aspirin in that hospital but they opened it; not even a bag of drips, no life water; not even a syringe but they opened the hospital. This hospital was going to be manned by the doctor from *Star Trek*, because what he would do is to “bring a little thing and go whee, whee, whee” over the patient because you do not need drugs, no investigation, no drugs. [*Laughter*] Do you remember Dr. “Bones” from *Star Trek*? He would have the patients lying down there in *Star Trek*. Nobody will die because we do not need any drugs. We do not need a pharmacy licence. You would beam them up somewhere. [*Crosstalk*]

6.00 p.m.

Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member, on the Government side, yes, I know you all are supporting your colleague, but please, he can handle himself. Kindly proceed.

Hon. T. Deyalsingh: But they spent over a million dollars to open a construction site.

Hon. Member: How much?

Hon. T. Deyalsingh: A million dollars, and rain fell that day, [*Crosstalk*] your opening ceremony, and everybody was there; right? And you are asking me to open a facility that “doh have ah aspirin, ah syringe, ah nurse, ah doctor” — imagine that. Well, when we get the proposals from our expression of interest, we

will open it, but I will put a plaque now, next to that plaque, with an arrow facing it, and that plaque will now say, Member for Princes Town, through you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, “Today, this facility, this hospital was really, really, really and truly opened for the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago—[*Desk thumping and crosstalk*]

Hon. Member: And honestly.

Hon. T. Deyalsingh:—and honestly opened.” Right? We will put a plaque.

Mr. Imbert: Put it for less than a million dollars.

Hon. T. Deyalsingh: For less than a million. It was really, really, truly and honestly opened on this date. I “doh even want mih name” on it. That is what we are going to do with that hospital. We will put a nice plaque next to the one which says: “The hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar commissioned this facility on August 14, 2014.” Commissioned what?

Hon. Member: A construction site.

Hon. T. Deyalsingh: Commissioned a construction site, because you had an election two weeks away. That is the—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: And the road collapsed.

Hon. T. Deyalsingh:—and the road collapsed and you had no wastewater pond, no incinerator, no mortuary, not “ah aspirin”, but “yuh opened it” in a grand fanfare.

Deputy Speaker: Your 45 minutes has expired. Do you care to avail yourself of the additional 10?

Hon. T. Deyalsingh: Yes, Sir.

Deputy Speaker: Proceed.

Hon. T. Deyalsingh: [*Desk thumping*] So, I have dealt—[*Interruption*—yes, I could talk and talk, but I have dealt with what I have met at the Ministry, and what we are doing as far as drug procurement is concerned, as far as maternal health is

concerned; the savings through the EPP Programme; the establishment of protocols and all of these things.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, one of the major things that this administration is going to do, are new projects. It is inconceivable that the last administration, their only solution for the health care was, "Open the Children's Hospital in Couva". [*Desk thumping*] How does opening the hospital in Couva replace the old, outdated cobalt machine that this Minister commissioned many years ago? We have taken a decision to put a new LINAC Accelerator in St. James, [*Desk thumping*] with oil at \$48 a barrel. We have taken a decision that the brachytherapy unit in St. James that has been laying dormant, we are going to revive it. [*Desk thumping*] We are going to modernize the NWRC.

"Open Couva"; that will solve all health problems. Couva is 15 minutes south and north of two major hospitals, but you left Sangre Grande as a container hospital, and did nothing with Sangre Grande. [*Desk thumping*] Nothing! It is a container hospital. Wards are in containers, that is what my friends did. You neglected Sangre Grande which serves St. Andrews, St. David, Nariva, Ortoire/Mayaro, and the MP for Cumuto/Manzanilla should be singing the praises of this administration, because her constituency falls in there. Sangre Grande will get a new hospital. [*Desk thumping*]

Let me light up the past administration one more time about infrastructure. There is a report which I saw early in my tenure as Minister of Health, which the hon. Vasant Bharath, Member for Chaguanas East, Member for Caroni East and Member for Oropouche East and the Member for Barataria/San Juan would have seen about Port of Spain Hospital and central block. That central block needs to have serious structural investigation, and depending on the results, we need to retrofit central block in Port of Spain.

Our friends for five years would have sat on that report, with oil at a hundred and what dollars?—at \$124 a barrel— and did absolutely nothing with it, but “open Couva”. As if opening Couva will solve the problems at Chemistry, Food and Drugs, will solve the problems at the blood bank, will solve the problems at Sangre Grande, and solve the problems at Port of Spain. This administration has taken a decision and we have allocated \$11 million to do the investigation and start the retrofitting of central block in Port of Spain. [*Desk thumping*] That is what we are doing. You did nothing about Port of Spain Hospital. Your mantra for five years was “Couva Hospital” and your mantra to me “Open Couva”, as if that was the panacea for all the ills in the health system. That is what we are doing. You all sat on that report for five years and did nothing with it, and you have people at risk in Port of Spain, and did nothing with it. You should be ashamed of yourselves.

So we are going to fix Sangre Grande; new hospital. We are going to put a new LINAC accelerator in St. James, and we are to fix Port of Spain with oil at \$48 a barrel, [*Desk thumping*] because there will be no corruption. There will be no mismanagement and no wastage. The people are going to get value for money with oil \$48 a barrel. What you could not do at \$124, we will do at \$48. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to close with what this administration will be doing, as a cornerstone to change the health paradigm in Trinidad and Tobago. In 2007, the then Heads of Caricom met in Trinidad and came up with the Port of Spain Declaration on NCDs. Precious little has happened from 2007 to now. The Minister would have brought legislation about cigarettes; that was done. For the first time in the history of Trinidad and Tobago, we are going to have a national response to the NCD epidemic.

Childhood obesity in this country has doubled in 10 years. It is an epidemic

waiting to happen. Sixty-two per cent of deaths are attributed to NCDs. The main ones are: cardiac disease, diabetes, cancer, cerebrovascular disease and diabetes have risen in about five to 10 years from being the number seven cause of death to the number three cause of death. We have to recognize the NCD epidemic. Why is this?—because we have adopted the so-called western lifestyle.

I want to talk to children directly. Pass a phone for me somebody, any phone. We have adopted this western lifestyle. [*Makes actions of texting on a cell phone.*] In the old days we had something called opposable thumbs, where your thumb could oppose your fingers, and all of us here would use opposable thumbs to play cricket, hold a ball, hold a bat and be active. Do you know what opposable thumbs are used for these days? [*Makes actions of texting on a cell phone.*] That is what children use their opposable thumbs for. [*Crosstalk*] Right? That is what we use opposable—we no longer play; we no longer exercise. Our children spend their whole day using the opposable thumbs which we used to use to play, and pelt mangoes and play cricket and football, doing this. [*Makes actions of texting on a cell phone.*] So our lifestyle has to change.

So we have come up through the aegis of the Inter-American Development Bank—I want to thank the Minister of Planning Development for facilitating the process. [*Desk thumping*] You see, you could not sign it off. You did not have the support of your Cabinet to sign it off. We will sign it off. It was not signed off, right? And the strategic objectives of this are: the preparation of a five-year strategic plan; the conduct of a study to estimate the economic burden of NCD's; emphasis on health promotion and strengthening, which is part of our manifesto, strengthening the primary healthcare system in Trinidad and Tobago, down to the health centres.

So I will be rolling out the NCD Plan very, very soon. I want to thank the

Prime Minister, the Minister of Finance, Minister of Planning and Development for supporting me in Cabinet on this NCD plan. It is going to be a game changer in Trinidad and Tobago because we cannot go on with the old model of building more hospitals, and amputating more legs.

We have to change the paradigm, because you see, people introduced myself and the former Minister of Health as Ministers of Health. We are not Ministers of Health in Trinidad and Tobago. We are Ministers of health care. We provide health care, but if we change this paradigm from treatment after the fact, stop having people depend on dialysis and all these medications, to preventative medicine, then the former Minister of Health, myself and whoever comes after, could truly be called Ministers of Health; not health care, because if we do not do this, we will continue to build more hospitals. We will continue to build more dialysis centres. We will continue to need more and more of all these treatment options after the fact. This NCD Plan will revolutionize the way the population sees itself. So I recommend the NCD Plan. How much time do I have, Sir?

Deputy Speaker: Two minutes.

Hon. T. Deyalsingh: And as I close, I want to go back to what I said at the beginning. The buck stops with me as Minister of Health, but that also means that people throughout the system—and I have full sport of my boards—that everyone in the health care system has to assume their little bit of responsibility, everyone; from the lab techs to everyone. If we do that, if we get all health sector workers gelling together as a team, we could start to deliver the type of health care, the type of services that our population deserve, our population is crying out for.

I have met many good people throughout the health care system, but the status quo which prevents them from really excelling, has to stop. The saying goes: “You cannot make an omelette if you do not crack a few eggs”. We cracked

a few eggs in Eric Williams, and all of a sudden 30 new beds have appeared; 30 new beds have appeared in Eric Williams, because I am holding the boards accountable. I am not “boofin” the board, but you applied for this job, management applied for this job, you draw a salary. You are going to be held accountable for your part of the realm, with the Minister, whoever it is sitting at the top of this pyramid, with the ultimate responsibility.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I thank you for this opportunity. Thank you very much. [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. Fuad Khan (*Barataria/San Juan*): [*Desk thumping*] Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise to contribute to this debate, not realizing that at this moment, I feel sort of *deja vu*. I feel as though I have to answer as the Minister of Health of this country, to somebody in Opposition, because you see, [*Desk thumping and laughter*] while listening to the hon. Member for St. Joseph, I was at pains to figure out, what is the—he is Minister of Health and my colleague, what has he done for this year? And I found—all I found is what happened last year, and it is the same as the budget, from the Member for Diego Martin North/East. So what I am thinking is that, I wonder if the Minister of Health took the cue from the Minister of Finance and read the same budget that was there last year, because he is saying the same thing this year that he said last year. So I was about to read the same speech that I gave last year, but I decided against that.

6.15 p.m

You see, when the hon. Minister says that the buck stops at the Ministry of Health, I began to think that, what is a buck? I always thought a buck was an Amerindian devil that sits on a buck and destroys something. You know, I was told that. I was told a buck in Guyana is something that brings bad luck to things. So when he says that the buck is in the Ministry of Health, I agree with him

[*Laughter*] because the buck is in the Ministry of Health, and the buck in the Ministry of Health is destroying the health system. But, at the end of the day, he has not blamed me. He has blamed everybody else and I want to put that to rest.

When we were having a lot of problems—[*Crosstalk*] I would take the blame, the same way he has taken his. He is taking his blame because he said he is the buck. [*Laughter*] The thing about it, I would take the blame because I was there before the buck. [*Laughter*] You see, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would deal with a lot of things that the hon. Minister said, because what he has done and said—he did not give credit where credit is due—that everything that he said that he is going to do was put in place by the People's Partnership before [*Desk thumping*] and I would tell you how. I would go to the last part of the NCDs.

The NCDs from the IDB came to me in 2013 or 2012—I cannot remember—and they produced this thing and said to me: “Minister, there is a problem that we need to do and we will be able to give the country of Trinidad and Tobago loan grants if we go according to problems with obesity, which I was doing already with fight-the-fat programme, childhood obesity, open the clinics and also have days of play to teach the children to play, because we have started that three years ago. That was ongoing in Eric Williams and throughout the country. We also had the biggest wellness days and NCDs days. We started with 5Ks.

It was the first time, the Ministry of Health—Miss Yvonne Lewis showed me and I promoted it where a soft drink had 15 teaspoons of sugar in it. We kept saying it was not the fat that is the problem, it was sugar in this country. [*Desk thumping*] We came to the realization that sugar was the problem for children and the NCDs, and I would educate the Minister. It is a combination that we found through PAHO together with CNFI with CARPHA that the problem was the

mixture of salt, sugar and fat that created what they called a sort of an enkephalin type of response and food addiction. We had the first NCD conference in this country—Australia was first—international conference with NCD child, through Professor George Alleyne. We did all that.

So when you say that we did nothing for NCDs, and you are going to do it, what we also did to combat the problems of the non-communicable diseases, we opened the health offices late, 24 hours so people could go in there and get their numbers checked. [*Desk thumping*] That is what we did. It was a two-fold process. All that was ongoing and it is now being stopped or curtailed.

