

Leave of Absence

Tuesday, May 28, 2013

SENATE

Tuesday, May 28, 2013

The Senate met at 1.30 p.m.

PRAYERS

[MADAM VICE-PRESIDENT *in the Chair*]

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Madam Vice-President: Hon. Senators, I have granted leave of absence to Sen. Elton Prescott SC who is out of the country.

SENATOR'S APPOINTMENT

Madam Vice-President: Hon. Senators, I have received the following correspondence from His Excellency the President, Anthony Thomas Aquinas Carmona SC:

“THE CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

By His Excellency ANTHONY THOMAS AQUINAS
 CARMONA, S.C., President and Commander-
 in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Republic
 of Trinidad and Tobago.

/s/ Anthony Thomas Aquinas Carmona SC
 President.

TO: RHONDA PARRIS-DE FREITAS

WHEREAS Senator Elton A. Prescott is incapable of performing his duties as a Senator by reason of his absence from Trinidad and Tobago:

NOW, THEREFORE, I, ANTHONY THOMAS AQUINAS CARMONA, President as aforesaid, in exercise of the power vested in me by section 44(1)(a) and section 44(4)(a) of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, do hereby appoint you, RHONDA PARRIS-DE FREITAS, to be temporarily a member of the Senate, with effect from 26th May, 2013 and continuing during the absence from Trinidad and Tobago of the said Senator Elton A. Prescott.

Given under my Hand and the Seal of the
 President of the Republic of Trinidad and
 Tobago at the Office of the President, St.
 Ann's, this 24th day of May, 2013.”

OATH OF ALLEGIANCE

Sen. Rhonda Parris-De Freitas took and subscribed the Oath of Allegiance as required by law.

WELCOME**Joe Biden****(Vice-President of the United States of America)**

Madam Vice-President: Hon. Senators, I would like to take this opportunity on behalf of all Senate Members to welcome the Vice-President of the United States of America, Mr. Joe Biden, and his wife Dr. Jill Biden and granddaughters Maisy and Naomi to the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. Mr. Biden is the first sitting US Vice-President to visit Trinidad and Tobago following in the footsteps of President Obama himself who was the first sitting President to visit our shores in 2009.

We also welcome His Excellency Michel Joseph Martelly, President of the Republic of Haiti and the Caricom Chairman, to our warm albeit rainy Trinidad and Tobago.

I would like to congratulate the Vice-President and, as well, our regional leaders for their continued efforts toward the strengthening of the diplomatic relations between the US and the Caribbean region.

On your behalf, hon. Senators, I do acknowledge this significant visit of US Vice-President Biden to Trinidad and Tobago and to the region, and we all look forward to the deepening of the US-Caribbean dialogue as it paves the way for enhanced cooperation in trade, socio-economic developments, security and international relations. [*Desk thumping*]

PAPERS LAID

1. Annual Administrative Report of the Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards and its Subsidiary, Premier Quality Services Limited for the financial year ended September 30, 2011. [*The Minister of the Environment and Water Resources (Sen. The Hon. Ganga Singh)*]
2. Annual Administrative Report of the Ministry of National Security for the year 2011. [*Sen. The Hon. G. Singh*]
3. Annual Report of the Industrial Court of Trinidad and Tobago for the period October, 2011 to September 2012. [*Sen. The Hon. G. Singh*]
4. Annual Administrative Report of the Ministry of Sport for the year 2011. [*Sen. The Hon. G. Singh*]

5. Annual Administrative Report of the Mayaro/Rio Claro Regional Corporation for the year 2009—2010. [*Sen. The Hon. G. Singh*]

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

The Minister of the Environment and Water Resources (Sen. The Hon. Ganga Singh): Madam Vice-President, we are in a position to answer several questions, but because of the ongoing bilateral discussions some of our Members are not here. However, we are in a position to answer with the Members here, questions 41, 42 and 45. We have answers for 44, but the hon. Minister is engaged in that, and so too questions 48, 52 and 53. We would seek a deferral of those for one week.

Madam Vice-President: Is it 51, 52 and 53?

Sen. The Hon. G. Singh: No, that is for two weeks.

Sen. Beckles: Questions 51 and 52?

Sen. The Hon. G. Singh: Two weeks, “yeah”.

The following questions stood on the Order Paper:

**Food Import Bill
(Details of)**

- 44.** Could the hon. Minister of Trade, Industry and Investment indicate to the Senate:
- (i) what was the country’s total food import bill per year for the years 2008—2012 inclusive; and
 - (ii) the first ten items of highest expenditure on the food import bill for the above mentioned years together with the monetary values? [*Sen. P. Beckles*]

**Children’s Life Fund
(Details of)**

- 48.** With respect to the Children’s Life Fund, would the Minister of Health indicate to the Senate:
- (i) the total amount of money now held in the account(s) of the Children’s Life Fund as at December 31, 2012;
 - (ii) the number of children up to the said December 31, 2012, who benefited from access to this fund;

- (iii) the number of children who acquired treatment/care locally; and the number who acquired treatment/care abroad;
- (iv) what was the largest single donation/contribution to the fund, as well as its source; and
- (v) whether any contributions from ministerial salaries are included in the figure(s) at (i) above? [*Sen. F. Hinds*]

CLICO/CLF

(Update on Outstanding Matters)

- 51.** Would the Minister of Finance and the Economy provide an update with respect to all outstanding matters required to achieve a final resolution of the CLICO/CLF matter. [*Sen. Dr. L. Henry*]

Heritage and Stabilization Fund

(Update on)

- 52.** Would the Minister of Finance and the Economy provide an update on the performance of the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund (HSF), and state when the review of the provisions of the HSF, as required by section 22 of the HSF Act, will be laid before the Parliament? [*Sen. Dr. L. Henry*]

Children's Hospital

(Details of)

- 53.** Regarding the proposed construction of a new Children's Hospital, would the Minister of Health indicate to the Senate:
- (a) how many other sites were considered for the location of the hospital;
 - (b) was the chosen site the first site chosen;
 - (c) whether design plans have already been prepared in respect of the hospital, and what is the projected cost of this project;
 - (d) were any design plans for this hospital drawn up for any site other than the one identified at (b) and discarded in favour of the current site;
 - (e) if the answer to part (d) is in the affirmative, whether there has been any variation in the projected costs having regard to the changed location;
 - (f) what are the financing arrangements for this project, including the repayment schedule;

- (g) when is the money to build the said hospital to become available to the Government;
- (h) what is the anticipated completion date of the hospital; and
- (i) the amount of money expended on the negotiation, planning, ground-preparation (including infrastructural work) and other such activities in respect of this hospital to date? [*Sen. F. Hinds*]

Questions, by leave, deferred.

**Commission of Enquiry into the 1990 Coup
(Details of)**

41. Sen. Penelope Beckles asked the hon. Attorney General:

Could the hon. Attorney General indicate, as at March 2013, the following:

- (i) the total cost of the Commission of Enquiry into the 1990 attempted coup inclusive of salaries for professional services rendered, administrative costs and other incidentals;
- (ii) the names of professionals providing services to the Commission and to the State and to all State Enterprises appearing at the Commission and/or advising in relation thereto; and
- (iii) the total fees paid to the professionals identified under paragraph (ii) above?

The Attorney General (Sen. The Hon. Anand Ramlogan SC): Madam Vice-President, the total cost of the Commission of Enquiry into the 1990 Attempted Coup, inclusive of salaries for professional services rendered, administrative costs and other incidentals is \$31,797,669.57 which is broken down as follows: fees for commissioners, \$15,620,147.97; legal fees, \$11,778,340; salaries, \$1,704,622.40; administrative costs and incidentals, \$3,252,559.20.

The members of the commission appointed by His Excellency The President are as follows: Sir. David Simmons, chairman; Sir. Richard Cheltenham, deputy chairman; Dr. Haffizool Mohammed, member; Mrs. Diana Mahabir-Wyatt, member; and Dr. Eastlyn McKenzie, member.

The following persons have provided legal professional services to the commission for the periods indicated thereunder: Mr. Avery Sinanan SC, September 02, 2010 to March 31, 2012, sessions 1 to 14; Mr. Darrell Allahar, September 02, 2010 to June 15, 2011, sessions 1 to 3; Mr. Jagdeosingh, June 11,

Oral Answers to Questions
[SEN. THE HON. A. RAMLOGAN SC]

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2011 to March 31, 2013—that is junior counsel—sessions 4 to 14; Miss Christlyn Moore, September 02, 2010 to September 20, 2012, as instructing attorney, sessions 1 to 12; Miss Carol Cuffy-Dowlat, instructing attorney, October 11, 2012 to March 31, 2013, sessions 13 and 14.

I turn now to the second part of the question. The names of the professionals providing services to the commission and to the State and to all state enterprises appearing at the commission and/or advising in relation thereto, members of the commission, again appointed by the President: Sir. David Simmons; Sir. Richard Cheltenham, deputy chairman; Dr. Haffizool Mohammed; Diana Mahabir-Wyatt, and Dr. Eastlyn Mc Kenzie.

The following persons provided legal professional services to the commission for the periods indicated thereunder: Mr. Avery Sinanan SC, September 02, 2010 to March 31, 2013, sessions 1 to 14, as the lead counsel to the commission; Mr. Darrell Allahar, September 02, 2010 to June 15, 2011, sessions 1 to 3, as junior counsel; Mr. Jagdeosingh, June 16, 2011 to March 31, 2013 as junior counsel, sessions 4 to 14; Miss Christlyn Moore, September 02, 2010 to September 20, 2012, as instructing attorney sessions 1 to 12; Miss Carol Cuffy-Dowlat, October 11, 2012 to March 31, 2013, sessions 13 and 14.

Total fees paid—this is the third part of the question—to professionals identified under paragraph (ii) above; the chairman and members of the commission, \$15,620,147.97; legal professionals, \$11,778,340. No other legal professional services were retained in respect of the State or any state enterprise appearing before this commission of enquiry. I thank you, Madam Vice-President. [*Desk thumping*]

1.45 p.m.

Madam Vice-President: Any supplemental?

Sen. Deyalsingh: Thank you, Madam Vice-President. Supplemental: of the \$15 million paid to the commissioners, could the hon. Minister tell us how much was paid, precisely, to Dr. Haffizool Mohammed?

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC: No, I will not, but if my learned friend puts that in a separate question I would be more than happy to provide the details of that.

Sen. Deyalsingh: Further supplemental, Madam Vice-President. Would the Attorney General agree that the findings and recommendations of this commission might be invalidated due to the poor qualifications of members?

Sen. Singh: No that is—you are asking for a legal opinion.

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC: All right, Madam Vice-President, that is not a question, it is a request for legal opinion, and whilst I appreciate my learned friend's status because he is in exam mode at the LLB stage, I would be happy to provide a legal opinion if properly requested at the appropriate time. Thank you.

Sen. Al-Rawi: Further supplemental, Madam Vice-President. Good to have the Attorney General sitting in your Chair, Madam Vice-President. *[Laughter]* Madam Vice-President, through you, is the hon. Attorney General able to tell us when the commission of enquiry is due to end?

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC: As my learned friend knows, the commission of enquiry is appointed by his Excellency the President as Head of State, and the Government does not in fact get involved in those matters once the commission is appointed, so I am not in a position to say. However, based on what is in the public domain one would expect that that commission of enquiry should be winding its way to an end, and that the finish line should be, you know, well within our sight.

Sen. Al-Rawi: Further supplemental, through you, Madam Vice-President. Hon. Attorney General, are you able to assist us as to the identity of any state enterprises that have participated in this commission of enquiry.

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC: As I indicated, based on the information provided, no fees were paid to any professionals in respect of the State or any state enterprise appearing before the commission—so that should cover it? Does it?

[Sen. Al-Rawi nods]

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC: Yes?

[Sen. Al-Rawi nods]

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC: Thanks.

Sen. Deyalsingh: Further supplemental, Madam Vice-President. Could the hon. Attorney General state, for the hiring of these professionals, what mechanism was used to judge the suitability of these professionals?

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC: Madam Vice-President, the State used the very same criteria and procedure that was employed in the past when we had the Uff Commission of Enquiry in the selection of persons to assist the commission, and that will be based on competence, expertise, merit and ability.

Sen. Al-Rawi: Further supplemental, Madam Vice-President. Is the hon. Attorney General able to assist us with identification by way of breakdown for the legal fees earned, and that is in the total sum of 11 million odd dollars?

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC: Madam Vice-President, that is a separate question, if it is asked, I am sure the breakdown can be provided, and even without it being asked I have no difficulty in sourcing that information. But, of course, one would have to be a little careful having regard to what has happened in the past, bearing in mind that in a previous incarnation, a previous administration took the position that legal fees were in fact secret, and under the Freedom of Information Act, since it was not disclosable, they refused to answer questions about the details of legal fees. I am not of that view, and I will therefore be more than happy to make that information available to the Parliament of this country.

Sen. Deyalsingh: Further supplemental, Madam Vice-President. Could the hon. Attorney General state if any of these professionals are found not to be suitable for the purpose would they be required to pay back to the State any moneys paid to them in pursuit of these duties?

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC: Well, as Attorney General it would be improper for me to speculate and hypothesize on what would happen if something—*[Interruption]*

Sen. Singh: You got that information—*[Inaudible]*

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC: It sounds a bit like a problem question in an exam paper, “What if—”, but what I can say is that in those matters we will cross that bridge if and when we come. It will obviously have to depend on the facts and circumstances of each particular case as the hon. Senator well knows.

Sen. Deyalsingh: Further supplemental, Madam Vice-President. I refer, specifically, hon. Attorney General, to the question of Dr. Haffizool Mohammed; would he be required to refund any moneys to the State?

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC: Any commissioner, if they are found to be wanting or incompetent for the appointment, that will be a matter that we will obviously have to consider, but I am not aware that any of the commissioners appointed on the two commissions that we have going have been so found.

Sen. Al-Rawi: Further supplemental: is the hon. Attorney General able to assist us as to whether any investigation concerning the bona fides of that particular commissioner, Haffizool Mohammed, is underway?

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC: Certainly not by my office, no, but, I mean I cannot speak for the Office of the President as to whether or not his Excellency has undertaken any investigation in the past. We all know, Madam Vice-President, that concerns were raised in a newspaper article which appeared on the front page, but the response to that was very forthright and very clear; Dr. Haffizool Mohammed was appointed because of his experience and training in the military in the United States of America.

We were able to verify those credentials, insofar as military training and experience goes, and, therefore, he was allowed to continue sitting as a commissioner on that particular enquiry. I think that brings that matter to an end because there is no point in pushing it further. The expertise that he possessed was not that of a professor who was wanted on the commission, but that of someone with military training and experience, and that he does in fact possess.

Independent confirmation and verification was in fact sought prior to his appointment about that, and that was in fact verified by officials from the United States.

Sen. Hinds: Supplemental: so is the Attorney General saying to this Senate, that the Government is satisfied as to the bona fides and the qualifications, and the suitability of the said Haffizool Ali Mohammed, and has the Government so advised the President?

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC: Madam Vice-President, it is not for us to speak to that issue with the Office of the President, but the expertise that was required on this particular commission of military training and experience—yes, the Government is satisfied that Dr. Haffizool Mohammed possesses that military experience and that military training, such that his position as a commissioner is justified.

Sen. Hinds: Further supplemental; and quite apart from the issue of expertise; is the Attorney General saying that the Government is wholly satisfied with respect to the credibility and the ethical standing of that particular commission member?

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC: Madam Vice-President, this question relates to the cost of the commission of enquiry. I have allowed my learned friend some latitude, but I do believe that that matter is a separate issue, and under the Standing Orders will qualify for a separate question. Obviously, if that question is filed, the Government has no difficulty answering it as we have been doing all along in this Parliament. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Al-Rawi: Further supplemental, Madam Vice-President; arising out of the hon. Attorney General's answers to questions put to him, is the hon. Attorney General able to tell us which aspect of Dr. Haffizool Mohammed's CV is the 20 per cent that he has said is not correct?

Sen. Hinds: Given that you investigated him.

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC: I am not aware that that is a question. Firstly, it is premised on 20 per cent of someone's r sum , which I do not have before me, being incorrect. We have had, in recent times, a number of statements made under the protection of parliamentary privilege that assassinates people's character. I am not about to respond to that, nor am I prepared to treat it as the truth. [*Desk thumping*]

I will simply say that for the record I do not have Dr. Haffizool's CV with me because that clearly did not form part of the remit of the question which was specific as filed by the hon. Sen. Penelope Beckles, specific to the issue of the cost of the commission of enquiry, and I have answered that. I have permitted some latitude, but I do believe this is stretching the boundaries. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Al-Rawi: Further supplemental.

Madam Vice-President: Is it a new question or a supplemental?

Sen. Al-Rawi: It is a further supplemental, Madam Vice-President. Madam Vice-President, through you to the hon. Attorney General; is the hon. Attorney General able to assist us insofar as the State pays costs for a commission of enquiry under the Commission of Enquiry Act—it is in the Act, right?

Sen. Singh: Yes, we know that.

Sen. Al-Rawi: Insofar as that is the case, is the hon. Attorney General able to assist us with its satisfaction that the CV issue of commissioner Haffizool Mohammed in fact entitles him to receive the quantum of payment that he has received in answer to this question that you have provided?

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC: Madam Vice-President, you know, again, this is good theatre for the Parliament Channel, but the reality is there are certain rules and procedures that govern the questions to be posed in Parliament. You have asked a question about the cost of the commission of enquiry; I have come here adequately prepared to answer that, and I have done so. I noticed that the person who posed that question, Sen. Beckles, has not in fact asked any supplemental, but I have allowed my learned friends to roam a little because I do not have anything to hide. But be that as it may—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Al-Rawi: If you do not want to answer just say so.

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC:—I have said it three times, I will say it a fourth time. Dr. Haffizool Mohammed was appointed to serve on the commission of enquiry because there was a requirement for someone with a military

background, with military training and experience. We have verified that before his appointment, we verified it subsequent to his appointment, and the credentials as they relate to his training and experience in the military in the United States of America have checked out and, yes, he is eminently qualified to serve on the commission because he possesses the training and experience in a military setting that was required by that commission. Thank you very much. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Deyalsingh: This is a supplemental, Madam Vice-President. As far as the issue of cost is concerned—the commission and the recommendation of suitable commissioners—could the hon. Attorney General tell us on whose recommendation was the name Dr. Haffizool Mohammed made?

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC: Madam Vice-President, again, if a separate question is asked about that and all the commissioners then I would be more than happy to go back into the records and find out on whose recommendation and how. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Vice-President: Hon. Senators, I would like to direct your attention to Standing Order 18(2), and urge that any Senator wishing to file new questions—the questions have already been answered based on the format of the questions. Any new questions will be done so.

Sen. Hinds: We are quite familiar with that Standing Order, Madam Vice-President.

Clico/HCU Commission of Enquiry (Details of)

42. Sen. Penelope Beckles asked the hon. Attorney General:

Could the hon. Attorney General indicate, as at March 2013, the following:

- (i) the total cost of the Clico/HCU Commission of Enquiry inclusive of salaries, fees for professional services rendered, administrative costs and other incidentals;
- (ii) the names of professionals providing services to the Commission and to State [*sic*] and to all state enterprises appearing at the Commission and/or advising in relation thereto; and
- (iii) the total fees paid to the professionals identified under paragraph (ii) above?

The Attorney General (Sen. The Hon. Anand Ramlogan SC): Madam Vice-President, thank you very much. Madam Vice-President, permit me so say at the outset, this question concerns the cost of the Clico Commission of Enquiry,

and that enquiry has been a very complex and involved commission of enquiry. I think this question was deferred on two occasions prior, and I did not want to have it deferred a third time. On the last occasion it was deferred because my learned friend, Sen. Beckles, was not with us, so I will answer the question and wherever there is a footnote to be made, I will make the footnote, but I would prefer to answer the question than to not have it answered, Senator. So the first question—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Al-Rawi: You are very kind.

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC: Yes. The total cost of the commission of enquiry into the Clico/HCU Commission of Enquiry inclusive of salaries for professional services rendered, administrative costs and other incidentals is \$96,212,560.03. It is broken down as follows:

- Fees for the Chairman of the commission: \$6,852,937.44;
- Legal and consultancy fees: \$22,240,363.67;
- Salaries: \$1,804,149.11; and
- Administrative costs and incidentals: \$5,370,854.67.

That gives us a total, in terms of the direct cost of the commission of enquiry, of \$36,268,304.99.

Madam Vice-President, whilst that will give the cost of the commission of enquiry, I wanted to go further to give an account to the Parliament, not just of the cost of the commission of enquiry but also the legal fees that have been incurred, indirectly, in the commission of enquiry—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Hinds: We did not ask that.

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC: Okay, that is fine. Well my learned friend said that they did not ask that so I will stop there, that is fine.

Sen. Al-Rawi: Did you have “asked a few questions”?

Sen. Hinds: It was asked; go ahead answer it, “doh” worry—

Hon. Senator: But he just said you did not ask it.

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC: Oh, he has changed his mind, apparently.

Sen. Hinds: “Yeah!” [*Laughter*]

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC: Yes, they are not sure as to what they asked, you see?

Sen. Hinds: No!

Hon. Senator: The mover of the question would say—

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC: But, Madam Vice-President, I have taken the time to write to each of the state agencies or entities that have been involved in the commission of enquiry, and to provide a proper and comprehensive account based on what has been received thus far, and I will identify where there is information that has not been received or that is deficient in my respectful view.

The fees paid by the Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development, these would be primarily legal fees, will be \$5,047,021.04; by the Ministry of Finance and the Economy, \$9,460,409.23; by First Citizens Bank, \$290,000; by the Securities and Exchange Commission, \$850,000, and, Madam Vice-President, the largest figure in the commission of enquiry has to do with the legal fees for the Central Bank.

The Central Bank has written to indicate that their legal fees for the Clico/HCU Commission of Enquiry is \$44,290,824.77. Now, Madam Vice-President, I pause because the Central Bank has taken the position that they are not legally obliged to give the details of, you know, the breakdown of the figures, but what I do wish to say is that the Central Bank's legal team was selected under the Governor, Mr. Ewart Williams, and the then board of governors, and subsequent to the selection and retention of the legal team by Governor Williams, and the then board of governors, the Government, upon the appointment of a new governor and a new board of governors, has not changed or interfered with that legal team for the Central Bank. So the legal team appointed by Governor Williams remains the same, and that legal team, the budget, the expenditure to date is \$44.29 million, as I indicated.

2.00 p.m.

The second part of the question asks for “the names of professionals providing services to the Commission and to the State”—I just want to point out that perhaps that is a grammatical error in the question—“and to State”—well, I will ignore that—“and to all state enterprises appearing at the Commission and/or advising in relation thereto”. I highlight the grammatical error in case my learned friend, Sen. Beckles, meant to ask something else, and perhaps that could be the subject of a supplemental, or indeed, a subsequent question.

The first part, to the Commission: the sole commissioner, Sir Anthony Colman; lead counsel, Peter Carter QC; Mr. Edwin Glasgow QC; Marion McGregor-Mason, junior counsel; Mr. Ian Marshall is a special advisor; he is a financial expert; Gerald Ramdeen, junior counsel; Shankar Bidaisee, junior counsel; Celeste Jules, instructing attorney and Veroon Debideen, instructing attorney.