The Carenage Health Centre, which was done in Diego Martin West was done as a prototype for health centres and primary health care services in this country. As a result of that, it was supposed to be opened 24 hours and serve the people for 24 hours. It is now closed on weekend, it is closed during the evenings after 9.00 and it is not giving the service it is supposed to give to the people. May I also as an aside say that Carenage Health Centre is solar powered. [*Desk thumping*] **Hon. Member:** Who built it?

Dr. F. Khan: We built it. We opened the health offices. I would tell you another thing, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We took little contractors in this country and gave them the opportunity to refurbish the health offices so it would be a standard for people to come to overnight, et cetera, and up to this day those contractors have not been paid by that Government. [*Desk thumping*] A lot of them are being threatened by suppliers and losing their homes and losing their cars to pay off that debt.

I spoke to the Minister of Public Utilities when he had CEPEP, but he was more impotent than the Minister of Health as the Member so said. [*Desk thumping*] I am not saying he is impotent, you know. I am saying as a Minister he

was impotent. So, what I am saying, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am calling on the Minister of Finance today, the hon. Member for Diego Martin North/East: pay those CEPEP contractors now. [*Desk thumping*]

You see, the hon. Minister went on and on and on about how bad the health system is and who is doing the bad things in the health system. You see, Mr. Deputy Speaker, two people could go down a road, the same road. Some people would see the worst part of the potholes on the road, some people would see the flowers on the road. I think the Minister has only seen the potholes on the road, he is not seeing the flowers. So attacking the RHAs and, in fact, in that manner of attack, they are going to get negative action. It is not the doctors and nurses alone. You have to make sure that the attendants, the ancillary staff, the biomedical technicians, the maintenance people, everyone is held accountable. You have to make sure, Mr. Minister, that the performance appraisals are true to form in the whole regional health authorities, because they are not true to form and you cannot fire anybody because they bring the performance appraisals and tell you that they are good. So you have to look at all that.

You see, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I just want to touch a little bit on the dialysis centre, which the Minister has claimed that he has started.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Restarted.

Dr. F. Khan: No, you did not restart that at all, I would tell you why. Mr. Deputy Speaker, that dialysis centre, the sod was turned when we were in office, because there was a legal problem that had to be hammered out between the Ministry of Health, the North Central Regional Health Authority as well as the supplier. The supplier changed from Fresenius to himself and back again. It was a whole potpourri of problems. Also, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the supplier had to get access to the government land at Eric Williams, and it had to be approved that this was okay

to be used for collateral. So that happened over the three years and we were able to come to a different agreement where things took place. So that is up and running.

But the Minister did not tell you about the women's outpatient centre that was built specifically for women, specifically for children, has not been opened after a year, and I am not hearing anything about it. [*Desk thumping*] That centre has everything that would give state-of-the-art treatment for maternal and foetal well-being. [*Crosstalk*] That was not meant.

But I heard about the Children's Life Fund and how on this side we are not contributing to the Children's Life Fund anymore, attack as if we were still in Government. So, I felt I was still a Minister.

You see, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Children's Life Fund came about as the first note by the hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar when she was Prime Minister, because before that if a child needed money to go away for treatment, you had to throw a bar-b-que, you had to throw everything and a lot of children died because \$60,000 was the cap that you could have gotten. In the Children's Life Fund, the hon. Member for Siparia put a cap of \$1 million for every single child. [*Desk thumping*] So when we say things like you cannot get it again and whatnot, in it had life and death situations, and that was determined by the board and the specialists who were linked to the board. So it was not a fault of anything. It was people wanting to get treatment for children for life and death situations, and they were approved. It took a while, but it was approved. In fact, at one point in time, a lot of people were approved, but did not take up the movement.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Couva Hospital. The hon. Minister of Finance, and I saw it echoed by the Minister of Health, said it was a construction site. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would tell you that hospital was built in phases. You

had a children part of it, a radiology part of it and you had everything on the children aspect of it and they had an adult part of it.

6.30 p.m.

I think, if my memory serves me right, well, the adult part was 120 beds, or something like that, and the children's part was 80-something beds—150. It was 220 in all. But on the part that we opened for commissioning there was a 3 Tesla MRI that is not seen in more than three or four countries of this world. There is a CT scanner; there are numerous ultrasound machines; there are numerous birthing areas; there are numerous incubators; and there are beds. The whole system is ready and wired to go—all the equipment, everything. The part of the construction site was the adult part of the hospital which was not ready to be opened.

We understood that in the neonatal unit in San Fernando where we tried to refurbish, there were pigeon droppings—and I think they may still be there—on those incubators in the San Fernando hospital. The incubators and the neonatal unit and the paediatric unit in Eric Williams in the women's hospital are overburdened. Sangre Grande is overburdened. Port of Spain cannot take any more children. So what do we do? Open the children part of the hospital and then you could do the adult after. [*Desk thumping*] And how do you do it?

I looked at the public/private partnership—and the public/private partnership is a difficult thing to manage. The Queen Mamohato Memorial Hospital was based in Lesotho, but it drained the health system—it drained the health system. Do you know why? You had to pay people. You had to pay the private sector to do what you had to do. So we looked at it and said no, we will go towards what they call opening in phases, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Opening in phases meant we open the radiology department first, because we had enough radiologists, we had enough equipment, and we start with radiology, and after radiology you go to

outpatient clinics. After you go to outpatient clinics, you go to accident/emergency and operating theatres. Then you would need a mortuary and an incinerator, not before that. When I opened the Scarborough Hospital it did not have a mortuary and an incinerator ready, or an oxygenator, but it was opened and functioning while that was being done. So I think the Minister made a serious error by attacking in that regard.

The RHA system, Mr. Deputy Speaker, was not done by this People's Partnership Government. It is a law that was basically, as they say, started in 1994 by the PNM Government—John Eckstein. He pushed it down the throat. I was a young doctor at the time in the northern branch of the medical association, and we opposed it because we said it was not going to work; we said it. Dr. Gopeesingh would tell you that—I mean the Member for Caroni East.

You see, the RHAs as a unit and law is a law that can work, but when you are strangled by a CPO and everybody else—which the Minister is not saying—the RHAs then take a back run. They are supposed to work as separate entities, corporate bodies, and they are not allowed to do that. So the Minister has to address that, not attack the doctors and nurses who are working. [*Desk thumping*] He is not supposed to do that. When you attack the board of directors—[*Interruption*] you are attacking the board of directors—he is attacking the board of directors. You have to decide whether you want to keep the RHAs as they are or throw the RHAs out. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Deyalsingh: Mr. Deputy Speaker, Standing Order 48(6), I never attacked doctors and nurses—never.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Member for Barataria/San Juan, I concur with the Member, so not “attack”. Find another word, please, or rephrase.

Dr. F. Khan: I withdraw that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I withdraw it, Member.

[*Crosstalk*]

Mr Deputy Speaker: Member for St. Joseph and Member for Caroni East, I have ruled. Proceed, hon. Member.

Dr. F. Khan: Mr. Deputy Speaker, his demeanour was that of an attack so I must have misinterpreted it.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Standing Order 48(6), I never attacked any person.

Mr Deputy Speaker: I have ruled. You said that you withdrew; proceed.

Dr. F. Khan: Okay, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I felt I was under attack though. [*Laughter*] I felt that way.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Standing Order 48(6), I never attacked anybody in the House, in the hospital, in the former Minister. I never attacked any body, any person, any profession, any doctor, any lawyer, any nurse, anything.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member, okay, fine. Let us go forward, please. You have rescinded your comment; continue.

Dr. F. Khan: Okay, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am very glad the Member got up, because I had forgotten I had to speak about mental health. [*Laughter*] I will talk about mental health now. You see, mental health in this country is about 25—no, I think it is more now—about 25 per cent of the population is undergoing mental health problems. The Mental Health Act needs to be revised, and what I am saying is that I saw nothing in the budget for mental health. I saw nothing in the budget for a lot of things.

In fact, as I speak about the budget it brought back a story to me, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Do you know the story about the goose and the golden egg? I think it is *Grimm's Fairy Tales*. “Not de gander, de goose.” Somebody came to me in the constituency office, and he said to me, “Member, that budget that the Minister has said, it seems to be a goose and the golden egg.” I said, “What do you mean by

that?” He said that the goose—I like to say “goose”—I will say “goose”, I was brought up in Caroni, so I will say “goose”. [Laughter] Okay, wait for the punchline, it is nice.

The Minister of Finance, the hon. Member for Diego Martin North/East—the economy before September 07, 2015, was an economy that laid a large golden egg and could be used. Then the Member for Diego Martin North/East came in, and because he has been getting some small golden eggs and not feeding the goose, what he has done in this budget is grab the goose, which is the economy, by its neck and put his hand right up the cloaca trying to grab the eggs out. He is trying to take the eggs out, but there are no eggs coming out because the eggs cannot be laid. That is what he said; this is what the budget is like. This business that the Minister is trying to find inside the golden goose—I am trying to figure out what he meant by that. That is what the budget basically connotes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was at pains to understand the hon. Prime Minister when he said that Sangre Grande hospital will be built. In fact I sat in this House and I was told, and I saw it over the air, “We are not building any hospitals. Why do you not refurbish what is there? What are you building hospitals about? Why are you building hospitals?” Hon. Member for St. Joseph you said that. “We do not need hospitals. We need to refurbish what is there.” I kept saying that our hospitals are not accredited. If you try to refurbish them, you are wasting money. Build the hospitals, because I had a master plan for Port of Spain hospital, San Fernando hospital, Eric Williams, Arima, Point Fortin and Sangre Grande. When we were building these hospitals, we were doing refurbishment work in Sangre Grande hospital for diagnostic centres.

There is an enhanced Sangre Grande health facility that is going to take over the primary health care. The casualty was done over. The blood bank was done

over. The pharmacy was done over; the maternity section was done over. The intensive care was enlarged and also there was a dialysis centre being run in Sangre Grande. So when you say there are containers, the PNM put the containers there. We did not put the containers there. I was working with the containers and building hospitals in Point Fortin, which was promised 20 years, Arima which was promised 20 years ago, they were on their way. [*Desk thumping*]

I heard nothing in this budget presentation from the Minister about the Oncology Centre. The Oncology Centre was going to be a state-of-the-art oncology centre. A centre that had two linear accelerators, a PET/CT scan, a cyclotron as well as a cyber knife, and also ultrasound facilities, as well as radio nuclear-type facilities that would have revolutionized cancer care in this country. That linear accelerator he speaks about, I put that in place before I left. The cobalt machine—[*Interruption*] yes, we did.

Mr. Imbert: Which one?

Dr. F. Khan: We put plans for that. [*Laughter*]

Mr Deputy Speaker: Members; hon. Member, I am on my legs. Member for St. Joseph, you had your chance, let us hear the hon. Member for Barataria/San Juan, please. Kindly proceed.

Dr. F. Khan: The cobalt machines were burning people's bladder, bowels, prostates, et cetera. We were building the Oncology Centre. We had increased the number of patients going to Southern Medical Radiotherapy Centre and Brian Lara to 500 patients. They were taking up the slack. While we were building the Oncology Centre, they have linear accelerators there. The reason why the cobalt machine was not, as they say, changed to a linear accelerator was because you had to redo the whole surroundings and structure to put the linear accelerator. We were able to find a linear accelerator that would fit in the cobalt machine area that we

would not have to spend too much money to do the lead shielding of the building. If you had put a linear accelerator in St. James, you were going to have to put a new lead structure to house that linear accelerator. We found one linear accelerator custom made to fit where the cobalt was. Tell me that is not true?

Mr. Deyalsingh: “Coulda, shoulda, woulda”.

Dr. F. Khan: And that is the Minister of Health—the buck. That is the buck we have in the Ministry of Health. Minister I am surprised you attacked the colleagues about it, but at least speak the truth. I am speaking the truth here, you know. [*Laughter*] You see, we put the things in place. We put that in place. It saddens me. I have been here since 1995. In 1995 when we came into the Parliament, we had a rundown area for an airport; one of the worst things you could find for an airport—and we want to have international trade. Mr. Panday’s government built an airport; one of the best airports, and we still use it.

When the PNM came into government in 2001, do you know what they did? They went and pulled down the roof of the airport and say, “Look how bad it is.” That is what they did, and it is the same thing that they are doing to the Couva hospital. They are trying their best to demonize the Couva hospital, because they do not want people to go inside and see how good it is. The people who go to the Carenage Health Centre said if that is the state-of-the-art that you are doing, we want it all over the country. [*Desk thumping*] Also, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when people go into the women’s outpatient centre and they see what is there, a First World building with First World services. I guess you would put your plaque on that.

The most I could do is indicate to the population what we did. I could talk about health right through. I could read a letter here that says the health sector has gone back to the bad old days of the PNM. Yes, and it talks about drug shortages,

et cetera. I will not go there because—drug shortages unacceptable, August 24, 2016; the Government's plans will fall short, and it keeps going on about cancer drug shortage, et cetera. Do you know why, Mr. Deputy Speaker? We realized that there was a problem with procurement, distribution, storage, supply chain action of drug shortage. We put things in place to deal with it. It was the medical committee headed by Vasant Bharath, myself, Minister Rambachan, Mr. Tewarie, ex-Minister Gopeesingh, we put our heads together with the RHA CEOs and Chairmen and came up with a plan to refurbish health centres, to put systems in place as a unit. [*Desk thumping*] That is what we did.

We could not have a Cabinet committee chaired by the same Minister who is running the sector; we did not do that, so that is what we did; a different level of thinking. You see, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is a reason for everything. Different governments work things differently, and at the end of the day the end result is the goal of service-oriented medicine.

We put in place a maternal review committee to develop recommendations to decrease maternal deaths and infant mortality rates. I will tell you about that. Maternal deaths—and that is why I asked the Member to name the dates when he said the infant mortality rates dropped, January 2015 to January 2016. That is what we did. Do you know why? For two long and for years they were counting it wrong. The infant mortality rate in Port of Spain was counted differently to the infant mortality rate in San Fernando, infant mortality rate in Mount Hope, infant mortality rate in Tobago and Sangre Grande. There is a specific criteria from the World Health Organization, I think, correct me if I am wrong, it is 24 weeks and 500 grams, and they must take a breath of life to count.

People were counting 14 weeks; they were counting 800 grams; they were counting 21 weeks. They were counting all type of things and putting it in the

system, and you were getting a skewed result. When I met with the UNICEF group I said that we had to redo it, and when we did it we realized that we were not that bad after all, and our infant mortality rate, together with what we put in place, we were able to show that that was the true result.

The Maternal Review Committee set out certain recommendations and we followed them and put them in place, and that is why the Minister is benefiting from that. At the end of the day, there is a no Director of Women's Health that was supposed to be there. I will go to the ambulance—the ambulance was a mess.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Who fixed it?

Dr. F. Khan: Not you. [*Laughter*]

Mr Deputy Speaker: Member for St. Joseph, that shouting across the floor.

Dr. F. Khan: I will tell you who fixed it. When we looked at the ambulance system, prior to it, was being run like this: the Ministry of Ministry of Health contracted a manager to run the Ministry of Health's ambulance, staff, et cetera, and they were not taking up certain parts of the system and most of the ambulances were down. To repair those ambulances and put them back on the road was a costly effort, which was the Ministry of Health's expense. We were able to have a proposal between the GMRTT and the Ministry of Health where there was a sort of semi-public/private system. Where the GMRTT would take up the slack of bringing in new ambulances, training paramedics, training EMTs as well as taking over the running of it. What we did was we were going to put I think \$100 or \$200 or less—it was \$200 on the calls, rather than \$180, and that would pay for that system. Put in electronic signatures, we were buying trolleys, because all that was a problem. The Minister benefited from that, and he said he did it. Okay, he did it, fine, but we put it in place same as the linear accelerator.

We are not going to have an Oncology Centre it looks like. So all in all

when you look at it that is my Minister of Health. I want the health sector to work because I work in the health sector. I have told the Minister time and time again, I am here to assist, because when I became Minister of Health in 2011, I was a new Minister. I called Mr. Jerry Narace, I called the Member for Diego Martin North/East and I called Mr. John Rahael for help and advice when I was in hot water, and you gave it.

The Nurses and Midwives Act that we passed to have specialist nurses, the Member for San Fernando West helped me a lot, so too the Member for Diego Martin North/East.

6.45 p.m.

We put in place specialist nurses, different systems in place, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You just have to go with it and run with it. The midwives, the maternity nurses, midwives, they had what they called “first entry” rather than going through RN, they went straight into it. Mental health nurse, straight in, not going RNs, so we are able to build the cadres.

One unfortunate part of it, we had a chief nursing officer when I was there who took a hands-off approach. Then another one who came and went to UWI. So we had a problem with chief nursing officers coming forward because the public service, the service commission they are the ones who sent the chief nursing officers. We “doh” hire them. And I came to a decision that I asked, if they could allow us to have a contracted chief nursing officer so we could hire them by advertisement not by service commission methods. Then you would have been able to have a chief nursing officer all the time. The same thing is going to happen to you, Minister, with the director of women health, the same thing because it is a public service post.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, how much time do I have?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: You finish at 6.58 p.m. That is your first 45 minutes.

Dr. F. Khan: Okay. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Port of Spain hospital, I want to touch on it because the Minister is making a song and dance about putting \$11 million in the developmental programme for the central block. That is a big mistake. You see, we have already done a structural analysis of the central block. It is done. We have all the results and it has shown that the central block needs to be not fixed, but removed or put buildings and trusses on the both sides to hold it. Going back and checking the structural integrity of the central block is wasting \$11 million.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the British Government through a company, I think was IHG and somebody else through the IDB, I think, anyway I could be wrong, but I am telling you, we had a plan for Port of Spain Hospital called the sustainable city's plan. The sustainable city's plan where the central block was going to be removed after we build a 10-storey structure where the engineering, the old buildings of the engineering system, the mortuaries, et cetera, were going to be removed and a 10-storey structure was going to go there to house the patients.

In that structure we were going to have a new accident and emergency. We were going to have a new nurses quarters, a new teaching centre on Jerningham Avenue, a new Ministry of Health area and it was going to be what you call a medical city. The British Government, they were going to finance it at, I think, 1 per cent, but only to start payment when the whole project was finished. You see, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that was the plan. The North West Regional Health Authority has that plan.

When I went to the Minister in the Ministry of Health there were no master plans. We put a master plan for Port of Spain, for San Fernando, for Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex, et cetera. What we also did, we put things in place to

develop the specialist centres of this country and diagnostic centres through the IDB. And that NCD movement that he is boasting about—sorry, the Member is boasting about—that was an initiative under the People's Partnership and the Minister of Planning and Sustainable Development, Mr. Bhoewarrie, Member for Caroni Central. They were negotiating with the IDB to develop a proper proposal and plan to move forward.

Now, all these things were going in place and I am going to tell the Members across there, it takes about three years or four years to start your projects and you are going to find out an election is going to come on you and you are going to have to rush them. The other Government that is coming in, maybe it would be yourself or us, will have to continue it. So when we start, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as you enter into government, you stop all the projects and systems in place, you are going to pay a heavy price for it because you are going to come back to them. [*Desk thumping*]

And the Minister of Health is coming back to all the programmes we put in place. He is coming back to them. He speaks to, I think, on the papers about 2,000 vials of morphine in one hospital and none in the other. You know why, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Because the system that we put in place was able to tag that. That has stopped and has gone back to the procurement people who were there since 1979. So as a result of that, that system stays on unless you change back to the system you put in place, rather than condemning me for the last year then you will know the supply chain system and where products are located and how you could move them around. But if you do not do that, you are going to end up in the same mess that is there for too long.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to shift gears a little bit. There is nothing much I can say to the Minister of Health except that I am there to help him, just

call me. [*Desk thumping*] Because at the end of the day, potholes, the potholes that I went in and the precipices that I went in and came out of, I can make sure that he does not go into those and the people of the country would benefit. It is open.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to touch on a couple of things. The budget—and I would like the Minister of Finance to listen to this. The online tax in his eyes may be a necessity because taxation is used for two things, for revenue collection or to change behaviour, and the taxes for some taxes which will hopefully change behaviour or get revenue. But the online taxes, Minister of Finance, I want you to look into this because the virtual world is a world that we could make a lot of money, the young people could make a lot of money. However, in Trinidad and Tobago our systems of online purchase is only for purchasing external goods. If a young person creates an app or creates something where money could come into the system, foreign exchange into the system in Trinidad and Tobago, there is nowhere that they have any merchant accounts in Trinidad and Tobago to allow external people of the world to put money into that account or through that system on an online trading programme.

So what happens, we could spend millions and billions, US \$1 billion per year to purchase goods, but we do not have the facility to make money. You see, we do not have the merchant accounts and if you have to do a business online, young people have to do a business online, what they have to do is to have a US account in a foreign country and it is difficult because our banks do not allow it. And I have something that says here, if the Government will collaborate with local banks and alleviate this issue, we can see a potential or massive amounts of forex entering our domestic markets through apps. Amazon purchases interactive, audiovisual content and games. In 2017, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the app market would be US \$77 billion. It is an industry of \$77 billion. Amazon net revenue was

\$107 billion in 2015. Our people cannot sell—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Identify your source, please.

Dr. F. Khan: The source—this was sent to me, it is www.entrepreneur.com article and there is another source www.statistical-data.com and it goes on, annualrevenue.com. That is what it is. But if somebody, as I say, wants to sell online, credit card purchases cannot be obtained for bringing money into the country. I may not be saying it 100 per cent correct, but the Minister of Finance could look at his technocrats and deal with it.

You see, the source for this one is charge.com and I want to read into the record:

“If you have a website with a shopping cart, you will need a merchant account in order to take payments. Specifically, you will need a MID (Merchant Identification Number) to integrate your merchant account into your website’s shopping cart. Because customers will not be swiping their credit cards using a (point of sale system), POS, you will not need any hardware to accept credit cards online. A merchant account provides a system to securely take the customer’s credit or debit card information, check to see if the customer has funds available to pay for the purchase, initiate the transaction, Once the payment is made, the credit card issued will transfer funds to the merchant service provider”—account—“who then credits the funds to the business checking account. This allows you to keep and accept payments online.

If your business...does not accept credit card payment, online, it can be left behind.”

I am not talking about Trinidad banks swiping your credit card by a point of sale system in a store and sending money to the Visa people. I am talking, speaking

about the young people doing online games. That is a big industry. Comics.com, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in San Diego has about 300,000 to 400,000 people in San Diego every year for comics.com and video games.

Our young people are able to tap into that video game, but they cannot be paid; not through PayPal Business Account, not through anything. And our banks are not allowing it. So, the Minister of Finance should look at this as a lucrative foreign exchange earner and deal with it.

You see, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if it is one thing you could say for the People's Partnership, we had innovative thinkers, [*Desk thumping*] and the innovation [*Crosstalk*] and I know the Minister of Finance will scoff at it, but he is "meh" friend, I will talk to him offline. He listens offline.

Mr. Imbert: We are not friends.

Dr. F. Khan: You will listen offline. You will listen to this offline. Trust "meh". Money coming in your pocket, US dollars.

You see, also the Member of Parliament for Pointe-a-Pierre touched on it. There is a young lady who gave me this paper because she is a friend of my daughter. She did, in the University of the West Indies in Jamaica, renewable energy. She got a first degree in renewable energy. She is doing her Masters now. You see, that young lady cannot get a job in Trinidad and Tobago and we are pushing renewable energy.

You see, she speaks about coastal erosion. She speaks about the Government of Trinidad and Tobago has set a target of renewable energy of 10 per cent of power generation from renewable by 2021.

This target coming from a country of renewable energy accounts for only 0.05 per cent of installed power capacity can be seen as ambitious however, this target coming from the richest Caribbean nation can also be seen as

unmotivated especially when compared to the targets, to the rest of the region. She talks about—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Now, you are quoting so therefore, you were given a name.

Dr. F. Khan: A letter.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: You will have to produce the name.

Dr. F. Khan: I do not have to. In Opposition you do not have to. *[Crosstalk]* You do not have to. You want “meh” quote May’s for “yuh”?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Proceed, hon. Member. I have ruled. Go ahead.

Dr. F. Khan: You see—*[Crosstalk]* but I can give you a name because the thing about it, she should be working in our energy industry. She should be working there.