Professionals representing the Ministry of Finance and the Economy: Mr. Fyard Hosein SC; Mr. Michael Quamina, Ashmead Ali and Company; Jagdeo Singh, Roger Kawalsingh. Representing the Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development, Mr. Reginald Armour SC, Vanessa Gopaul, B D Hewitt & Company; Dharmendra Punwasee and Ernst & Young.

Representing First Citizens Bank: Mr. Fareez Hosein, Bronock Reid, Brendan Sutherland. Professionals representing the Central Bank: Mr. Bankim Thanki QC, Mr. Henry King, Mr. Ian Benjamin, Miss Elena Araujo, Mr. Ravi Heffes-Doon. Representing the Securities and Exchange Commission: Miss Aileen Green; Mr. Gilbert Peterson; Larry Lalla and Michael Rooplal.

Total fees paid to the professionals identified above: for the Commission itself, the Chairman of the Commission, \$6,852,937.44; for the legal and other professionals employed directly by the Commission, \$22,240,363.77. That gives a total for the Commission itself of \$29,953,301.54. Ministry of Finance, \$9,466,409.23; Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development, \$5,047,021.04; First Citizens Bank, \$290,000; Central Bank, \$44,290,824.77; Securities and Exchange Commission, \$850,000. No fees were paid to any other professional in respect of the State or any state enterprise appearing before the commission.

That represents a comprehensive account of all moneys spent by the State, directly in the commission of enquiry and indirectly via several state enterprises. Madam Vice-President, this figure of course is consistent and on par with what we have had if you minus the Central Bank figure, which we have no control over. The figures are on par with what occurred and obtained in the Uff Commission of Enquiry, bearing in mind that this is a much more complex financial enquiry that obviously required a much more hands-on approach from the professionals that were employed by the various parties.

Thank you very much.

Sen. Beckles: Just to clarify, hon. Attorney General, the \$44 million and other figures that you gave, would that be part of the \$96 million which is the total cost or that is in addition to?

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC: No, it is. That is what brings it up.

Sen. Beckles: That is part of?

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC: Yes. If I leave out that then it drops dramatically, but I wanted to include it so that although it is the Central Bank, I consider it to be a state institution. They are not spending private funds, it is public funds, so I saw it fit to include it. So that is inclusive of the \$44 million.

Sen. Al-Rawi: Hon. Attorney General, you listed certain persons as receiving fees including Mr. Reginald Amour, Miss Elena Araujo and Mr. Ian Benjamin, who are on record in the Senate as having written in to say that fees quoted previously by you in a different position were inaccurate. Does this comparison in today's answer provide any clarification to their statement of inaccuracies before?

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC: The total figure of \$44 million far surpasses the figures I cited before. Suffice it to say, Madam Vice-President, the Central Bank being an independent institution whenever fees are quoted it would be based on figures supplied by the Central Bank via the Ministry of Finance and the Economy. I have no control over those figures. I can only come and say, "This is what I can say to the Parliament, based on what is provided to me by the Central Bank." Based on what is provided to me by the Central Bank, I have indicated that I have a letter from the Central Bank and the figure is \$44 million—well a little over \$44 million—in moneys paid in legal fees directly to the commission of enquiry. Bear in mind they would also have litigation going on, so in addition to the \$44 million the Central Bank would in fact be paying legal fees for their normal litigation and legal advice, so the figures may be much higher.

Science and Technology Policy for Trinidad and Tobago (Details of)

45. Sen. Prof. Harold Ramkissoon asked the hon. Minister of Tertiary Education and Skills Training:

With regard to the Science and Technology Policy for Trinidad and Tobago, could the Minister indicate to the Senate:

- (i) what is the status of development/execution of this policy;
- (ii) how will the policy be funded;
- (iii) does the policy include a National Research and Development (R&D) System;
- (iv) how much has already been spent on R&D as a percentage of GDP during the 2010—11 and 2011—12 periods;
- (v) what major areas were the recipients of the expenditure under (iv) and how much was expended on each area; and
- (vi) when can the country expect to reach the international recommended minimum expenditure on R&D of 1 per cent of GDP?

Sen. Prof. Harold Ramkissoon: Madam Vice-President, through you I have the honour of directing question No. 45 to the Leader of Government Business in the absence of the Minister of Science and Technology.

Madam Vice-President: Sen. Karim is here.

The Minister of Water Resources and the Environment (Sen. The Hon. Ganga Singh): Thank you very much, Madam Vice-President. My colleague, Minister Rupert Griffith, is not here and this question is directed to him. Notwithstanding that Science and Technology falls under his portfolio, Sen. Prof. Ramkissoon has agreed to accept the answer and if he has any further questions subsequently, to ask Minister Griffith.

The policy is currently being written. Much research has been done. Six consultations were completed and one-on-one interviews with relevant stakeholders were conducted. The policy is to be completed by June 2013.

The activities outlined in the proposed action plan in the policy document are to be funded by both the public and private sector stakeholders.

The proposed policy will be a comprehensive document covering, among other things, the institutional structure for science and technology inclusive of the system for research and development and its funding.

For the calendar year 2010, research and development as a percentage of GDP was 0.05 per cent. Not much variance has taken place since then. This figure represents only public funding for research and development. Data is not available for private funding of research and development.

Again, using 2010 data of a total sum of \$67.4 million expended on research and development, higher education received TT \$28.7 million; research institutions, TT \$19.8 million; government departments, TT \$18.9 million.

Increasing research and development expenditure to 1 per cent of GDP would require an annual commitment of public and private research and development funding of around TT \$1.5 billion, compared to the 2010 public level of expenditure of \$67.4 million. An increase in expenditure of that magnitude can only be forthcoming if the necessary institutional structure, human resource capacity and funding mechanisms, inclusive of an incentive regime to increase research and development funding from the private sector, and the uptake of innovation and research and development by the productive sectors are in place.

Without prejudice to the decision of Cabinet, the Ministry of Science and Technology is expected to play the lead role, working with stakeholder Ministries and institutions in education, research, industry and civil society, to put in place the required framework to strengthen Trinidad and Tobago's capacity in science and technology, research and development and innovation to support economic and social development. Thank you.

Sen. Deyalsingh: Supplemental, Madam Vice-President; may I?

Madam Vice-President: Sure

Sen. Deyalsingh: With regard to part (i) of the answer, the hon. Minister said that a policy is being developed by June 2013. Is this a new policy or an ongoing policy which was in development stage?

Sen. The Hon. G. Singh: As I do not have the specific answer, the hon. Senator would know that Government in its policy formulation is a continuum. Therefore, it has to start across the spectrum, and in the continuum it would take what went on in the past, corroborate, collaborate and cooperate with institutions in the current-present and then a policy would emerge.

Sen. Deyalsingh: Would the hon. Minister be able to say whether in fact then, based on the answer, that the Ministry of Science and Technology has been operating without a policy?

Sen. The Hon. G. Singh: Well, they have been operating within a framework, but to say it is without a policy is wrong. It is a science and technology policy.

Sen. Deyalsingh: Further supplemental. A framework, hon. Minister, is different to a policy. My question is: does the Ministry have a policy? Has it been operating with a policy from 2010—2013?

The Minister of Tertiary Education and Skills Training (Sen. The Hon. Fazal Karim): Thank you very much, Madam Vice-President. That question is a very relevant question, and like all other policies this is not a new policy. It would have been a policy, as the hon. Minister indicated, a work in progress. Sen. Prof. Ramkissoon knows that because in my previous responsibility for the Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education, we would have had substantial discussions in terms of the way in which the policy was going to be formulated.

Discussions have taken place. There was in fact a base policy, and what we did when we came into office was to go outside and re-engage the stakeholders into developing this new policy. So it is a work in progress, and very shortly as the hon. Minister indicated, that will come to a sense of completion.

Sen. Deyalsingh: Further supplemental, Madam Vice-President. Basically, the question then is: has the country been operating with a policy?

Sen. The Hon. F. Karim: Madam Vice-President, there has been a policy which is in progress, and in terms of the work that we are doing, we continue to be guided by that policy. There is a policy.

Sen. Deyalsingh: Thank you.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS**Town and Country Planning Division
(Actions Taken)**

The Minister of Planning and Sustainable Development (Sen. The Hon. Dr. Bhoendradatt Tewarie): Thank you very much, Madam Vice-President. I want to outline for hon. Senators some actions that have been taken by the Town and Country Planning in the Ministry of Planning and Sustainable Development, on the basis of Cabinet support and decision, that will seek to do two things: increase the density policy in areas that are located for homeowners that are located in areas in which the urban footprint now exists and that will also contribute to the development of the housing sector.

2.15 p.m.

Members of Parliament will be aware that several decisions have been taken to streamline the operations of Town and Country Planning, and several interventions have been made involving private developers in order to facilitate and fast-track development projects in the country funded by the private sector.

The focus of this particular statement, Madam Vice-President, hon. Senators, is to focus on citizens in the country who have their homes and who live in various areas of the country that we want to support for intensification of the density policy and also expansion of the housing stock.

Madam Vice-President, to facilitate adequate housing for our citizens is critical to achieving the broader objective of poverty reduction. And we can see this in other policies that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago has having to do with land for the landless, and having as well to do with the provision of housing through the HDC and other agencies of the State.

Our present planning policy though only permits at the present time one single family residential unit in all approved single family residential layouts, and this, regardless of the age of the housing stock, the location or the size of development.

The housing problem in Trinidad and Tobago, however, is twofold; firstly, there is insufficient supply of adequate and suitable housing to meet current and future needs; and secondly, there is the issue of affordability. To underline these issues Parliament should note that there are presently 130,000 applicants for public housing with over 50 per cent of these applicants falling below a minimum of TT \$4,000 in monthly income.

In an effort to alleviate the existing housing problems, the Ministry of Planning and Sustainable Development will execute the following steps to revise the current residential policy, and this is in addition to work being done, as I said, with regard to land for the landless and strategies deployed by HDC; these are for private home owners.

In all established single family plots, layouts and developments over 10 years old, where the plot size is 5,000 square feet, property owners will have the option of adding at least one residential unit, so that there will now be a standard density of two integrated residential units on each standard lot of 5,000 square feet and over or 464.5 square metres.

On-site parking requirements will be adjusted to one space per unit on any site. Residential building height will be dependent on plot size and location, but it is intended to retain the two-storey limit for lots of standard size. There is a reason for that which is that you do not want somebody to build a structure that is higher than two storeys in an area in which all the other residences are two storeys. For example, an owner of a house constructed on columns can now build up the ground floor with one or two additional dwelling units.

Densities increase as plot size increases which can promote assembly of land leading to more efficient and economical development. At present we have a residential density policy that has contributed significantly to the present urban sprawl and housing shortage in the country. Essentially, the existing allowed densities are too low resulting in agricultural land being increasingly used for residential purposes whether with approval or not. A case in point, the majority of appeal matters to the advisory town panel relate to the unsustainable change of use and subdivision of land for residential purposes.

Madam Vice-President, as you may be aware the Ministry has restricted new construction over the next two years in the foothills of the Northern Range. This decision, however, reduces the land space available for development near to many of our urban centres. This proposed revision to residential density policy will partially offset this reduction in usable land space by increasing the capacity of existing lots of land in urban areas.

Madam Vice-President, let me outline the expected outcomes of the revised residential policy. Firstly, there will be elements of environmental sustainability through the protection and conservation of our finite land resources. Essentially this means that by increasing the housing capacity of existing residential areas the demand for changing the use of land from agricultural and other green areas will be reduced.

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Secondly, there will be stimulation of the housing and construction sectors and sectors related to these. Thirdly, there will be a reduction of urban sprawl through optimization, densification and consolidation of existing urban areas. The impact of these areas within the greater Port of Spain/East-West Corridor, for example, can increase the potential housing supply by over 30,000 units without expanding the urban footprint.

Additionally, this policy can lead to an expanded supply of housing from the private sector and individuals which cumulatively can effectively reduce the demand for housing presently being made on the State.

It is important to note that the revised policy would be applicable to those residential plots and developments within adequately serviced residential areas and which conform to present planning standards and policy. It is expected to promote redevelopment and consolidation of sites and also address some of the issues related to unauthorized development as individuals seek to benefit from the improved density. In other words, if you do not have approval and you have a property and you want to expand it, you would have to come to regularize it.

It is also important to note that the building height specifications, even as it has increased across the board, have been limited to 20 storeys. Now, this is for residential only; for commercial buildings specific assessment will be made on a building by building basis. This policy will be due for revision once strict building codes have been duly established. A committee has already been established by Cabinet for this purpose.

Madam Vice-President, the areas which are covered by this revised policy have been identified and they are located in countries—sorry, they are located in centres across the country, and are urban and suburban residential areas that have been identified as having an upward development trend. Essentially, Madam Vice-President, we have identified the areas that are expected to develop rapidly over the next 10 years and have adjusted the residential density policy to optimize residential land use within those areas.

In summary, Madam Vice-President, the Ministry of Planning and Sustainable Development with Cabinet's agreement has revised the residential density policy as administered by the Town and Country Planning Division. This is being done to facilitate the optimal use of land within residential areas, in effect increasing the number of potential residences within the given locations. This is expected to benefit the nation by protection and conservation of limited land space, stimulation of the housing and construction sector, and reduction of urban sprawl by better use of land within urban and suburban areas.

Some of the areas that will be affected are; Planning Region T One: Port of Spain; Woodbrook; Maraval; St. James; Belmont; Diego Martin.

Planning Region T Two: Santa Cruz; Barataria and San Juan, Mount Lambert and Mount Hope; Trincity and Tacarigua; Champs Fleurs; St. Joseph; Curepe; St. Augustine; Tunapuna; El Dorado; Arouca; and Piarco.

Planning Region T Three: D'Abadie and Arima—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Hinds: UNC.

Sen. The Hon. Dr. B. Tewarie:—Brazil and Talparo.

Planning Region T Four: Valencia and Sangre Grande.

Planning Region T Five: Montrose; Mt. Plaisir; St. Helena; Chaguanas; Felicity; Longdenville; Cunupia, Carapichaima ; Couva; Charlieville.

Planning Region T Six: Rio Claro; Mayaro.

Planning Region T Seven: St. Margaret; Princes Town; Gasparillo; Pointe-a-Pierre, Marabella; San Fernando; Ste. Madeleine; La Romaine; Moruga; Debe; Penal; Siparia.

Planning Region T Eight: Cap-de-Ville; Point Fortin; San Francique; La Brea; Fyzabad; Palo Seco; Cedros.

And in Tobago—south west Tobago—Bon Accord; Mason Hall; Bacolet; Mt. Irvine; Roxborough; Scarborough; and Plymouth.

Madam Vice-President, I present this information for the benefit of Members of Parliament.

Madam Vice-President: Mr. Maharaj.

Revitalization of the Local Rice Industry (Status Report)

The Minister of Food Production (Sen. The Hon. Devant Maharaj): Thank you very much, Madam Vice-President. I rise to make a statement on the status report of the revitalization of the local rice industry in Trinidad and Tobago.

Sen. Deyalsingh: “All yuh really want to waste time today.” [*Crosstalk*]

Sen. The Hon. D. Maharaj: Madam Vice-President, food security is a major goal of the People's Partnership Government. [*Crosstalk*]

Sen. Deyalsingh: “Ah know yuh want to debate today.”

Sen. The Hon. D. Maharaj: In this regard the Ministry of Food Production has developed [*Crosstalk*] an action plan for 2012—2015 which is premised on the pursuit of increasing the country's food security. [*Crosstalk*]

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The focus of the action plan is the development of six commodity groups, namely, staples, vegetables, legumes and pulses, fruits [*Desk thumping*] livestock and aquaculture. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Hinds: Point of order! Sit down! Point of order! [*Crosstalk*]

Sen. Al-Rawi: Madam Vice-President. Yes. On a point of privilege.

Madam Vice-President: No. No. You cannot disturb—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Al-Rawi: Yes. Yes. Madam Vice-President, I am sure you wish to hear me.

Sen. Hinds: Must!

Madam Vice-President: Briefly.

Sen. Al-Rawi: On a point of privilege.

Madam Vice-President: Briefly.

Sen. Al-Rawi: Yes, because under May's I have a point of privilege.

Sen. Hinds: Teach them. Teach them.

Sen. Al-Rawi: The rights of the minority of this House are in question. Today is Private Members' Day [*Desk thumping*] and I would like to ask your consideration.

Sen. Deyalsingh: "We fraid! We fraid!" [*Crosstalk*]

Sen. Al-Rawi: I would like to ask your consideration. There has been no consultation as to the moving of very lengthy, drawn-out statements of no urgent public importance on Private Members' Day and we have an issue of the privilege of the Members of the minority of the Senate.

Sen. Hinds: "Yeah. Yeah." [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Al-Rawi: Could I ask you, I am just grappling—could I most humbly [*Crosstalk*] ask your consideration—[*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Senator: Call to basics.

Sen. Al-Rawi:—to put the question to the Senate on this point of privilege—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Hinds: "Aaaahhhh!"

Sen. Al-Rawi:—as to whether it will be continued?

Sen. Hinds: Well put, Senator. [*Crosstalk*]

Madam Vice-President: Actually, Senators I would like to direct your attention to Standing Order 10, the Order of Business, which clearly identifies—10—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Deyalsingh: “All yuh fraid to debate it.”

Madam Vice-President:—“the business of each sitting” is identified very clearly under section 10(1) straight through until (15). Item number 10(11) “Statements by Ministers...”, following which any “Personal Explanations; Introduction of Bills; Motions relating to the Business or Sittings...” and then “Public Business” including—“Government Business [*Crosstalk*] or Private Business.” Minister, please continue. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Al-Rawi: If I could just ask; have you ruled on my point of privilege, Madam Vice-President? Could you for clarity, please, so that I could be edified, tell me what the point relative to the minority rights is in the functioning of this?

2.30 p.m.

Madam Vice-President: Senator, there is a very clear identification of the order of the business of any sitting, which is—it is in your Standing Orders, the point of privilege. You do not have a point of privilege which calls for any Senator or any Senators to vote on whether or not this sitting should follow the Standing Orders. Minister Maharaj, please continue.

Sen. Al-Rawi: Madam Vice-President, on a point of privilege—[*Interruption*]

Madam Vice-President: Minister Maharaj.

Sen. Al-Rawi: On a point of privilege. Madam Vice-President, on a point of privilege—[*Interruption*]

Sen. The Hon. D. Maharaj: Thank you very much, Madam Vice-President—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Al-Rawi: Madam Vice-President, on a point of privilege—[*Interruption*]

Madam Vice-President: Sen. Al-Rawi!

Sen. The Hon. D. Maharaj: Sen. Al-Rawi, the President indicated that I am supposed to be on my legs right now.

Sen. Al-Rawi: In accordance with the Constitution, Madam Vice-President, I am moving a point of privilege—[*Interruption*]

Sen. The Hon. D. Maharaj: Madam Vice-President, two of us cannot be on our legs.

Sen. Singh: You want—[*Inaudible*]

Sen. The Hon. D. Maharaj: The Vice-President has ruled, Sen. Al-Rawi. Take your seat! [*Crosstalk*]

Sen. Al-Rawi: You are not the Vice-President of the Senate!

Sen. The Hon. D. Maharaj: But you are not listening to the Vice-President.

Sen. Al-Rawi: I am raising a fresh point of privilege, Madam Vice-President.

Madam Vice-President: No, I am sorry! [*Crosstalk*]

Sen. The Hon. D. Maharaj: You have not been recognized.

Sen. Singh: You have not been recognized!

Sen. Al-Rawi: Under 77 of the Constitution—[*Interruption*]

Sen. The Hon. D. Maharaj: Madam Vice-President, this is an untenable position in the Senate! Two Senators are on their legs after your ruling?

Sen. Deyalsingh: “Well, sit down, nah”.

Sen. Al-Rawi: Madam Vice-President, if you do not—[*Interruption*]

Madam Vice-President: Minister Maharaj, please!

Sen. The Hon. D. Maharaj: You are not recognized, Sen. Al-Rawi.

Sen. Al-Rawi: Madam Vice-President—you are not the President of the Senate—I am moving a point to you, Madam Vice-President.

Madam Vice-President: Minister Maharaj—[*Interruption*]

Sen. The Hon. D. Maharaj: Madam Vice-President, now let me get on to the business of the plans for the rice industry now on the record. The international situation as it holds arising from the food crisis—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Al-Rawi: A point of privilege—[*Interruption*]

Sen. The Hon. D. Maharaj:—2007—2008, the global food sector—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Dr. Tewarie: A Senator is on his legs.

Sen. Al-Rawi: I am speaking—[*Inaudible*]

Sen. The Hon. D. Maharaj:—has been undergoing major structural changes. These changes have been driven by a number of global forces which include population increases, rapid economic growth and high price per capita income, [*Desk thumping*] global warming and the changing rule governing agricultural trade.

The cumulative effects of these global forces are uncertain food supplies, dramatic changes in food prices and significant threats to the food security of many countries. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations has stated the international price shocks and volatility in world prices of

important internationally traded commodities, which occurred during the period 2007—2008 are forecast to continue in the medium to long term. Since the aforementioned period many food exporting countries have instituted measures to reduce their imports of important staples such as rice, choosing instead to increase the levels of their domestic food stock. This action inevitably resulted in sharp reductions in the traditional volumes of these commodities which are traded on the international market and as a consequence has resulted in increases in commodity prices.

In the local situation: in Trinidad and Tobago rice is the most important staple food constituting a regular part of the daily diet of all ethnic groups. Local production in 2010 accounted for approximately 5 per cent of the demand with a shortfall in the supply being met by imports which stood at some 31,363 tonnes and valued at \$96 million, according to the Central Statistical Office. Thus, the country's rice supply is directly hinged on the availability of rice on the international market and of equal importance the price at which this rice can be obtained. So it is based on the potential of the commodity to have a significant impact on the nation's food security and also to have a significant impact on reducing the food import bill that rice has been viewed as a crop of strategic national importance.

There is a low-lying flood-prone land in Trinidad that is ideally suited for rice production, but which currently remains underutilized or is used for the cultivation of upland crops which is more often than not adversely affected by flooding during the rainy season. The Ministry of Food Production, cognizant of the need to address the threats posed to the nation's food security, and also to address the mandate of reducing the annual food import bill has developed a national food production action plan. Under this plan, rice was selected as a key commodity of focus within the staples grouping and as such targeted for increased local rice production. An action plan aimed at revitalizing the local rice industry was prepared by a commodity team comprising of stakeholders from the local rice industry and officers of the Ministry of Food Production.

In devising a plan a comprehensive review of the local rice industry for the past 20 years was conducted and all the major constraints which adversely affected the local rice industry identified. It is important to note that one of the major shortcomings identified in the rice industry of the past was its state-centric construct, a public sector model. Inherent in that model were a number of inefficiencies from both the rice production and rice milling sides. Some of the major challenges identified include—

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On the production side:

- limited availability of high quality certified seeds of high yielding varieties;
- low productivity;
- low quality paddy produced by farmers in the context of a pricing policy based on quality;
- lack of infrastructure of appropriate drainage and irrigation infrastructure;
- unavailability of timely and efficient mechanical harvesting services;
- high dependence on manual labour which became increasingly difficult to source;
- outdated production technologies;
- lack of land tenure arrangement for most of the rice growers located on state land;
- inadequate farmers' development programmes;
- inadequate technical research and development support for farmers.