You see, they speak about the municipal waste programme and the landfills of Trinidad and Tobago that produce methane gas, and methane gas can be used for energy production in Trinidad and Tobago. She also speaks about solar. Aruba’s airport is fully run by solar, so too Barbados has tapped into the solar market for water heaters. And it was the People’s Partnership that spoke about water heaters and solar power.

We need a wind assessment study for mapping potential location for wind farms for Trinidad and Tobago. And Jamaica has the IDB and Richard Branson helping them with wind farms along the coast and determining where wind farms are. You see, Mr. Deputy Speaker, innovative talk, and the Members for St. Joseph and Diego Martin North/East laughing at it. That is why we cannot go anywhere in this country.

You see, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we look at the budget on the whole, the budget is what they call a taxman budget. It is a taxman budget that does nothing to stimulate an economy: The budget—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member, you care to get your additional 10 minutes?

Dr. F. Khan: I would like to.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Proceed.

Dr. F. Khan: Thank you. You see, the budget being a taxman budget is a budget that takes from a system. And if you understand the multiplier effect, for every \$100 that you take out of an economy into a system that is not spent, you decrease—I do not know what the multiplier system is in Trinidad, but we were taught it was 10 times the amount of—so you take out \$1,000 for every \$100 that you take off.

7.00 p.m.

You see, when I spend \$100 to one person, A; that person spend it to person, B, C, D, and it goes on. So, each part of that \$100 generates more money as you go on. When you pull it out of the system you lose that whole trend. I am going to ask the Minister of Finance, a stimulus package for business people tagged to hiring of people will decrease the need for the Government to be the whole employer of the country. If you give a tax credit based on hiring and the amount of people that you hire and you drop the tax and you increase the manufacturer, it is a different way of thinking. You see, rather than telling the business people, raising the business levy, raising the unemployment levy, raising the green fund levy on gross sales, not net sales, and now you have increased the amount of national insurance.

So, what you have done, you have done that. So, you are strangling the business people from producing, rather than giving them an incentive to produce more, to hire more people. I am asking the Minister of Finance to consider that. It may be a different way of thinking, but it kick-starts an economy because we want expenditure. You see, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when one does that the economy kicks

off and it starts to move. However, if you do not be innovative and stimulating you are going to just get money from a system and spend it where you want to spend it without productivity. I am asking the Minister of Finance if he could look into that.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have tried my best to change the thinking process on that side, and I hope that the Minister of Health will see it fit to come to the next budget debate and tell us what he has done, and how it will be done, rather than continue to attack what was there before.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

Mrs. Glenda Jennings-Smith (*Toco/Sangre Grande*): Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is an honour and indeed a privilege to contribute today to this budget presentation delivered by the hon. Minister of Finance in this honourable House on September 30th.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I seek your leave to refer to my notes under section 44(10). This privilege that I have today I owe it to the constituents of Toco/Sangre Grande, and after one year I am humbled yet again by the opportunity to be their voice in this Parliament. I have had the benefit of listening to the debate over the last few days, and the opportunity to reflect on a number of things said by both my own colleagues and those who now occupy the benches opposite. At times I believed I was in an alternative reality because of the utterings of those opposite. At times too, I simply could not believe the rantings of those opposite as they made a mockery of the truth and manipulated figures to their own benefits.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have heard it said in this House before, “facts are stubborn things, they just won’t go away”. And therefore no amount of manipulation, twisting and turning will change the facts, as presented by the hon. Minister of Finance and those other Ministers who have spoken before me, into

anything else. [*Desk thumping*] This budget brought to this House by the hon. Minister of Finance is one which the people of Trinidad and Tobago recognize as a praise-worthy attempt to put our country back on stable grounds. [*Desk thumping*]
Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will now turn to crime.

Hon. Member: What?

Mrs. G. Jennings-Smith: Yes, I will now turn to crime. [*Interruption*] I have served—

Hon. Member: The issue of crime.

Mrs. G. Jennings-Smith: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have served—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: The issue of crime.

Mrs. G. Jennings-Smith: I will now turn to the issue of crime. [*Desk thumping*]
Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have served for more than 34 years in the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, rising to the position of an assistant Commissioner of Police. [*Desk thumping*] And during my many years as a police officer and particularly the last five years spent at the most senior ranks, the greatest pain I felt was when I saw policies for national security being created on the hoof, being formulated without regard for the consequences to be visited upon by those charged with the implementation of such policies.

My greatest pain was when I saw policies being articulated which clearly had no grounding in facts or figures, but were based solely on whatever model thoughts emerged at the end of another five-day weekend. My greatest pain was when I saw our line Ministers being changed with a frequency that would make the heads of even the heaviest of drinkers spin in drunken disbelief. My greatest pain was when I saw the blatant activities of a government which by its very approaches and non-action weakened the management of the police service by their apparent non-interest in the appointment of a police commissioner. My entry then into

representational politics was my response to yet another call to serve the people of Trinidad and Tobago, and more so the good people of Toco/Sangre Grande. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I stand here with the guidance and grace from the Almighty God, I want to encourage Members opposite, who for whatever reasons have been called to serve, to serve this country, to begin to do so with a bit of sincerity and goodwill. To remember the oath they took in this honourable House and put aside bitterness and selfishness. There is no other way to say it, no other way other than to speak the truth with passion, and back it up with delivery. We must reclaim our country and the communities. And on behalf of this Government I give the assurance that we will do so, one by one, block by block, one community after the next until, to the best of our ability, all of Trinidad and Tobago is safe again. [*Desk thumping*].

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, unfortunately, for five years and three months this country had neither strong nor sober leadership. Whilst important national security infrastructure was being dismantled rather than strengthened, national security assets designed to protect our porous borders were being unceremoniously returned, and the treaties and agreements left in abeyance; whilst national security Ministers were being hired and fired at whim, shopping for national security assets was conducted as though from a Courts catalogue, albeit the Chinese version. There is no other conclusion that one can draw than the ship of state was in dangerous hands during those five years. I sat and I looked on in disbelief when the left hand, aka the Prime Minister, was blissfully unaware of what the right hand, aka the AG, was doing. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, how else can the country make sense of the most recent utterances of the current Opposition Leader in respect of the ruling in the challenge

of the Bail (Amd't) Bill which was passed unanimously in this said House. According to a story carried in the Saturday edition of the *Trinidad Guardian* at pages A5 under the umbrella, "Opposition hails ruling". If ever anyone wanted an explanation for the national security crisis in this country faced under the last administration the answer is in black and white in front of them. [*Desk thumping*] Look in the mirror.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Ministry of National Security, after carefully reviewing the house of cards left by the last administration, has embarked on a whole-of-government approach to national security matters, which we are confident when embraced by the national community will not only significantly and positively enhance the public perception of their safety, but go a very long way to reclaim many of the communities currently considered lost to the criminal element.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it was highlighted in 2012 by the United Nations report that Caribbean nations have experienced significant increases in crime with regard to domestic violence, substance abuse and gang activities amongst our young people. The United Nations recommended that we effectively address crime prevention in a changing world, governments must examine the root cause of crime. Over the past year we have been analyzing our packages of programmes and interventions to ensure that we have proper alignment. So that as part of the national security apparatus and approach in going forward towards fiscal 2017, a social crime prevention framework was designed to build collaboration and trust amongst groups, to identify and prevent the common causes of crime in their communities.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the current Prime Minister, our Prime Minister, the hon. Keith Christopher Rowley, is fully cognizant of this approach, and he has

endorsed its implementation. Evidence of this can be found in the recent Cabinet decision to give life to a national crime prevention programme. This programme when implemented will see a greater collaboration amongst Ministries of government each bringing their sectoral expertise to the development of plans and programmes designed to reduce the prevalence of crime in communities, and significantly improve the levels of safety experienced by the good people of Trinidad and Tobago.

This approach, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will find its anchor in the local government reform that will be launched shortly. It will find its anchor in the establishment of 14 multisectoral community councils with collaborative leadership comprising representatives drawn from the business communities, the Ministries of Education, National Security, local government, Social Development and Family Services, community development, community representatives, NGOs and CBOs, faith-based organizations, all sitting around the same table to determine what is best for the particular community in which they function.

So, this whole-of-government approach will also see the involvement of 14 fully equipped and sanctioned municipal police units fully engaged with the communities. It is community policing taken to an entirely new level, way beyond that previously envisioned by commissioners Ewatski and Gibbs, who were unceremoniously hounded out of office by the previous administration.

7.15 p.m.

The whole-of-government approach, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will see the rationalization and more effective and efficient use of already scarce national security assets. The duplication of programmes that currently exists in many cases will be eliminated, because in our case, left hand will know what right hand is doing. The unfortunate tendency too, of double-dipping, engaged in by many

organizations will be all but eliminated through the utilization of this whole-of-government approach.

We have bolstered our efforts in the fight against crime by increasing our naval strength to stem the inflow of drugs and guns into this country. But the fight against crime, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is not going to be won only by placing additional police officers and soldiers on the streets in joint patrols. The fight against crime is not going to be won only by increasing the punitive powers of magistrates and judges. But the fight against crime is going to be won when each and every citizen, including the 41 of us who sit in this honourable House, accept that if we are not contributing to the solution then we are part of the problem. And I want to repeat it, if the 41 of us sitting in this House here, in this most honourable House, the nation depending on us, and if we are not part of the solution then we are part of the problem. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we on this side acknowledge that every day, that we have been elected to govern, to provide a safe place for the people of Trinidad and Tobago and with or without Opposition's support we will do it, we will do it. [*Desk thumping*] We will not throw our hands in the air like they did. We will fight back and that fight-back begins at the community level. As the Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of National Security this is my responsibility and it is one which I wholeheartedly and gladly embrace. I want to thank the Minister of National Security for having that confidence in me, for guiding me, for enabling me to perform these functions I have been doing since I have been in that Ministry. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, a key component in the national community crime prevention programme is the work that has already been undertaken by the Citizens Security Programme. As a police officer with long service I remember

only too well when this programme was launched by the late Minister of National Security, Mr. Martin Joseph, full of good intentions. The overall goal of the CSP is to contribute to a reduction in crime and violence in targeted pilot communities. The CSP focuses on addressing the most modifiable and proximal risk factors associated with crime and violence, utilizing community action as the primary strategy.

To date, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the programme has realized several noteworthy achievements and under my guidance I assure this House it will continue to positively impact the communities in which it is operational. Based on the data gathered so far, the work of the CSP has resulted in approximately 50 per cent decrease in crime in these partnered communities. And while those on the other side may scoff at these figures, it is abundantly clear to us that they are doing something right and the CSP team should be applauded for their efforts to date.

So such has been the success of the CSP initiative that in February of this year the CSP received an approved amended IDB loan agreement which enabled it to expand the scope of the project beyond the original 22 partnered communities to encompass 30 communities. Since then, CSP personnel have been engaging partners and stakeholders in an effort to fast-track expansion of its efforts which will now reach communities beyond east Port of Spain.

In fiscal 2016 the CSP will continue to implement continued expansion into additional eight new communities, the creation of youth friendly spaces in collaboration with other Ministries, the introduction of a community media production programme which has already started, the introduction of a ceasefire initiative. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the introduction of an injury surveillance system in hospital areas to reduce gun violence.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as alluded earlier, when I listened to the Members

opposite speak in this House it is almost as though they live in an alternative reality too, where nothing good exists in Trinidad and Tobago, not even in their own constituencies. This, of course, begs the question as to exactly, what do they do there?

I heard the Member for Couva North, for example, rallying in her contribution about the lack of focus on groups and youth groups, and youth development. And, again, I wonder about their level of engagement in their own constituencies. I say this very boldly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because none of them can in good conscience, if it still exists for them, stand here and tell this House they are unaware of the good work being done by the police youth clubs in their constituencies or by the prison youth clubs or even the fire service youth clubs. Collectively, Mr. Deputy Speaker, these three bodies, the police, fire and the prison services, through their youth clubs, interact with more than 11,000 young people on a daily basis.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, one of my most pleasant tasks during my tenure as a police officer was my interaction with the police youth clubs. You see, police youth clubs not only dealt with the young people but there was a sector for the parents, where the parents would come out with the young people, where the parents would take responsibility and be exposed to training. So I recognized that, as I do now, for us to ultimately curb the crime problem, particularly, we must focus on bending the tree while it is still young. So the police youth club affords that privilege for parents who we called young parents, together with their young children to be given that particular attention.

The Ministry of National Security therefore is involved in a number of preventative measures that target children at risk, of which the police youth club initiative is one. Under the guidance of police officers, police youth clubs aim to

assist in the development of more productive youths and to foster a more meaningful relationship between youth and the police service. This is merely one of the methods we employ to rebuild the relationship of trust between the community and the police.

Currently, there are 102 police youth clubs located across Trinidad and Tobago. I call on my colleagues and those opposite to get involved with the police youth clubs, do your part as I called on you before; if the 41 of us get involved we will make a difference. Youth between the ages of five to 25, regardless of their status and the environment from which they come, are eligible to become members of the club. Successful applicants undergo a six-month apprenticeship training at one of the established certified police youth clubs as determined by the Community Policing Secretariat and attend the one-week development training programme. During the current 2016 fiscal year, eight new youth clubs were added which cater for approximately 300 additional youth members.

The Trinidad and Tobago Fire Service Youth Club also continued their youth-based training programme in fiscal 2016. The Fire Service Youth Club has a current membership of 165 children. Unlike the police service this is not a commissioned unit of the Trinidad and Tobago Fire Service and therefore the club does not have a budget allocation for its operation. The club administration consists of firefighters and other individuals who could give freely of their time. Sponsorship from corporate entities and fundraisers assist with offsetting expenses that are incurred. I want to publicly applaud the efforts of these fire officers for their unselfish service to our nation. [*Desk thumping*]

The prison youth clubs: similar to the fire service, the Trinidad and Tobago Prison Service has no specific budgetary allocation for programmes targeting at-risk children. However, there are several programmes and intervention geared

towards incarcerated or detained juvenile offenders, funding for which is obtained from existing votes and through the generosity of corporate citizens, non-governmental and advocate organizations. The prison's youth club, in particular, aims to target at-risk children and youth between the ages of five to 29 years. The Commissioner of Prisons is the titled head of the organization and patron. But the day-to-day operations are managed by a First Division officer, appointed by the Commissioner and an elected executive.

To this end, a number of officers are also engaged in the affairs of the police youth club on a purely voluntary basis. There are currently nine prison youth clubs in Trinidad and Tobago and the total membership of each youth club range from 35 to 100 members. I want to also publicly commend the Prison Commissioner for his interest, [*Desk thumping*] shown not only in this programme, but his ability in retaining the assistance of the many stakeholders, NGOs and some of our cultural icons.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the coming year, we intend to strengthen our relationship with those charged with spearheading these programmes which target our at-risk youths. And, yes, we know that as successful as these programmes are we are being asked to do more with less. Mr. Deputy Speaker, more money has not always meant better quality or greater results. We learnt this the hard way from the maladministration of the country under the last regime. With the little we have we will manage it, prudently, responsibly, honestly and transparently, [*Desk thumping*] so that the good taxpaying citizens of Trinidad and Tobago can be assured of obtaining a proper return on their investment in these programmes. And quite recently, Mr. Deputy Speaker, at a prison's graduating programme I met with Mr. Len "Boogsie" Sharpe, Mr. Chris "Tambu" Herbert and such efforts, I want to applaud them today. I wish to also applaud the efforts of the NGO and the faith-

based organizations for doing their part, for the love of this country. [*Desk thumping*] Something which I say every time I stand, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I call on those opposite to just try to love their country, care for their country. [*Desk thumping*] Think about your country. Try, just try. So doing your part for the love of your country in preparing young men and women for their re-entry in community life too.

7.30 p.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is absolutely no doubt in my own mind that this Government, and in particular the Ministry of National Security, under the leadership of our Minister of National Security, an astute leader, has placed particular priority on those vulnerable youths in our society, those who merely, by accident of geography over which they have no control, face a greater risk of exposure to negative influences. In fact, all of the social programmes under the ambit of the Ministry of National Security are aimed at influencing positive behavioural changes in as many of our young people as possible, while addressing at the same time the social causes of crime.

This is one of the reasons that a programme like the Cadet Force, once regarded as the nursery for so many of our eminent soldiers and leaders of nation, must be strengthened and supported. The main objective of the Cadet Force is to train and inspire young men and women to be model citizens. Emphasis is placed on instilling in the cadet, qualities such as discipline, loyalty and duty. The Cadet Force continues to provide much needed support to young men in secondary schools throughout Trinidad and Tobago over the past year.

In the coming year, the Government will seek to expand this programme with the establishment of cadet units in 10 additional schools and, in so doing, increase and expand the influence of these units to our young people. The Ministries of National Security and Education are currently collaborating on a revised programme of activities for our cadet youths and this we anticipate will be rolled out in the coming year.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, none of these programmes should come as a surprise to those opposite, but I think they were surprised because I heard—all day long I was hearing absence of youth programmes, absence of intervention. But I, for one, will not be surprised if they are surprised. Mr. Deputy Speaker, these are low-hanging fruit which, if harvested properly, could make a significant dent in the current levels of crime and criminality being experienced in some communities. If through these programmes youths can be led away from a life of crime—because they are exposed instead to a diet of alternative to crime and violence—then our living might not be in vain.

Hon. Member: All right.

Mrs. G. Jennings-Smith: Let us all say: then our living shall not be in vain—both sides of the House. Another of the socially-grounded initiatives aimed at providing alternatives for our young people is the Civilian Conservation Corps Programme. Every day this state-sponsored youth-oriented training programme that is administered by the Ministry of National Security and managed by the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force, keeps

1,400 young people actively engaged in productive activities between 7.00 a.m. and 4.00 p.m. in a supervised environment.

The critical achievement of this programme is its ability to curb the rising incidence of crime committed by youths between the ages of 18 and 25. Through this programme, we are able to initiate interventions that will assist in fostering socially desirable behaviours among youth and create well-balanced citizens. The programme also aims to develop in young adults an understanding and sensitivity to the natural environment. This is achieved primarily through a collaboration with the Forestry Division of the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries.

You will recognize, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that all the programmes I have spoken of thus far require a significant contribution from Ministries other than the Ministry of National Security. We, at the Ministry of National Security, do not engage in ostrich-like behaviour. We will not bury our heads in the sand and pretend that everything is all right and these programmes I have mentioned will be the panacea for all our problems with young people. To the extent that there will always be those who find themselves on the wrong side of the law, or who are deemed to be potential guests of the State of Golden Grove, we have a responsibility to act early.

[Desk thumping]

To this end, the Military-led Training Programme, MILAT, targets youths who show evidence of social exclusion, require individual attention, exhibit a disinterest in education and training, suffer from an absence of

effective parental or guardian influence and provision, display an absence of respect for authority and a lack of moral sense of direction. The primary objectives of the MILAT Programme are to reduce the loss of potentially productive human capital from the national skill base, create a rehabilitative intervention that strengthens the success capacity of the education system. Beneficiaries' details can include, but are not limited to, victims of domestic violence, socially displaced persons, unemployed persons, persons with disabilities, persons in households living in poverty, persons living with HIV-AIDS, ex-prisoners, prisoners, deportees, probationers, substance abusers, athletes and at-risk vulnerable communities.

In the last fiscal year we have been able to refine the policy for enlistment into the academy whilst simultaneously recording a 70 per cent retention rate for participants. I must applaud the efforts of Major Cheryl Richardson and her hard-working team which comprised both civilians and officers. Being able to maintain a high retention rate must be applauded. We have also regularized the period of schooling at the academy for two years and added five new teachers to the staff of the academy. We are also seeking to reactivate the parent support committee as we earnestly believe—and all the literature supports this—that if we do not work with the parents alongside the children, then we might as well send them back into the same environment untouched.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have taken the time—and it was a long time—*[Laughter]* to point out to the national community and to those opposite, the

many programmes and initiatives which fall under our purview, and my purview as the Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of National Security. All these initiatives are designed to deal with the problem of crime and criminality at source. It is here. If we get it right, then we can make the most significant dent. All of us are painfully aware that the crimes being committed in our country are the actions of a minuscule percentage of our population.

We on this side believe if we can reduce the number of possible recruits for the gangs, then we would have made a difference. We believe if we can open the eyes of communities to see the alternatives available for their sons and daughters, we would have made a difference. We believe it is possible—and we will not relent in this fight to make Trinidad and Tobago a safe place for every citizen. [*Desk thumping*]

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would not be in this position today were it not for the good people of the Toco/Sangre Grande constituency who, on September 7th last year, first reposed their confidence in me. It is through them that I have the privilege and the honour to stand in this august Chamber, and so to all of them, I offer my sincerest appreciation and gratitude.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in July of this year I held a stakeholder's consultation with the community members of my constituency to enable them the opportunity to highlight some of the issues that were of concern to them and to chart a relationship of working together as one. We are now

working to ensure that the issues would be prioritized to the benefit of the majority. This budget, and the operations of the Government, will impact significantly on my constituency and it has the potential to significantly enhance the quality of their lives. And so, I call on them today to embrace every single opportunity presented by this budget, and the wider operations of our Government.

There is no doubt, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the introduction of the rebate on electricity bills for low-income households will find favour with large sections of my constituency. This rebate potentially leaves more disposable income in the hands of the home-owner and therefore allows for the purchase of more essential items. Oh, what a happy day it was, when my colleague, the Minister of Public Utilities, decided to launch this initiative in the Toco/Sangre Grande district. I thank you, Minister. [*Desk thumping*]

More importantly, though, for the people of Toco/Sangre Grande, are the projects which were once championed on the political hustings but which now find their way from ideas to reality. None of this happens in a vacuum. It happens because a Government understands that it is empowered to enhance the quality of lives of all citizens, irrespective of their political affiliations and irrespective of where accidents of geography caused them to be located. It is precisely because we, in the PNM, understand this, that this Government has articulated its plans for the holistic development of the entire eastern block of Trinidad, alongside other developmental works to take place throughout the length and breadth of our twin-island republic.

These plans, Mr. Deputy Speaker, articulated in our 2015 manifesto, which has now become official government policy, are by no means pie in the sky plans plucked out of the minds of those more concerned with personal aggrandizement and lining the pockets of their friends and financiers. These are the plans of sober minds, crafted with great care and deliberation so as to ensure that maximum benefit can be derived by everyone involved and affected by them.

In our 2015 manifesto, the PNM indicated that it would undertake a number of initiatives to ensure the development of this eastern region, not least of which would be the construction of the fast-ferry port to accommodate travel between Toco and Tobago. Indeed, in our manifesto, we said the following: that we will construct a first-class road to Toco and a new fast-ferry boat port in Toco, thus providing—sorry, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will repeat. In our manifesto we said that we will construct a first-class road to Toco and a new fast-ferry port in Toco, thus providing a faster alternative sea route to and from Tobago, from East Trinidad, [*Desk thumping*] and opening up the entire north-east region of Trinidad for new industrial, residential and commercial development.

We also indicated in our manifesto that we will extend the Churchill Roosevelt Highway from its present termination point at Wallerfield, through Cumuto to the Eastern Main Road in Sangre Grande and a ring road around Sangre Grande. This highway is to be designed to freeway standards and be compatible with the proposed extension from Sangre Grande to

Wallerfield. It comprises the construction of a new four-lane freeway over a length of approximately 12 kilometres.

There will be major interchanges at the Churchill Roosevelt Highway in Cumuto, Cumuto junction and Eastern Main Road, Sangre Grande. The main highway construction will be done through virgin territory whilst the interchanges will be done at existing accesses. There is absolutely no doubt in my mind that these plans are evidence of the PNM's belief that modern and strategically planned infrastructure is essential for the development of Trinidad and Tobago.

7.45 p.m.

I am very happy to report, though, that these are no longer plans, that the steps to bring them to fruition have already begun. I am sure that like me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you would have seen advertisements in the newspaper placed by the National Infrastructure Development Company (NIDCO) for the request for proposals, for consultancy services, for sites selection and the conceptual designs for fast-ferry port in Toco. Similarly, a cursory glance through the NIDCO website will reveal how they are actively pursuing the construction of the road network.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am sure in your own travels through the east coast you would have noticed the mushrooming of small and micro businesses along the roads that lead from Valencia to Toco, owing in no small part to the domestic tourism that draws travellers from far and wide to the beaches at Salybia, Mathura, Balandra, Cumana, Toco and Matelot.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the constituents of Toco/Sangre Grande are well aware of the levels of commercial development and the explosion of opportunities that will become possible when this fast-ferry port in Toco is constructed and

commissioned. They are also well aware of the level of residential development that will take place once this new network of roads is constructed and commissioned, and they are very well aware of what these developments will do to the relative prices of properties in this constituency.