On the milling side:

- a mill of low efficiency;
- the local mill had a conversion rate paddy to finished rice that is of approximately 47 per cent while the international standard is closer to the vicinity of 60 per cent;
- no major investment in upgrading or modernizing the facility in approximately two and a half decades;
- no parboiling facility; [*Interruption*]
- late payments to farmers by the mill;
- payments average approximately three months after the paddy is delivered to the mill;
- state subsidy paid to NFM from the Ministry of Food Production in the form of a monthly operational and management fee of approximately \$480,000 per month or approximately TT \$4.8 million per annum;
- state-guaranteed market and total subsidized price for paddy through NFM.

The objective of the new rice industry: the plan aims to revitalize the local rice industry has as its major objectives:

- to facilitate and provide an enabling environment so that locally produced rice can increase to a target of 50 per cent of the total consumption by approximately 2018;
- to increase overall efficiency and productivity in the local rice industry through knowledge transfer, training, use of modernized production technologies and high-yielding varieties and efficient milling system;
- to produce a high quality locally produced rice that is comparative to imported rice;
- to facilitate increased private sector participation in the major roles along the rice commodity value chain while simultaneously reducing the role and reliance of the State;
- to develop a sustainable profitable and private-sector-led local rice industry.

The implementation of the action plan began in earnest in 2012 with the following accomplishments to date:

- the establishment of a rice development and coordinating committee comprising major stakeholders in the rice industry. The committee is chaired by the Ministry of Food Production;
- resuscitated—that is fully mechanized rice farming in the Plum Mitan district on approximately 300 acres distributed via the large commercial farm programme—approximately 580 acres for rice production to private sector agri-investors in 2012;
- facilitated private sector investment in acquiring relevant state-of-the-art rice production machinery inclusive of mechanical combine harvesters so as to provide mechanized production services to growers who lack machinery but are desirous of cultivating rice;
- invited the private sector to develop 1,500 acres of land for rice production in the Nariva area EMA approved site, which is not in the wetlands reserve—proposals are currently being evaluated;
- facilitated the private sector in importing commercial certified seeds from Guyana for local farmers to produce rice paddy in June 2012;
- provided ongoing training to local rice farmers;

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- established a pumping station in the Caroni area to aid farmers in accessing water during low rain fall periods in February 2013;
- desilted major watercourses in the Caroni rice production areas to facilitate improved water management in these areas—this is an ongoing activity;
- facilitated a technical visit to Guyana by nine officers from the Ministry of Food Production or all directly involved in the roll-out of the action plan—April 2013.

During the period January to June 2013, Phase 1: the Ministry of Food Production has assisted some 55 new and former rice farmers on both private and state land in preparing some 558 acres with best practices in land preparation. It is proposed for the period July to September 2013, Phase 2: an additional 50 farmers will be similarly assisted in preparing some 758 acres with best practices in land preparation.

- Currently facilitating the purchase of certified commercial rice by the private sector from Guyana for local farmers for the 2013—2014 crop;
- Established the framework for technical cooperation between the Government of Guyana and the Government of Trinidad and Tobago with respect to developing the local rice industry.

The Ministry of Food Production is in the process of purchasing one new state-of-the-art rice combine harvester to support the harvesting of the additional rice paddy to be produced within the next year by small to medium farmers in south Trinidad. This assistance is a short-term measure for one year as the harvester will be subsequently assigned to the Ministry of Food Production proposed Rice Seed Research and Development facility established at the Ministry's El Carmen Agricultural Station. The Ministry of Food Production is in the process of finalizing a public-private sector partnership arrangement with the private sector for the establishment of a modern state-of-the-art rice mill with parboiling facility with the capacity to mill 40 tonnes of paddy per annum.

The Ministry of Food Production with the technical support of the Inter-American Institute for (Technical) Cooperation and Agriculture (IICA) has prepared a draft strategic plan for the development of the rice industry 2012—2022. The document is currently being circulated along with the rice value chain. The final version of the document will be completed in July 2013. During the period 2013—2014 some of the major activities proposed for the industry include:

- implementation of the strategic plan;
- cultivation of 5,000 acres of rice by year end 2013, up from 1,800 from 2011;

- investment by the private sector with the construction of a modern state-of-the-art mill with parboiling facilities, with the capacity to mill 40,000 tonnes paddy per annum. It is proposed that this mill would be fully operational by June 2014.
- the development of a contract farming system between rice farmers and the mill similar to that which currently obtains in the local poultry industry.

This system will facilitate direct support and provision of a range of crop production services to those rice farmers contracted to the mill; the Government will no longer be required to pay 100 per cent of the guaranteed price to the local rice farmers for paddy produced. The new model—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Hinds: Tell us about food prices?

Sen. The Hon. D. Maharaj:—will be based upon world market price for the commodity as influenced by the market forces. [*Crosstalk*] Based on this proposed arrangement the State will only pay rice farmers any difference between the world market price and the current guaranteed market price.

Sen. Al-Rawi: Repeat that please.

Sen. The Hon. D. Maharaj: It is significant to note that the world market price for rice has been above the guaranteed price paid to local farmers since 2008 and it is expected to remain above this price in the short term.

The termination of an operational and management fee of \$4.8 million per annum since 2006:

- based on the above, the State will accrue an annual saving of \$112.8 million annually. [*Interruption*]
- the valuation of the international developed rice varieties as a joint project between the Ministry of Food Production and the University of the West Indies.
- selection for the most suitable varieties for local production.
- revision of the current grading system that adequately incentivizes farmers to produce grade one paddy as opposed to lower grade.

With these few words, I would like to close on the development of the rice sector. [*Laughter and desk thumping*]

Sen. Hinds: Shame! What a shame! [*Crosstalk*] Shame!

INSURANCE BILL, 2013

Bill to repeal and replace the Insurance Act, Chap. 84:01; to reform the law relating to insurance companies; to regulate insurance businesses and privately administered pension fund plans and for other related purposes [*The Minister of Finance and the Economy*]; read the first time.

GOVERNMENT'S COMMITMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION

[Fifth Day]

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on question [November 20, 2012]:

Be it resolved that the government re-affirm its commitment to these principles and the practice of democracy in Trinidad and Tobago. [*Sen. F. Hinds*]

Question again proposed.

Madam Vice-President: Those who spoke on November 20: Sen. Fitzgerald Hinds, the mover of the Motion; Sen. The Hon. Christlyn Moore, Sen. Subhas Ramkhelawan.

On Tuesday, February 26: Sen. Shamfa Cudjoe, Sen. Helen Drayton, Sen. The Hon. Kevin Ramnarine and Sen. Penelope Beckles.

On Tuesday, March 26: Sen. The Hon. Embau Moheni, Sen. Terrence Deyalsingh, Sen. Elton Prescott SC and Sen. Dr. Lennox Bernard.

And those who spoke on April 30: Sen. Prof. Harold Ramkissoon, Sen. Dr. James Armstrong, Sen. The Hon. Devant Maharaj and Sen. Dr. Lester Henry. Any Senator wishing to join the debate may do so.

Sen. Corinne Baptiste-Mc Knight: I thank you, Madam Vice-President, for allowing me the opportunity to intervene in this debate. I would like to use this occasion to share a few thoughts on my interpretation of democracy and how it operates in Trinidad and Tobago.

2.45 p.m.

Let me start by saying that I view democracy as an inclusive system of social organization which should promote the empowerment of the citizenry and the development of the nation. That said, I do not consider the sustaining of democracy to be the exclusive responsibility or privilege of the Executive and the Parliament. I feel that, given this definition, Trinidad and Tobago, given its resources, is admirably suited to prove that a citizen-centred participatory democracy is indeed the ideal form of government.

Why do I say this? We have all the required ingredients. We start with the intention clearly stated in our Constitution. We have the basic institutions, the Executive, the Parliament and the Judiciary. There is provision for a reasonably well educated population, which in fact produces an enviable pool of extremely talented nationals, many of whom populate First World countries and assist in their development. But we also have a dedicated pool of personnel populating what could be and should be an effective and high functioning civil service, were it not for the fact that it has been systematically dismantled under the guise of reorganization over the past years. Be that as it may, we still have a thriving private sector, and we add to this our natural resources.

Then, given what we have, how are we doing? It is my thesis that we have not yet mastered a method of harnessing these components to achieve the optimum goal. We do have one of the basic criteria for good democracy. We are known to hold regular, free and reasonably fair elections, but it must be widely recognized that there are elements that need to be improved. And it has been stated here before, the matter of campaign financing needs to be, has to be addressed in order to improve our system.

Added to this, I am convinced that whichever party or coalition wins the election needs to recognize that their mandate derives from the majority of those who vote. We have to remember that in Trinidad and Tobago voting is a choice. One cannot vote unless one chooses to register to vote, and we must recognize that everyone who is eligible to vote has not accepted this choice to be on the register. But the fact that they are elected by the majority of those who do express a choice, means that they must recognize that their responsibility is to minister to the needs of the entirety of the population and, as such, they must be accessible to all and be perceived to govern in the best interest of all. By winning the election they are merely authorized by the people to operate on their behalf and they must understand that they remain accountable to them.

Then there is the perception that the elected representatives give first allegiance to their party, to the detriment of their duty to their constituents. Similarly, Cabinet Ministers are considered to have a prior allegiance to the Prime Minister and the Cabinet, rather than their duty to seek what is best for the entire country. Additionally, once elected, whichever group is in Government acknowledges no clear separation between party and Government.

Madam Vice-President, I think that for most of the past 56 years, during which we moved from self-government, to independence, to republican status, our population has largely practised what I term, passive democracy. Many of us

voted, and once we left the voting booth with our red-stained fingers, we allow the Executive to have its way and to run amok, that is, with the two notable exceptions of 1970 and 1990 when the Executive of the day was not attuned to the political significance of the voices of discontent. The result in each instance is etched in our collective memories. My feeling is that now, 50 years after independence, the citizenry is coming of age and is now ready to practise a more proactive democracy which will be characterized by more active participation in the decisions that affect their lives. In other words, I sense a growing need on their part to exercise their right to influence the decision-makers whom they have appointed and the decisions which they make on their behalf.

My question is, can we ignore this movement if we accept that the citizen is the focus of democracy? I see this move to proactive democracy being signalled across the entirety of the stakeholders—the NGOs, the trade unions, CBOs, political parties, private sector economic interest, civil society, special interest groups and academic institutions. It is being done in ways which are either reactive, that is, protesting after the fact of something that has upset them or seeking to influence the policy or decision through privately sponsored seminars, think-tanks and even presenting legislative proposals.

Madam Vice-President, I think that to the extent that this quest for inclusion does not appear to be either recognized or appreciated, what often starts as respectful intervention will become more strident and more persistently awkward. My thesis is, that neither openly articulated concern nor vigorous and vociferous debate can threaten democracy. Indeed, I see the role of both as vital in the grounding and strengthening of the democracy and this needs to be recognized.

Madam Vice-President, I want to look at some of the areas in which active democracy can be facilitated by Government. I want to start at home, here, with Parliament. Parliament must be allowed and be seen to be allowed to fulfil its critical role of oversight, its duty to hold the Executive to account for its actions. We have to desist from appearing merely as a forum for airing and entrenching political differences. It must be realized that the budget is not the only debate in Parliament that requires more than one session. Every single Bill that comes here and needs to be debated, needs to be recognized as worthy of enough time for proper debate and consideration. We have to realize that proper debate is not a matter of the length of the debate or the length of time that each Member is on his or her legs talking. It is a matter of being able to analyze the subject and in a fashion in which the public that has immediate access to the debate can understand and appreciate what is going on.

Then there is a matter of local government. The functions of local government must be clearly identified and adequate resources must be allocated for these functions to be performed efficiently and effectively. Then Government needs to establish procedures for serious stakeholder consultation on all policy matters. This is something that has not been absent over the past years, it has been absent forever. The way in which policies impact the population must be considered and this can only be done if there is room for debate prior to the adoption of the policy. This would also have the effect of allowing the citizenry to monitor the expenditure of public money which is what is involved in absolutely every penny that goes in to any public policy. Madam Vice-President, I also see a vital and critical role for our Ministry of Communications.

3.00 p.m.

Our Constitution confers rights and freedoms on our population, but can we honestly say that our citizens understand and appreciate, not only the rights that they have under the Constitution, but the many ways in which the laws we pass here limit those rights and those freedoms?

I think that it is essential, in order to be able to exercise these rights in a responsible fashion, that citizens be given quality information which is easily accessible and understandable. These rights need to be explained. For example, the Constitution gives a parent the right to choose the school to which his or her child goes, but in truth and in fact, I would say 90 per cent of the parents are unable to get that wish because children—how many children get their first choice as a result of the SEA exam? I think that people need to understand the process by which school places are allocated, and once they understand, they will probably accept it.

We have freedom of action of every sort, but yet there are noise pollution limits for maxi taxis, for your private vehicle, which are honoured more in the breach. Now, would it not be good to let people know exactly what these limits are in order that they can be enforced? And I suspect that it is one of the problems that we have, that neither the citizens nor the police are aware of what these limits are and how to enforce them.

Madam Vice-President, I do not think that what I am suggesting is anything that is difficult because there are various levels of interaction between the citizenry and the Executive that exist, but of which we are not aware. Legislative proposals need not to be surprises for the public when they turn on to the Parliament Channel. Proposed legislation should be advertised so that people have an opportunity to consider, discuss, and that we who are supposed to be the lawmakers, could have the benefit of their feedback, their analysis, understand how they see that these proposed laws would impact them.

And then there is the matter of proclaimed legislation. Legislation is proclaimed via the *Gazette*. How many people have access to the *Gazette*? How many people know how to access the *Gazette*? Now if our citizens are expected to obey the laws, I think, at the very least, we should ensure that they know the laws, and one of the ways of doing this would be having laws that are proclaimed—really and truly proclaimed—in some way making sure that the public is aware of these laws.

Now, can what I am asking be accommodated currently? I am sure that there are people who are thinking, well Forms 1 to 3 have computers which they take home, no doubt, and perhaps, therefore, about 40,000/48,000 homes now have access to the Net and they can be taught how to access these things on the Net. But of these largely 50,000 homes, what percentage of them have access at home?

So that we have got to find other ways of doing it, and these already exist. The Parliament Channel is one of the more popular—what should I say—reality TV channels. A lot of people follow it.

Sen. Hinds: Except when the Government speaks.

Sen. C. Baptiste-Mc Knight: And the fact is that if a lot of this information is factored into the Parliament Channel broadcast, it will reach a large audience. Then there is also Channel 4, which is a government channel, which can be used to mount seminars, panel discussions, et cetera, on prospective, as well as, legislation actually passed. These can be used as public information channels.

Madam Vice-President, the point that I really want to highlight is that people need to be encouraged to understand and to influence the decisions that are being taken on their behalf, and in so doing be provided with the opportunity to know, to understand and to obey our laws. This, to me, is promoting proactive, participatory democracy.

Madam Vice-President, I think that a most critical determinant of the quality of an active participatory democracy, which I suspect is what we are trying to forge, is a responsible and responsive attitude on the part of the Executive to citizens' involvement in policy formulation and implementation. But the ultimate test of the people's judgment of a government's success emerges from the uncommitted voters, that is, those who do not have an entrenched loyalty to any party and vote on the basis of their personal experience and their personal interpretation of the Government's success or failure in moving the country forward.

These, in the final analysis, are the citizens who determine who forms the Government, and I think that these are the people who, added to your entrenched supporters—these are the voices that must be solicited if we mean to have a truly participatory democracy.

I want to close with one thought, that where an inordinate effort is placed on unscrambling a scrambled egg, rather than trying to make an omelette for the common good for a population that is already willing, ready and able and has demonstrated its preference for living together harmoniously and contributing to the enjoyment of paradise, where the decision is to insist on trying to unscramble the egg, the judgment is likely to be quite harsh.

I thank you, Madam Vice-President. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of Planning and the Economy (Sen. The Hon. Dr. Bhoendradatt Tewarie): [*Desk thumping*] Madam, Vice-President, I rise to speak on this Motion which reads:

“*Whereas* the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago in its preamble, its terms and spirit, recognizes and promotes the observance and practice of democratic principles;

Be it resolved that the government re-affirm its commitment to these principles and the practice of democracy in Trinidad and Tobago.”

Madam Vice-President, the mover of this Motion, hon. Sen. Fitzgerald Hinds—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Hinds: Ethelbert.

Sen. The Hon. Dr. B. Tewarie: I do not see the middle name but I will say it: “Ethelbert”.

Sen. Hinds: As yours is “Hitler”.

Sen. The Hon. Dr. B. Tewarie: [*Laughter*] The mover of this Motion, Sen. Hinds, would have put forward this Motion because the insinuation in the Motion, of course, is that the Government has to reaffirm its commitment to these principles and the practice of democracy because something is missing; it is not doing it right, so to speak. But I want to say that nothing could be further from the truth, and that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago is, indeed, deeply committed to the principles of democracy, the upholding of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Hinds: Madam Vice-President, would you be kind enough to allow me? I take objection. Standing Order 35(5). The Senator is saying that in presenting this Motion, [*Interruption*] I, Madam Vice-President, ascribed certain nefarious motives to the Government.

Sen. Singh: He never said so. He said you made certain insinuations.

Madam Vice-President: From what I gather, Sen. Hinds, if you feel offended by the fact that he is saying that you alluded to something in bringing forward the Motion, I do not see it as improper. I do not see he is imputing improper motives at all. However, Minister Tewarie, if you can kindly not allude to any inferences or motives and merely get on with the Motion at hand.

Sen. The Hon. Dr. B. Tewarie: Thank you, Madam Vice-President. I am surprised that Sen. Hinds is so sensitive today.

Hon. Senator: So thin-skinned! So thin-skinned!

Sen. Singh: Email! Email!

Sen. The Hon. Dr. B. Tewarie: I am very, very surprised. I mean, I was just going to speak to the issues of democracy. I have a rather harmless contribution here today. [*Laughter*]

Hon. Senator: “He gehin nervous! He gehin nervous!”

Sen. The Hon. Dr. B. Tewarie:—and I do not understand, and nobody in the Senate, so far, has mentioned the word “email”, [*Laughter*] so there is no need to be—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Senator: “He gehin nervous!”

Sen. The Hon. Dr. B. Tewarie: Now I must say that in going forward, though, I do want to agree with some of the sentiments expressed by the hon. Senator before me when she spoke of democracy as being something that really should empower others—empower the citizens; that democracy, the whole principle of it, is to be driven by the notion of inclusion, and when she conditioned that by saying—or she elaborated on that by saying—that democracy is by no means the sole privilege of the Executive or the Parliament, and she went on to speak to some of the issues.

I do agree with all of those things that she said and I believe in the manner in which we have been conducting our business, we have demonstrated by practice—[*Interruption*]

3.15 p.m.

Sen. Hinds: The fans!

Sen. The Hon. Dr. B. Tewarie:—what we are about. I am not going to speak about anything that we have said.

Sen. Hinds: Do not!

Sen. The Hon. Dr. B. Tewarie: I am going to speak about the things that we have actually done. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Singh: By their deeds, you shall know them. [*Laughter*]

Sen. The Hon. Dr. B. Tewarie: You know—I want to talk a little bit about some of the things that were mentioned here before which is the issue of consultation. Sen. Baptiste-Mc Knight indicated that consultation has never really happened in the country, and I understand why she said that because, in my own life and evolution, whether in the politics or in Government or outside doing some other job or pursuing some other vocation, I have also felt that the consultations that we have had have not been deep enough, have not been engaging enough, have not elicited the kind of participation that we needed in the country. But I want to say that in the last three years that we have been in office, and especially the last two, the kind of consultations that we have had have really made a meaningful difference to the lives of the citizens. [*Desk thumping and crosstalk*]

I remember when—together with the Member for Arima who is a Minister in the Prime Minister's office, collaborating with the Office of the Prime Minister, the Ministry of Planning and Sustainable Development and with the economic board, I remember going across this country with about 15 consultations, and this was mostly in 2011 and early 2012. I did not attend all of them and Minister Rodger Samuel, the Member for Arima in the other House, attended some of them also because we could not go to all—each of us could not attend all of them. We had two in Tobago and we had about 13 or 14 in Trinidad.

I was surprised at the level of participation, the numbers of participation and the serious level of engagement. The end result of that engagement and participation in the consultative process is that with civil society now under the Ministry of National Diversity and Social Integration, they are now taking the final steps to establish the civil society board in order to engage on a regular and constant and institutional basis civil society, so that they can participate in the influencing process of making policy in the country.

So that is something that started with consultation that was very real in which people were engaged, a number of Ministries were involved, and it did not matter whether it was being done by the Office of the Prime Minister, the Ministry of Planning and Sustainable Development, or whether now the whole institution is under the Ministry of National Diversity and Social Integration. What did matter was that the consultation led to a meaningful result that benefited ultimately the people who participated in it which are the civil society groups. So I wanted to mention that as part of the consultation.

In my own case, in the Ministry of Planning and Sustainable Development, as you know we are involved in a national spatial development strategy now, and consultations are ongoing with regard to that. In fact, when I leave here, Madam Vice-President, I go to attend a consultation together with the Tobago House of Assembly in Tobago on this same matter. But, I want to mention, besides that, that there is a level at which consultation takes place also at the regional level, that is to say at the level of local government—the regional corporations—and we have a lot of community consultations as well in order to develop strategies for communities.

I remember very vividly going to five community consultations. They were in the Caura Valley, they were in St. Helena, they were in Aranguez, they were in Rousillac and they were in Arima. I was shocked when I went to the first of these consultations which was in St. Helena, and nearly 300 people from that community showed up for the consultation. Not only did they show up for the consultation, they participated fully, because we went with all the maps so that they could see. We did a PowerPoint presentation with the GIS mapping and so on, so that they could understand. We explained what was happening—and I did not do it, it was the public servants in my Ministry who made the presentation. These were technically well-done presentations.

When they were finished, the people engaged us for over 90 minutes and they suggested changes to some of the things that we had done, and right there at the meeting, we took the decision that we would establish a committee. They agreed on a number which was seven members of the committee. That committee then established itself as a community leadership, engaged the community further, came back with the changes that they wanted, negotiated it with the planners in Town and Country Planning and got the plan that was most appropriate for the community. [*Desk thumping*]

Now, they did not get everything that they wanted because some of the thoughts that they had were misguided, but most of what they wanted that made sense, they got, and we did the similar procedure in Rousillac, in Caura. I do not

think we did it in Aranguez, we did not complete that process, and in Arima, we certainly did it. We are ready now to go—out of those plans in Arima, we designated a particular area, a new business district, in order to expand the business district in Arima.