I will leave the Members of this House to imagine the endless possibilities for wealth creation that are bound from these two initiatives. I will however—
[Interruption]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member, your speaking time has expired. You care to avail yourself of the additional 10?

Hon. G. Jennings-Smith: Yes, thank you.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Kindly proceed.

Hon. G. Jennings-Smith: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I will, however, extend a caution to those on the other side that the land grab that took place in their own constituencies, when the highway that was originally intended to move simply from San Fernando to Point Fortin began to meander through Debe and Mon Desir, through swamp land and protected areas, will not happen in Toco/Sangre Grande.
[Desk thumping]

You will not find massive places and supermarkets being built, smack in the middle of the proposed areas—in the middle of the proposed roads, sorry, requiring millions of dollars in compensation to be paid to allegedly innocent property owners who had no idea a highway was going to be built there. I caution them to keep their ways to those who are accustomed to it. The people of Toco/Sangre Grande are decent honest people, yearning for their share of the national economic pie, and as long as I am their Member of Parliament I will do everything in my power to ensure that they receive it.

At this point, I want to give thanks to the Minister of Health for the proposed

hospital in Sangre Grande; [*Desk thumping*] to the Minister of Works and Transport for reviving the bus service to Matelot and to start repair of the roadway; [*Desk thumping*] to the Minister of Housing and Urban Development for the distribution of housing. We look forward to more distribution, Mr. Minister of Housing and Urban Development; [*Desk thumping*] to the Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs for the indoor facility in Sangre Grande. We are very thankful for that; the Minister of Community Development, Culture and Arts for the opening of our Montevideo Community Centre. We thank you for that; [*Desk thumping*] to the Minister of Public Administration, we are poor people in Toco. We enjoy the free services that you give us on those buses; to the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries for repairs to our fishing depots; [*Desk thumping*] I want to say thanks especially to the NGOs, Digicel, for providing us with the parks; [*Desk thumping*] to the Minister of National Security for our proposed police station in Mathura and Matelot; [*Desk thumping*] to the Chairman of the Sangre Grande Regional Corporation, the councillors, thanks for your support in maintaining our constituency; [*Desk thumping*] to the Minister of Planning and Development for assistance for our programmes in the Ministry of National Security. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have sought through my intervention today, to lend some clarity to this House on the work being undertaken by the Ministry of National Security in its multipronged approach to reducing crime and criminality in Trinidad and Tobago. I have put on the table the national crime prevention programme and a whole-of-government approach to tackling the issues before us. I have alluded to the collaborative framework which will guide this process and which to some extent is already doing so, and I have highlighted the sterling contribution of some of our flagship programmes.

I want to thank my own Minister of National Security for his collaborative support and confidence he has bestowed on me in these areas. Not forgetting the PS of the Ministry of National Security and members of staff, along with the Minister of Planning and Development, again, for her continued interest and support in the activities of the Ministry. I have to commend you a second time because of your support and continued guidance. I therefore commend these to my colleagues and to those opposite whose proclivity for selective hearing and understanding continues to astound me. I stand, therefore, in total support of this budget presented by my colleague, the most hon. Minister of Finance, and I pledge my continuing efforts to ensure that the good citizens of Trinidad and Tobago enjoy a better and brighter future under the People's National Movement. [*Desk thumping*]

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

The Minister of Works and Transport (Hon. Fitzgerald Hinds): Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you very much [*Desk thumping*] for this opportunity to make my small contribution to this very more important debate. I wish to speak a bit about the Ministry of Works and Transport, of course, and a bit about the constituency of Laventille West and, in fact, Laventille in general for the ensuing year. I propose to demonstrate that in the Ministry of Works and Transport we were about three things in the last year: saving money, saving time and saving lives.

What did I meet when I went into the Ministry, Madam Speaker? Between the PURE Programme—a very important aspect of the Ministry—the URP—very important—and NIDCO, the National Infrastructure Development Company and the core Ministry, I met massive debts. We owed \$772 million to contractors. We owed \$259 million in back pay between PTSC, the Airport Authority, Port

Authority and a couple others. I want to say that we have managed to pay roughly half of some of the debt to contractors, and we have paid some of the money in back pay to some of our stakeholders.

I had a look at, of course, the estimates for fiscal 2017 and compared it with fiscal 2016. In 2016, in the Highways Division, between the Infrastructure Development Fund and the Development Programme for 2016 we had \$110.7 million. This time it is \$75.5 million. In the PURE Programme, in 2016, we had \$210 million. This time around it is \$165 million. Overall, Madam Speaker, we had in 2016, \$2.63 billion; on this occasion it is \$2.26 billion. Cuts, yes, but in my honest view, in the circumstances, reasonable cuts and most of all in my view necessary given current circumstances. Things are simply not the way they used to be.

Some of the debt of which I just spoke, including the back pay, had to do with a 14 per cent settlement that the UNC Government resolved with trade unions before they left office—14 per cent—and it is really about 20 per cent when you consider the allowances that go along with the basic salary increases. So all together about 20 per cent and they did that. Two and half years and thereabout ago, knowing full well at that time that the economy was in deep trouble. They knew that because that is precisely the time when their started plundering NGC funds, \$10 billion and, you know they burnt that out. So they knew that we were having trouble at that time, but, you see, of course, massive rape of the economy was taking place, wholesale rape and plundering. So while that was happening, there were those who had to pretend that everything was fat and all was well, because otherwise it did not make sense to them.

Madam Speaker, I told this House before, inside of that debt I met about \$60 million in my Ministry, in the core Ministry, people making claims for \$60 million without a single written contract, not a line. That Government oversaw that. In

some cases there were contracts issued, signed, awarded, signed off claims for payment but no work. None whatsoever. The Member for Tabaquite, when he spoke, told this House that my Ministry was given \$101 million in the Consolidated Fund and spent 62. That might be correct. In the IDF \$800 million and spent just over \$350 million. That too might be correct. But there is good reason for that. When I got in there as Minister, given the anecdotal evidence that I had, and given my knowledge that a lot went wrong in the Ministry of Works for the last five years, I could not simply run on the track that “dem gouti leave for me to run” you know, because that was a reckless track, that was a seeping track, that was a leaking track. I could not do that. *[Interruption]*

Madam Speaker: Member! Member, I believe—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Singh: Madam Speaker, it is offensive, Standing Order 48(4).

Madam Speaker: Member, I do not find it offensive, but it is unparliamentary. So I will ask you to just withdraw and say it in a way that you are quite capable of saying it.

Hon. F. Hinds: I thank you very much. It was metaphor, Madam Speaker. Maybe it was a little colloquial. I should have said “those agouti”. *[Laughter and desk thumping]* But in any case, I withdraw it. I withdraw it.

Madam Speaker: Members, I have noticed a practice is developing of protracting and excessive thumping of the desk. That can constitute gross disorder. But I was on my legs and, Member, when I have ruled I would really appreciate if there is no back talk. You have withdrawn and I would like you to say it in a way that is more becoming of this House. Thank you.

Hon. F. Hinds: I withdraw it simpliciter. Madam Speaker, let me put it differently then. I had to stop that train. Jessica James and her friends were upon it. I had to stop that train. I could not run on that.

Madam Speaker, the Member for Tabaquite asked very glibly in this House where the \$61 billion gone, implying to those who would listen to his misguided meandering thoughts that this Government wasted \$61 billion. Even in that with the documents in front of him he is unable to speak the truth. In fact, the figures revealed that we expended some \$52 billion—the revised figures. Even that. And then I had to remind myself, and let me remind the Member now, he knows full well, he has been around here a long time, that some 61 to 65 per cent of all the allocations unfortunately in this country is spent on salaries and emoluments. He knows that, but yet he gets up here and he says so.

8.00 p.m.

He also told us very glibly, “you all are going to”—and I did not rise on Standing Order 48 although I knew it was not true—“you all going to shut down URP and shut down CEPEP” when in front of him, there are allocations for both, in this fiscal year, but he stands up here and says that. They cannot be relied upon to speak the truth even when it stares them in the face. Madam Speaker—and I had to sit here for the last few days and hear the Member for Siparia, the Member for Tabaquite, the Member for—well, all of them and my friend from Couva North. Imagine, I heard Members on the other side telling us they cannot trust the PNM. “Ah say oh God, what we reach to. Oh Lord, what we reach to.”

Madam Speaker, “they asking for roads. They entitled to do that, they represent people. They asking for water, they asking for electricity, they asking for playfields”. They are accusing the PNM of discrimination. I wonder sometimes if my colleagues on the other side really listen to themselves. All of that as though, as my friend from St. Joseph pointed out earlier today, it is as if nothing happened for the last five years and everything in Trinidad and Tobago began, originated, on September 7th or the 8th. But I know, and sensible people would know, all of the

troubles this country is in, they have a direct hand in it. They are the ones who brought us to where we are [*Desk thumping*] because when we had, they squandered, they wasted and other things.

Madam Speaker, let me give you quickly. I saw documents in my Ministry where a woman from Gasparillo was recommended by my friend, the Member for Tabaquite, as a Material Supervisor in the Unemployment Relief Programme, Lorna Ramjugsingh. I saw those documents. She was put on the evaluation committee in the URP. That is, for those who do not know, the little team that would assess bids and tenders for contracts and award them accordingly. She was made chairman of that committee. Went on, along with that committee, to award a contract to DJ Construction Limited on July 10, 2015 in the sum of \$463,317.75 to do a single-storey building at Rochard Road in Barrackpore, so-called package A. The tender was signed by some Shelly Lana Ramjugsingh of SS Erin Road in Penal. And then, for the same package A, they awarded a contract to P & Caroo General Contractors Limited for \$581,428. The same building, virtually the same work.

And then, on the same July 10, 2015, the same day, a contract to DJ Construction Limited again, package B this time, same job, Rochard Road, Manohar Trace, same job, \$497,363.50 and then another contract to Drojor, D-R-O-J-O-R—“yuh see the DJ inside of there”—General Contracting Services for \$541,489 on the same job, and the tenderer, on that occasion, was Alana Sirjoo of 1277 SS Erin Road, the same address as in DJ Construction. So we have DJ Construction, \$463,000; Drojor Contracting Services \$497,000; P & Caroo \$580,000.

Mr. Imbert: All for the same job?

Hon. F. Hinds: Same job, right there, same day. And hear this, that is not all,

Madam Speaker. Nepali Trace Activity Centre, package B, DJ Construction Limited, again, \$497,490 plus VAT. The same Shelly Lana Ramjingsingh is the tenderer on that one. Then package B to Drojor Contracting Services, \$470,860 plus VAT. Alana Sirjoo signing that one, same address as DJ Construction Services. Then package B, in that one, P & Caroo General Contractors Limited, \$504,720 plus VAT. Same job, same work.

While all of this is happening, Lorna Ramjingsingh, who was recommended by the Member for Tabaquite as Material Supervisor, is chairman of the tenders committee, hardly on the job—the records show consistent sick leave—issuing contracts to those three companies. And we notice from the paper trail that the same email address—“yuh know they like tuh quarrel about emails”—is used consistently on the documents. Let them quarrel about that! And we have the email, we have everything right here, all the documents.

So, Madam Speaker, I have these documents and when I saw that—let me just tell you what the internal audit says because all of these contractors that I told you about, they are making claims. We decided under the guidance of our leader and the Minister of Finance that we cannot just rush out there and pay them because if we did that, we will be throwing good money after bad. So, we decided before we pay a cent we must at least do some checking, and hear what the auditor, the Internal Auditor inside of the Ministry of Works and Transport tells us: a site visit was made—well, first, DJ Construction Limited submitted the lowest bid for both contracts. The other two contractors, Drojor General Contracting and P & Caroo, it is to be noted that the handwriting on all the tender submissions appeared to be the same [*Interruption*] and goes on to say—a site visit was made on August 29, 2015 by the internal audit along with Mr. Kenneth Edwards, Project Supervisor for Penal/Fyzabad. It was observed that no work was done at all at Nepali Trace.