So the consultations, I think, have taken on a different character and they are much more real. They do invite and facilitate the engagement of a community of interest, and more than that, the people do get a tangible benefit at the end of the consultation, which is something that has always been missing, because they do not know, at the end of the consultation, what difference it will make to them. So here are two examples: one, the civil society leading to the civil society board, and community consultations about community development that lead to the development of plans that are accepted by the community, and in which the community has an input, that are very real and tangible benefits of the consultative process at work in Trinidad and Tobago under this People's Partnership Government. [*Desk thumping*]

There are active consultations taking place now in terms of local government reform, and that local government reform is really based on the movement of the country towards greater devolution of power in the hands of regional corporations. Because the devolution of power in this country is a critical next step in the deepening of the democratic process in Trinidad and Tobago. If we were able to devolve real power to the communities, and we were able to have a regional system in which the infrastructure were made tangible and real in local government, so that the engagement between citizens and local government—that is to say regional corporations—could be such that there would be direct results in terms of community engagement with smaller government, direct results that were beneficial to the community, that would be an important step in the democratic process.

Those consultations have been led by the Minister of Local Government, and he has been going around the country. I do not know how many he has completed by now, but there have been at least half of them completed already, and the end result of that take is that this was based on a document that was circulated. I think the document was brought to Parliament. It was certainly approved by Cabinet for consultation, not as a final document, and that document has now been in the consultative process, and on the basis of the responses and the notes taken of those meetings with people, we will then get a White Paper, and that will ultimately lead to the modified policy for the devolution of power in Trinidad and Tobago.

Now, those consultations have been very real. People have engaged the process. They have made strong, strong statements, including the statements of skepticism about whether or not anything will happen that will make a difference to the communities. But these things have been taken into account, and the political will is there to devolve power to the communities and make it real in Trinidad and Tobago. I think that that is another example of consultations deepening the democratic process, and a Government willing to engage in consultations that are not just cosmetic or window dressing, but that are very real and that lead to tangible results. [*Desk thumping*]

The other aspect of consultation that I would mention is the big one, because in the presentation here in the Motion, reference is made to the Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago. It talks about the spirit—I do not want to misquote him—it talks about the spirit—the terms and spirit which promote the idea for the practice of democracy in Trinidad and Tobago. The reform of the Constitution, the revision of the Constitution, which we will seek to do based on those consultations is very real.

Notice, we did not go to the population with a Constitution draft; this constitutional exercise was driven by the Minister of Legal Affairs, and a committee was set up, and the Minister of Justice was also a part of that. A committee was set up in which other people from civil society, from academia, experts in the field were also part of that committee. They took this exercise through until May 21 for about two months, a series of constitutional consultations all over the country, and the end result was significant participation in the country, varying from place to place of course, and people putting forward their ideas. They did not go with a document in which they said, “This is what we suggest and we would like you to comment on it”.

What they did is that they had an open consultation. They indicated very clearly that there were certain things that we were committed to. We were committed to a two-term prime ministerial term in office, we were committed to referenda, right—committed to the principle of referendum.

Sen. Hinds: “Yuh better forget that two-term commitment, [*Inaudible*] one!”

Sen. The Hon. Dr. B. Tewarie: We will have more than two.

Sen. Singh: Not with emails!

Sen. The Hon. Dr. B. Tewarie: We will have more than two! [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Mohammed: Fabricate—[*Inaudible*]

Sen. The Hon. Dr. B. Tewarie: And the reason we will have more than two—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Hinds: “Yuh better wake up.”

Sen. The Hon. Dr. B. Tewarie:—is that the people of this country, those who are participating in the consultation and who are not, are much smarter than you think.

Sen. Mohammed: Yes, fabricator!

Sen. Singh: Not after Tobago!

Sen. The Hon. Dr. B. Tewarie: They are very, very smart.

Sen. Hinds: Tobago smartest!

Sen. The Hon. Dr. B. Tewarie: They understand what is involved. We will see, we will see, time will tell! “We ha two years, doh worry about it.” [*Crosstalk*]

Sen. George: “Continue doing wey yuh doing.” [*Continuous crosstalk*]

Sen. The Hon. Dr. B. Tewarie: But the consultation on the Constitution, there were certain things that we had in the manifesto, I mentioned two of them [*Continuous crosstalk and laughter*] and that is all we did. We said that okay, we are bringing this to you but the rest of the issues you could talk, and people had the opportunity, they spoke of all kinds of things.

3.30 p.m.

People talked about greater representation, that they wanted better representation. People talked about proportional representation. People talked about the nature of democracy. They talked about local government, a number of things. They brought a number of important issues which will now be taken into account and ultimately Parliament, of course, will have to decide on how the Constitution might be revised. What I am saying to you then is that in all of these instances of consultation, the people were fully engaged.

I want to go to the final area of consultation, which is the consultation on the spatial development strategy for Trinidad and Tobago. We have produced four documents related to that and the process of producing those documents themselves involved a process of consultation and this—with people who know about the things that are related to the spatial development strategy. These would be GIS people. These would be land surveyors. These would be architects. These would be planners.

We set up a national task force. We had the people in the Town and Country Planning fully engaged and then what we did is that we pulled together five consultations—I think, one in Tobago, four in Trinidad—in which we had a free-for-all consultation on the essential principles which would inform this strategy and we had those over a period of maybe a month and a half and when we were finished, all the comments of these people were taken into account, fully written up, et cetera, and we are going to make all of these things part of the public documents that we will put together with the final document that would be made.

Sen. Al-Rawi: The Constitution.

Sen. The Hon. Dr. B. Tewarie: No, not the Constitution.

Sen. Al-Rawi: Planning?

Sen. The Hon. Dr. B. Tewarie: For the planning. What we are doing now, we are also taking those issues into account and we are recording all of those. Again, all the comments of people will be in the public domain. They would be part of the public documents and the documents that we have now, which are draft, will be modified.

When we took this document to Cabinet and Cabinet agreed for us to go out to consultation, Cabinet did not say this is the document and they did not agree that this will be the final document. They agreed to send the document for consultation and when all of that is over, including the comments of Ministers and the comments of the various government departments, but also all of society who wish to participate—and they vary because when I went to St. Augustine, there were about 230 people in the LRC at the University of the West Indies who participated at a very high level in this consultation. When I went to the Naparima Bowl, there were about 75 people. So it does vary. I do not know how many are going to be in Tobago but “ah mean” people have to serve whatever their interests are or they have to make time. I know that these things—democracy is a very hard thing.

Sen. Hinds: You have the temerity to mention Tobago?

Sen. The Hon. Dr. B. Tewarie: And it does not matter—I am going there today—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Singh: Challenge him.

Sen. The Hon. Dr. B. Tewarie:—all right, and if you want to talk about whether or not we would get two terms, we will win the two seats in there too.

Sen. Hinds: With a cap and a dark shades.

Sen. Mohammed: Yes fabricator.

Sen. The Hon. Dr. B. Tewarie: “Me? I could walk in Tobago anytime. Everybody in Tobago know me.” [*Desk thumping*] Everybody. Everybody.

Sen. Karim: “Even the seagulls, man.” [*Laughter*]

Sen. The Hon. Dr. B. Tewarie: Okay. So, the am—

Sen. George: Do not worry. He is just being disruptive.

Sen. The Hon. Dr. B. Tewarie: I know, I know. I know Hinds. He “doh” want me to talk on this Motion. [*Crosstalk*] You will notice despite the fact that he did not want me to speak and he said I was casting aspersions, et cetera, I am not saying anything negative “eh”. I am trying to be positive today.

Sen. George: Yes.

Sen. The Hon. Dr. B. Tewarie: So. Anyway, these consultations, they are ongoing and when they are finished, of course, we are going to—that policy, the strategy is going to buttress the Bills that we bring to Parliament and we are going to bring about two or three Bills. So, again, the consultation will lead to a tangible result, a tangible product, that makes a difference in the development of this country.

Now, having said that about the consultations, the devolution of power, et cetera, I think we need to understand that democracy is not only a political thing. It is not only about politics or the involvement and engagement of people. The strategies that we have for education serve the democratic process; the strategies of reforming and improving the primary school system; the strategies of universal preschool education; the strategies of improving and transforming the secondary school system and introducing elements that were not there before through curriculum reform; the strategies for expanding tertiary education and for transforming tertiary education, linking it with vocational, et cetera; all of those things are part of the democratization process. [*Desk thumping*]

The hon. Prime Minister says, every time she gets an opportunity, that education is your passport to opportunity and freedom—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Deyalsingh: Dr. Williams said that.

Sen. The Hon. Dr. B. Tewarie:—and it is a very important thing and the more you can open up the system and let the foundation go and improve the system, the better the chance of having the democracy. Because, as Sen. Mc Knight was pointing out, democracy can often be quite difficult in its translation

into reality. [*Desk thumping*] You might have the right concept but it is hard to translate into reality. So, all the participation in the world, without the opportunity to build up the capacity sometimes that you need to engage some of the issues—there are some issues that you need no education to engage, but there are some issues that schooling and education will make a difference in the quality of engagement and the difference that you can make to the policy or the things that you are trying to influence. And, therefore, this business of educational opportunity is very, very important.

It is also important in the sense that, besides the business of education, devolution, deepening the consultation process, the whole business of the equity principle is also important and this is something that is very important to the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, the People's Partnership Government.

The poverty eradication issue, [*Desk thumping*] if you look in the seven pillars of the manifesto you will see that poverty eradication and human development are in the same phrase, the same principle, because we understand the continuum between poverty eradication and the capacity for human development in the country. And, therefore, that poverty eradication issue is very important and it is the first step in the business of addressing the issue of equity because of the widening gap between rich and poor in most societies. And, therefore, this business of bridging the equity gap is important to fostering the principle of equity, just like education is and poverty eradication is.

I want to say that, in terms of poverty eradication, clearly we are not anywhere near to the eradication of poverty. That is a legacy issue that has been with us for the last 50 years but we have made some progress. We have reduced poverty in the last two years by about 4 per cent [*Desk thumping*] and that is a significant number of people.

The Minister of the People and Social Development has done a significant amount of work in moving people off the streets into care and housing and better health and he is making the bridges to allow them to move into economic self-sufficiency. When the census was done in January 2011, the amount of homeless people in this country was over 500 and since then, he has been able, by systematic work, to take about 200 of them off the streets. That is a significant percentage. It is almost 40 per cent. These things are real and tangible achievements that contribute to the democratic process. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Vice-President, I wanted to outline what we are doing. I did not want to say what we have said but what we are doing reflects the philosophy of the People's Partnership Government of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] We are people

centred. We are community focused. Our development strategy is about people and communities and we are focused on bridging the inequity gap, eradicating poverty from the society and more than that, building the entire country, every corner of the country, up. That is what we are prepared to do.

Having talked about what we are doing, in terms of democracy and trying to deepen the democratic process and how it links with our philosophy and strategy of development, I want to say that the world today is a very complex world. All of us know that. We are very much aware of that and we see it every day. But I want to say that there has been a movement of the world between 1989, when the Berlin Wall fell, and in the context of open communication technologies and the growth and integration and drive by more and more people for democratic opportunity, with the fall of the Berlin Wall, there was a big movement of freedom from that time in 1989 and a big drive to democracy. East and West Berlin, for instance, became one city once more and the whole democratic process was in movement.