[*Interruption*] None. Residents were interviewed and they had indicated no activity centre was constructed at Nepali Trace.

Mr. Imbert: “And they send the invoice?”

Hon. F. Hinds: “Yes, they claim, big money.” And some of my colleagues in here quarrelling about paying contractors week after week. So, Madam Speaker, that is not all.

Hon. Member: There is more?

Hon. F. Hinds: “It have plenty, plenty, plenty more.” I have another one here. A claim I face for \$623,415 by Powermac Rentals Limited where the tenderer is one Vishnu Balroop for box drains. “We decide we checking as well.” Madam Speaker, no drain exists.

Mr. Imbert: What?

Hon. F. Hinds: None.

Mr. Smith: Yes, in the Treasury. [*Laughter*]

Hon. F. Hinds: Officials in the Ministry, in the programme, URP and otherwise, signed off on the job with signatures that the work was 100 per cent completed.

Mr. Imbert: Police, police, police.

Hon. F. Hinds: Yes, police. When I saw this—and I want to take the opportunity to point out for those who missed it, not everybody in this country subscribes to that behaviour, eh. [*Desk thumping*] There are public servants in this country who stand by their oath just as we on this side stand by ours and it is they who identified these things and brought it to the attention of those to whom it must be brought. And as a result, I have instructed the Permanent Secretary in my Ministry to send this matter: one, to the police for the attention of the Anti-Corruption Investigation Bureau and the Fraud Squad and two, to the Public Service Commission to deal with any public servants who might have erred in the course

of this.

And that is not all. Happy Hill Hindu School. I would not take my time to go through all the details except to let you know that when the auditors went out there, this is their report: all tender documents—yes, well let me give you a little bit of details. This one is \$485,000, Hapsin General Contractors Limited.

Hon. Member: Not DJ again?

Hon. F. Hinds: “Ah next one.” All tender documents were incomplete, only the signatures of the contractors were seen on the tender documents. No figures were seen with respect of the items of work, yet on the recommendation for the contract form, the evaluation form, the sums of \$515,901.50; \$485,403.50; \$524,086.05 respectively were quoted. The contract completion report and the authorization for payment certificate were both dated April 24, 2015 and reflected that works were 100 per cent completed. Both were signed by various officers including Acting Works Supervisor III, and I will save his name for later. The contractor’s invoice was a lump sum figure and did not provide details. A site visit was made to Happy Hill Hindu School by the auditor and others. The following observations were made:

- It appears that no excavation and earth works were undertaken.
- No pavement marking using thermoplastic was taken.
- Audits cannot determine where and how the figures quoted on the evaluation form were derived, except for the contractors’ signatures. A number of persons, including officials of the Ministry, certified that the work was 100 per cent complete and the awarding of this contract—

Hear the final close on this one, signed by the auditor:

- The awarding of this contract appears fraudulent and warrants the need

for further investigation.

[*Interruption*] This too, yeah, I am sending to the police.

Mr. Imbert: Because that is just a sample.

Hon. F. Hinds: All right. That is just a sample. I do not want to spend all my time talking about that but I had to sit here for the last few days and listen to my friends on the other side accuse us and ask us where the money gone. Well, now you know. [*Desk thumping*] At least now, you are reminded.

Mr. Smith: “They coulda finish the hospital.” [*Laughter*]

Hon. F. Hinds: Madam Speaker, as I said, there is more. When I went into the Ministry, I met a weak Ministry of Works and Transport and it frightened me because I know we live on some faults in this country, geological faults. Seismic issues face us. “They say we due for ah big one. “ And I always worry, genuinely worry, if we get “ah big one” like Haiti, how will we manage. From the day I went into the Ministry, I was saying to the PS and those who were around me, the technical people in there, how will we react to a major disaster.

A few days ago we had some flooding in Barataria, we were all over the place. We had a landslip on the Saddle Road in Maraval, I had to get external help in order to do it very, very quickly. The Ministry was weak after all of the billions we spent for the last five years, weak and we were relying on external services, contractors. If it only rained and there was a little bit of rubble in the road, we would bring in contractors, pay millions of dollars. I told you, my task was to save the taxpayers of this country money. [*Desk thumping*] And I boastfully say here tonight, even if we did nothing else, just came to Government and stand at the gates of the Treasury and outside every Ministry, this country is in a much better position than it was in the last five years, [*Desk thumping*] even if we did nothing else. Because you know, at least, these guards are not sleeping and these guards

are not turning a blind eye for all kinds of things to happen in your shop.

The trucks were derelict, equipment derelict, staff largely unmotivated and unproductive. Our Agua Santa plant which produces asphalt where we could use it to patch potholes for ourselves, that was not working. I spent money to fix it, money to fix all of the trucks. In fact, we had a major landslide on the Saddle Road in Boissiere some time ago, and in the haste to move it from there, to clear the road to allow passers-by to go and drivers, we moved the dirt and we put it by the Savannah.

We had a mountain of dirt by Queen's Park East. And I was so proud, on Saturday evening I called them and I told them I wanted it removed, and by Sunday at 3.00 a.m. it was finished because trucks of the Ministry of Works and Transport, that we repaired, had been out there rolling and carried it all away. [*Desk thumping*] That was not so when I got there, but I do not get and boast every week and talk foolishness in this country. Like Brian Lara, "I talk with meh bat", [*Desk thumping*] to get the job done.

Now, our Agua Santa plant has so far produced 573 metric tonnes of asphalt and we are able to attend to some of the small matters that the Ministry of Works and Transport could attend to.

That was a place where people coming out of university used to come to learn, to get their feet wet in the engineering field. All of that died.

8.15 p.m.

So now, I heard my friend from Couva North talking about, throwing across the floor at me facetiously about I should pave a pothole. Well let me tell her, one of the things I did, because I am so embarrassed, when I consider that this nation is 54 years old, when I consider the last five years how much money we spent and all in Port of Spain: Frederick Street, Richmond Street, Henry Street, is pothole, I am

embarrassed. I wonder where is all the expertise, where is all the money we spent since independence. And since they were good, the former Minister of Works and the one before him and the one before him, how come I get so much complaint about bad road every minute, every day, everywhere in this country? If they were so good I should not have that problem. The roads would have been as smooth as my black skin and I would have been all right. But that is not the case. It is as if we are starting from new.

So you know what? I asked my Ministry, all the work supervisors in the various districts around the country, to tabulate for me the number of potholes they would find. They came back with a figure of about 17,800 and I am happy to let you know, former Minister of Works, we have done about 12,500 of them. I heard my friend talking about I must pave one—12,500. And not just patch, patch with quality. And so much patch that right now, I have just gotten the Cabinet approval. The Director of Highways and my PS should be travelling shortly to look at a certain modern piece of equipment which someone showed me on Facebook that you would use to patch the road far more efficiently. I hope they like it when they see it. I hope we could afford it. I will import one in the morning. [*Desk thumping*] And when I see holes I like to patch, so keep quiet.

Madam Speaker, drainage, I went in there. I knew the rainy season was impending. I live in the Maraval area. I have seen the suffering in La Seiva in Maraval, in Carenage, in Diego Martin and I asked the experts in my Ministry to identify for me all of the major watercourses across the country. I called in every single regional corporation, met with them personally at my office and told them what the programme would be. We decided to collaborate. Forget the UNC thing. Forget the PNM. This is Trinidad and Tobago. They all agreed and to their credit we started sharing equipment around, doing as best as we could and I tackled it,

Mamoral River, Santa Cruz River, this one, Diego Martin, Maraval.

We had some rains last week and, knock on wood, I am being told by a former Chairman of the Diego Martin Corporation, he boasted here. I do not boast, but he told me not a bit of flooding in Diego Martin last week. None. [*Desk thumping*] Because we cleared the drains properly, the rivers properly and the corporation, led by Katty Christopher, got down to do that which was her responsibility and we have had no problem and we intend to keep it so. [*Desk thumping*] I know she is a boss and I urge all of the corporations to do similarly. We had flooding in Barataria last week, I have called them in to tell me what was the cause of it and once they tell me I am going to tackle it.

I called the Mayor of San Fernando. They had some problems in the La Romaine area. Once I identify what the problem is I am going to send in the troops and we are going to deal with it.

Let me congratulate the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force because when I called on the Engineer Battalion, the Second Battalion out of Camp Cumuto, they came and they stayed the course with us, and I want to thank the Chief of Defence staff and I want to thank his men for their contribution; all of that. [*Desk thumping*] When I saw the bill that they sent me; the bill to have done that was about \$55 million along the track that they left for us to run on. But I did most of that internally and I saved this country about \$40 million. [*Desk thumping*] “Again, ah not talking, talking, talk. Ah talking wit meh bat.”

Patching statistics—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Gopeesingh: And you are scoring singles.

Hon. F. Hinds: Well you used to play cricket but that is why you failed.

Mr. Smith: “Duck right through”.

Hon. F. Hinds: Yeah, yeah. Madam Speaker, patching statistics. I just want to

tell you there is surface patching, there is deep patching. When we contract out, service patching costs about \$309 per square metre, deep patching, \$677.04 for deep patching. We do it in-house and it costs, from the statistics and these are analyzed by the staff in my office and they sent me these figures, based on their records, actual records, we do it in-house between 2015 and now, 2016, our surface patching costs \$157 per square foot and our deep patching \$302, a saving of 50 per cent across the board. [*Desk thumping*] I told you I would save you money. So you should thank me for being in Government, rather than be ungrateful. [*Desk thumping*] Yes.

Culvert crossings, the diameter cost, in 2014/1015, \$4,571 per metre. In 2016, 2,500 per metre, a saving of 46 per cent. You should thank me for saving this country money and you have a better chance of getting all the things you are quarrelling about.

Vegetation control, when we look at their figures 2014 to 2015, \$1,943,543 metres squared, it cost \$1.2 million, i.e. 62 cents per metre squared. Under my watch, we did 55,166,551 metres squared to date. It cost \$7.7 million but it cost us an average 13 cents per metre, saving money in-house. Those are the figures.

Box drains, and you say you were a box drain Government, massive savings nonetheless. Do you know what I did when I went in there, just to make sure that my Prime Minister's instructions were well and truly carried out? I got a firm of high international repute, KPMG and I brought them into the Ministry, exposed them to all the files and documents, and told them I wanted to review how we were procuring things and I want them to make recommendations for an almost perfect procurement system in accordance with the impending procurement legislation. That we did. I paid for that. But I felt very proud and right now that is the track we are running on, a new brand procurement system, centralized procurement

system.

When I got in there this officer could have given a contract for half a million, this one for \$300,000 and you had chaos. When I got the \$60 million claim, “it was somebody say gih he ah contract fuh dis, gih he.” No writing. And then when we turned around they were denying that they did it orally. Men went to court you know and I said they would have to get a court order to pay that. So now we have a proper procurement system and that is the track “dis goutie, they cyah take offence, intend tuh run on.” [*Desk thumping*] And it is in accordance with the new impending legislation.

So, Madam Speaker, I told you, I hope not boastfully, that I was out to save you money and that is exactly what we are doing. Value for money is all that occupies me. And just as some people work hard to steal and to con and to scam and to steal public money, as I explained earlier, I work twice as hard to make sure that it is protected. [*Desk thumping*]

And one of the reasons why I do not get things done as quickly as I would like is because I am making sure that we follow the letters. I could have paved—I planned to pave around the Savannah about three weeks ago, as well as the whole Western Main Road, but before I did that I called in WASA. Citizens complain all the time we have paved the road and then WASA comes and dig it up. They say WASA is one of the—I am sorry, this is the truth—biggest threats to the smoothness of the roads and the maintenance of the roads.

One person told me facetiously WASA is supposed to—I am sorry, I should not say this. No, this is bad business because I can tell you I have been getting a lot of support from WASA and I am quite pleased with the direction that they are going now. I am very, very pleased. [*Desk thumping*] It is just about coordinating. It is just about planning.

So I called in WASA and I said: “Look, I want to pave the Western Main Road, straight up the road. But I want you to go in there and fix every leak you find”. Not only that, they told me we will see where we have old pipes that need changing, Minister. We will do that now and WASA went in. The other day, about a week and a half ago, big traffic pile-up, but I knew WASA is on the job and it is not until they are finished and they report to me it is done then I would send in the pavers and I would give you a paving you never got before because water is to asphalt what termites are to wood and I know if I have to give you quality work I have to sort out those water issues and I am going to give you a pavement like you have never had before.

The experts tell we once it is properly done and you deal with the water issues it could last 15 years. I told you I would save you money and that is all I am about to do. So I held back and I “ain pave no Western Main Road. I ain pave around the Savannah.” That was cambered because it was two-way traffic. Now we have one way. They are doing it all over, sorting things out and then I would give you a very smooth and wonderful pave in a short while.

So that is where we are heading, Madam Speaker. We negotiated with National Quarries so that we will get the best possible price on the aggregate to use at Agua Santa. We negotiated with Lake Asphalt. Since the price of oil has gone down the price of bitumen should go down. What I pay per tonne should go down and we have negotiated down, so we are getting the best prices as it now stands. Yes, I heard my friend whispering. It is better than that. It is 500 and something dollars now. So, therefore, when contractors come to bid for projects now we know the price you could get it at. So you cannot jack up no price for me. We understand the thing.

Quality! I have imported a team of quantity surveyors who second-guess

whatever we do at random. So if I get a quotation for something, I get a quantity surveyor to cast his mind intellectually and professionally upon it and if they feel that it is all right, it is all right. If they think it is not all right, it “ain” all right. We deal with it, all with a view of pushing down prices and bringing some sobriety and sanity back to Trinidad and Tobago and getting value for money. We demand quality work. I have said it over and over to the contractors.

I was passing on one of my job sites last weekend and I saw some work that did not look good to this layman's eye and I called the contractor and I told him and he admitted it was not so hot and he told me will get the job done, and I expect that. We are not out to play. This is serious business.

We are doing the back road, St. Joseph Road where I grew up, because I grew up in Laventille in Prizgar Lands. The people in the area, and they are hearing me now, they are telling me: “Mr Hinds we have never seen it done like that before.” We could have gone in there and in eight days, in five days we could have just put down asphalt and go again and two years from now we have come and put down more. I said no, water is to asphalt what termites are to wood. Let us deal with the drainage. So we gave a small contractor the job and they are fixing the drains with perfection and then we are paving going behind. If you see the quality of the work. You would be proud, Madam Speaker. [*Desk thumping*] I urge you to drive across there.

Right now we are in San Souci between Montevideo, the Member of Parliament for Toco/ Sangre Grande raised the matter with me. I went myself last weekend. I went personally and it was not as bad as some other roads, but it was bad enough to warrant our attention and she told me this morning the contractor is on the job and we are doing a great job sorting it out.

But my pride and joy, I have to admit, remains the La Brea, the Point D’Or

junction. Because we have travelled that road for many years when we go Borough Day and otherwise for many years and the turbulent road in that area, everyone thought that it had to do with outgrowth of the pitch lake, as they call it. It is only partly that the bulk of that problem was a water problem.

We do soil testing before we start in the PURE programme. We do proper soil testing, and that soil test revealed that there was a catchment of water below that for years. So we sucked it all out and we realized we had to stop other water from going in. So we put a drainage programme to deal with all the water from the shops and businesses and residences around the area. And it is taking longer than usual but it is going to be well done. And the people of La Brea are very, very pleased. I am very pleased and I am looking forward to a formal opening with the Member of Parliament for La Brea shortly. That one remains because that was a big challenge to Trinidad and Tobago and I think we have gotten a hold on it now.

8.30 p.m.

So let me deal with this question of Bay Ferries. My friend from Tabaquite got up here, and he had a lot to say about it, and my friend for Pointe-a-Pierre joined in today. Let me just deal quickly with that, about the engagement of one, Capt. MacMillan, who I met on one or probably two occasions, because as we were overseeing this transition from Bay Ferries' management and conduct of the ferry service to the Port Authority of Trinidad and Tobago, a resumption of that responsibility. Because Bay Ferries came here in 2005, and they were supposed to have been here for six months, with a part of the plan was to transfer the technologies to the locals; that was never done. That has gone on now for over 10 years.

I can tell you, you now, Madam Speaker, I think I owe it to you to let you know that it cost us, the taxpayers of this country a substantial amount of money

over that period. Let me tell you. Since 2005 to today as we speak, to 2014 at any rate, it cost us US \$85.7 million, totalling TT \$5,493,532.16. That is for dry-docking expenditure, management fees and actual operational expenditure. So altogether—and that is 2005 to 2014. A tremendous amount of money, and we cannot afford that kind of US outflow so easily on this time.

This question of transition is not new. It began under the last Government. So we will see, but Capt. MacMillan was engaged by the UNC as a consultant to deal with this matter. In fact, he wrote a report for them. He was hired for 10 months by the board, by the UNC Government before we came to office. The same Capt. MacMillan, and he was working along with a team of about four other persons as experts in the field. They cancelled that contact and reduced it to one month, and sometime after—I have all the dates and figures here. I do not want to waste time. They re-engaged him again, but there was no board on the port for a very long time. He wrote a report on this transition programme.

When our board, when the new board under Chairman Christine Sahadeo went in, she met this report. She asked them what were their priorities, and part of it was the transition from the management by Bay Ferries, a Canadian firm, back to the local management, because of the cost and all of the things. It did not work well. The transfer of technology did not take place. The training of our people did not take place. So they reported to the new board that there was this transition plan as drafted by the same MacMillan.

When the board applied its professional and intellectual minds to it, they found that it was useful, and notwithstanding the fact that it came from the UNC, they decided in the public interest to keep it, and then improved it by telling Mr. MacMillan, “You are an individual. We do not wish to contract with you. You are telling us about these individuals. You should incorporate yourself, because we do

not want to be dealing with an individual.” In those circumstances, the firm was incorporated only then, all well known to the port. Nothing corrupt or sinister in my humble view about it, and one can argue that the procurement process was not one to perfection. One can argue that—but then.

So let me tell you, the board initiated a meeting with Capt. MacMillan and the port authority, and was advised that the names of the members of the transition team were that of Capt. MacMillan, Peter Lyons, Leonard Chan Chow and Terry MacMillan, who collectively had 100 years of shipping experience. It was agreed that a company, Magellan Maritime Services Limited, would be established to ensure the proper provision of the transition services for the 10-month period.

Let me say here and now, what Bay Ferries was doing was managing the sailing, the maintenance, the dry docking and everything of the whole operation. They were carrying it on. MacMillan/Magellan was not contracted for that purpose. It merely an administrative piece to manage the transition. So my friends need to understand that; big difference; big, big difference. Magellan is not taking over from Bay Ferries or did not take over from Bay Ferries. Their contract came to an end on September 30th, and the plan before that date and after that date was a transition, to ensure that there was no disruption in the service between Trinidad and Tobago, and that is the transition piece that MacMillan/Magellan was involved in. Nothing in my humble view untoward or corrupt, but if my friends on the other side feel anything is wrong, they are free, and we have no problem. We have nothing to hide, and insofar as the sole select and the procurement of Magellan in the circumstances I have described, the port advises me, and I read, I quote:

Port Authority of Trinidad and Tobago adopted the transition plan prepared by Capt. MacMillan, and began the implementation thereof in 2015. The current board determined that the engagement of Capt. MacMillan and/or his

company felt to be considered as an exemption in accordance with section—
in exemption—[*Interruption*]

Madam Speaker: Hon. Member for Laventille, your original 45 minutes have expired. You are entitled to 10 more minutes.

Hon. F. Hinds: Thank you very kindly.

Madam Speaker: You may proceed.

Hon. F. Hinds: Thank you very much:

In according with section four of the standard procurement, 4.5 exemptions merits award which states—
—and that is in the performance, state performance monitoring manual. And it quotes:

Where only one vendor/consultant is capable or available or identified as having the qualifications as special proficiency, experience or skill, of the exceptional works—
—and so on, and it goes on.

So it is all here for everyone to see. So in my humble view, nothing untoward. Insofar as the insurance is concerned, I heard some rumour-mongering and scaremongering in the national community; some scaremongering right here. The insurance is enforced, intact and there is no issue with insurance, [*Desk thumping*] because of the fact of the transition. Lloyd's had to do some certification, and as such, Lloyd's is involved in that certification, but the insurance is well in place as we speak, and will be so for the next six months, as the survey by Lloyd's continues because of the fact of the transition. So let me set my friends to rest.

Finally, my friend, the Member for—who was it? Member for Pointe-a-Pierre, he said today that the communications equipment, the SAT was taken out,

and now it is unsafe because you cannot communicate. Let me teach my friend that that system—let me get the exact thing here for him. That system for communication is one for when you are going into international waters, if we are going for dry docking outside of the jurisdiction. There is communication, long range, VHF communication on board the vessels, so that they are able to communicate inside of our territory. So there is no lack of safety for want of communication. Now that my friends have heard that, I hope that they will let better judgment prevail and stop scaring unnecessarily, the people. The people are already well afraid of you, okay? [*Desk thumping*]

I do not think—time has run. I would have liked to tell you about our national infrastructure programme, but I can only endorse what the Minister of Finance said in his address, when he told us that we are engaged—we had to untangle a very dirty mess caused by the last Government, in respect of the Point Fortin extension, and we are committed to finishing it. We have a clear plan to finishing it, and we are on the way.

Let me tell you, some of the programmes we completed are: the St. Croix Road, Princes Town Programme, under my PURE Programme; Loney Road, Moruga; Iere Village Road, Princes Town; Lengua Road, Princes Town; Freeport to Couva, parallel access road, which was started and we have just completed it. We have several drainage and road works going on: Mercer Road, 99 per cent complete; School Street, 75 per cent; Old St. Joseph Road, 60 per cent; Dan Kelly a major project up in there to protect some houses, 70 per cent, and all that is happening. In 2016—17, we are going to construct walkovers at Sea Lots and MovieTowne, something they promised. [*Desk thumping*]

We are going to widen some parts of the Churchill Roosevelt Highway, Morvant Junction improvement works; Caroni Savannah Road; Sir Solomon

Hochoy Highway; Munroe Road interchange improvement; Endeavour Phase two. We are now—right? And we will also embark on some bridge improvement projects: Jackson Trace in Chatham; Toco Main Road; Galera Road, Toco; Caigual Road in Manzanilla; Guaico/Tamana Road, Dades Road, Tabaquite/Rio Claro; Morrow Road in Moruga; Freeport, Todd's Road; Freeport, Mission Road, and I called those just to let you know we focus on the entire country. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam, I wish I had a little more time to tell you about some of the good things happening to improve the registration and the licensing processes, at the licensing office. Time has run. There is a lot more to be said, especially on the important matters that I have raised here today.

I should rest, Madam Speaker, confident that the Ministry of Works and Transport, has satisfied the goodwill and the expectations of the people of Trinidad and Tobago in the last year, and I commit myself and the Ministry, all aspects of it, to continuing to do the same thing 2016—17, in the best interest of the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Before I close, let me congratulate very sincerely, the Minister of Planning and Development and, of course, the Minister of Finance, [*Desk thumping*] for a very sensible budget package, [*Desk thumping*] necessary in the circumstances. It is only the unthinking and the malicious, who will see the cuts that were necessary, to maintain some balance and to ensure that we do not topple over into the loving arms of the IMF. It is only the reckless and those who really do not love Trinidad and Tobago who would have problems with that. I do not. My constituents do not.

As for Laventille, I want you to know, do not worry. The talk is not necessary. You could look around and see what is happening in your community. The Prime Minister has been to Laventille four times since he became Prime Minister. The last one was to—the last time he came was to tell you, “I am

looking after the schools in your community, because education is an important component in terms of national development”. So I want to say to Laventille, and when I say Laventille, I do not just mean Laventille West. I mean all from Queen’s Park West right up to Mt. D’or, Sea Lots, Beetham, Santa Cruz, all of that, Belmont Valley Road, Lady Young, all that. That is my definition of Laventille, and they say, that you have been denied. I intend to take “We name outta them mouth”. So hold on Laventille, we will sort you out. [*Desk thumping*]
God bless you! Thank you, Madam Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Planning and Development (Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis):

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I beg to move that this House do now adjourn to Tuesday, October 11 at 10.30 a.m., at which time we will continue the budget debate.

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned 8.43 p.m.