From 1989, we moved to 2001, 9/11. And just as the world changed in 1989, the world changed again in 2001 and after 2001, you saw a situation in which the threat to democracy became a threat to freedom and that threat to freedom has been escalating ever since 2001. The end result is that the entire opening up of the world, which cannot now be stopped, which expanded and intensified in 1989, now finds itself almost dominated by interventions to protect further escalation without control. And, therefore, people are more concerned now about managing borders. They are more concerned about terrorism inside their country. They are more concerned about terrorism from outside of their country. They are more concerned about the relationship between criminal elements, terrorism and the undermining of democracy, and all of these things threatening democracy and threatening freedom as we try to protect it, become a curtailment of the freedom of the ordinary freedom-loving citizen in the country and that is what we are faced with in Trinidad and Tobago, in the United States, in every country in the world, which is that the retreat after 9/11, has really created the conditions in which all our freedoms are now threatened by the need to have systems to protect the freedom already gained—*[Interruption]*

Sen. Hinds: The biggest threat is the UNC.

Sen. The Hon. Dr. B. Tewarie:—and that is the challenge that we are facing today.

Sen. Karim: “Yuh now wake up.”

Sen. Hinds: 9/11?

Sen. Mohammed: Fabricator.

3.45 p.m.

[MR. PRESIDENT *in the Chair*]

Sen. The Hon. Dr. B. Tewarie: If you provoke me, I will remind you of something in 1971. In 1971 in this country, Trinidad and Tobago, a poet was driven to write the following last lines of a sonnet:

Each evening there is darkness at the door,
each morning terror of the light.

A poet was driven to write that about the condition of the country in 1971—
[*Interruption*]

Sen. Hinds: Tagore would not write that.

Sen. The Hon. Dr. B. Tewarie:—a Trinidad and Tobago poet. That poet was also driven to write these two lines of another sonnet:

Power is not enough to make us strong,
the heart must also sing the human song. [*Desk thumping*]

And he was moved to write that in 1971. So, if you tell “meh” something about the UNC again, I have another retort for you. [*Laughter*] So, it is up to you. [*Laughter*]

Sen. Hinds: You are a member of the COP.

Sen. The Hon. Dr. B. Tewarie: All right. “If yuh tell me about COP”, I will have another retort too. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Hinds: Are you UNC or COP?

Sen. The Hon. Dr. B. Tewarie: Am I?

Sen. Hinds: Are you UNC or COP?

Sen. Dr. The Hon. B. Tewarie: I am COP. I am UNC. I am People's Partnership. I am the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]
[*Crosstalk*]

Sen. Hinds: Old politics or new politics?

Sen. Singh: Fabricators. [*Crosstalk*]

Sen. The Hon. Dr. B. Tewarie: These men and women here are my colleagues—[*Interruption*]

Mr. President: Senators!

Sen. The Hon. Dr. B. Tewarie:—they are hard-working, they are committed, they are causing the development to happen in this country. When I drive through this country—over Easter I went down to Cedros—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Hinds: “Eh-heh!”

Sen. The Hon. Dr. B. Tewarie:—sometimes I drive to different parts of the country—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Hinds: Tabaquite and Debe.

Sen. The Hon. Dr. B. Tewarie:—to do certain things, and when I look at what is happening to this country [*Crosstalk*] and because of what happens in Cabinet, I know the people who are involved in it, I almost cannot believe the amount of work that they are able to achieve, that results in benefits to people in Trinidad and Tobago in their communities. [*Desk thumping*] But I was telling you about what is happening—

[*Sen. Hinds indicates he wants Minister to give way*]

Hon. Senators: Sit down! Sit down!

Sen. The Hon. Dr. B. Tewarie: “Sit down nah man! Sit down nah man!” I was telling you—[*Crosstalk*]

Sen. George: Unparliamentary.

Sen. The Hon. Dr. B. Tewarie:—about what has happened to the threat to our democracy and freedom. [*Crosstalk*] I think all of you would have seen on television, reported in the news [*Crosstalk*] or would have read in the papers or certainly are aware of what happened in Britain recently, in which a man simply murdered somebody and basically dared the cameras to look at him in the streets of a small community in England.

Before that not three or four weeks, perhaps less, in Boston we saw what happened, and again all of these things, when something like Boston happens, when something like this terror attack in England, in the United Kingdom happens, what it does, it forces people to rethink. And in order to have law and order, what happens again, is that the citizen's freedom, the ordinary innocent citizen who is just going about his business or doing his work, thinking his thoughts, making his notes, going about his business, shopping, enjoying his family, her family, these people are—their freedom is threatened because of all of these things.

Therefore, the reason I am saying that, and the reason I am raising that is because I want to make the case that in today's world, there is a threat to freedom and there is pressure on civil liberties and that is a fact. That means that we have to be very, very careful about how we manage the democratic process.

The people who have to be most careful about how we manage the democratic process are the people like ourselves who sit in Parliament and who are the leaders of the country. The Members of the Executive who lead the country; the members of the Judiciary by the manner in which they conduct their business; the President is the Head of State and the person who basically is the custodian of the unifying hand, so to speak, that prevails over this country; people like the Director of Public Prosecutions—*[Interruption]*

Hon. Senators: Oh! Oh! Oh!

Sen. The Hon. Dr. B. Tewarie:—who must deal with the system of justice to make it effective; people like the media who are guardians of the democratic process; the independent institutions of Trinidad and Tobago and in the Constitution there are many.

The Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago, you know, is a constitution in which you have a fair amount of executive power, you have a fair amount of parliamentary power, you have a fair amount of presidential power and jurisdiction, but in order for the country to work effectively, there is need always in the Constitution like in most constitutions, for a working together of these institutions in a certain relative harmony, so that the citizens of the society could benefit.

Among those institutions, the Opposition is also an institution. The Opposition in the Parliament is also an institution, just as the Independent Senators are an institution, not the individuals, but the institution itself. And the democratic interplay, the discourse, the shared responsibility for governance, is a very important part of custodianship of the democratic processes and the practice of democracy in the country. When you abuse the democratic process, it can be very costly. When one, I should say, abuses the democratic process it can be very costly.

I want to make reference to what happened earlier today in the Senate when Sen. Al-Rawi got up. I do not mean this in any way and I am certainly not going to say anything that is untoward, but I want to use it simply as an example about other things that I might say. Now, when you look at the Order Paper for Tuesday, May 28, which is today, Mr. President, you see that the first Order of Business is Prayers and we had our prayers.

Sen. Hinds: Prayer.

Sen. The Hon. Dr. B. Tewarie: Well, it says “prayers” here, I am reading. So, the second item on the agenda is the “Oath of Allegiance of a New Senator”, and we swore in a new Senator today, Independent Senator, Rhonda Parris-De Freitas, and I take the opportunity to welcome her to this Senate. [*Desk thumping*]

Then it says “Bills Brought from the House of Representatives” and there were no Bills, so we passed over that. It says “Petitions”, so we passed over that because there were no petitions, and then it says “Papers”, number six, and the hon. Leader of Government Business, Sen. Ganga Singh, presented the papers on behalf of our ministerial colleagues who were not present, in his capacity as Leader of Government Business.

Then it goes on to say, “Questions to Ministers”, and we had the Leader of Government Business indicating what were the questions we were prepared to answer and why we could not answer other questions because some of our colleagues were otherwise engaged.

Our commitment to come here today on Private Members’ Day is a commitment, Mr. President, to democracy, the democratic process and the parliamentary process, that is why we are here. [*Desk thumping*] Even though we came here, just a few of us, in order to make sure that the Parliament started on time, and we service our democratic and parliamentary obligations to the Parliament, we knew that other colleagues, when they had finished with their part of the business, would come to join us because they also would meet their parliamentary obligations, and we came here to do that. [*Desk thumping*]

So there were questions and following the explanation by the Leader of Government Business in the Senate, we then had the questions, we went on to that. When that was finished, the next item on the paper would be “Questions to Chairmen of Sessional and Special Select Committees”, well, there were none, so we passed over that.

Then item number 10, ‘Requests for Leave to Move the Adjournment of the Senate on Definite Matters of Urgent Public Importance’, and there were none so we went on. Then it says here number 11, “Statements by Ministers or Parliamentary Secretaries”. There is an order of precedence in the Order Paper of the Parliament, Mr. President [*Desk thumping*] and you cannot upset that order and accost—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Ramlogan SC: At your whim and fancy. [*Crosstalk*]

Sen. Hinds: Frivolous?

Sen. Singh: Frivolous!

Sen. The Hon. Dr. B. Tewarie:—accost the hon. Vice-President of the Senate who was in the Chair—*[Interruption]*

Sen. Singh: “Yuh want to go and join Rowley?”

Sen. The Hon. Dr. B. Tewarie:—on the basis that you are representing some minority rights position in the Parliament of this country, when the Order Paper tells you what the order of precedence is. *[Crosstalk and laughter]* So all I can say is that while it may have been theatrically effective—*[Interruption]*

Sen. Ramlogan SC: “Yeah.” Yes.

Sen. The Hon. Dr. B. Tewarie:—it was really, totally inappropriate. *[Desk thumping]* And it is this attempt to hijack the parliamentary process, that although this is not something that we should talk anymore about—I am finished with it now—

Hon. Senator: Yes, please.

Hon. Senator: Are you a lawyer? You must not abuse it.

Sen. The Hon. Dr. B. Tewarie:—although it is not anything that we should talk very much about, it indicates—

Mr. President: Hon. Senators, the speaking time of the hon. Senator has expired.

Hon. Senator: Thank God!

Motion made: That the hon. Senator’s speaking time be extended by 15 minutes. *[Hon. G. Singh]*

Sen. Hinds: “Oh gorm!”

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. President: The Minister of Planning and Sustainable Development. *[Desk thumping]*

Sen. The Hon. Dr. B. Tewarie: I thank you, Sen. Hinds, for saying, yes. *[Laughter and desk thumping]*

Hon. Senators: “De seagull stay quiet, man.”

Sen. George: “Yeah, yeah, yeah.”

Sen. The Hon. Dr. B. Tewarie: Anyway, I was simply making the point that sometimes we might take a liberty without thinking through the ultimate consequences of where some of these things might lead, and I just wanted to make that point. I am not going to go any further with that.

Sen. Hinds: You mean chastised.

Hon. Senator: You would never be chastised by—[*Inaudible*]

Sen. The Hon. Dr. B. Tewarie: I talked about the words of the poet in the 1970s, and I said that in response to something Sen. Hinds said. But I want to say that context is very important in understanding the democratic process, which was why I raised the issue of 1989 to September 11, 2001.

I want to talk a little bit of our context in Trinidad and Tobago. We are now 50 years, we are going on to our 51st anniversary of independence, and I think we need to understand the democracy and the guarding of democracy is a shared responsibility.

4.00 p.m.

I do not want to go into any matters that have been debated in the other House and I do not wish to raise any controversial issue this afternoon, but when you think about how the process works and how you manage the democratic process, the hon. Leader of the Opposition in the other House—the Opposition Leader is a very important role and point in the democratic process—and the hon. Leader used the parliamentary opportunity, the opportunity of Parliament, to do something which he is within his right to do, which is to say, to bring a Motion of no confidence in the Government, as he had done on occasions before in the Prime Minister, the Government and other Ministers.

He took the opportunity to do that and it is within his right, within his jurisdiction to do so and he did that, he came and he did that; but notwithstanding all the issues that have come up and the refutations that have come up about the emails which have made them so suspect, I just want to ask one question here. If I am Leader of the Opposition and I sent to the President of this country a set of documents for his perusal and assessment in order to make a judgment about it, and the President, His Excellency, in his wisdom, sends the matter to another independent institution under his charge, the Integrity Commission, because in his judgment he could not clearly address the issue of the veracity or the authenticity of the document, and that document is under the jurisdiction of another institution, with its veracity uncertain, how could you then come to the Parliament and bring the same document? [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Singh: Reckless! Reckless!

Sen. The Hon. Dr. B. Tewarie: Come to the Parliament and bring the same document, which is under the scrutiny of an independent institution and use that as the basis of an entire debate that seeks to bring the Government into disrepute.

Sen. Mohammed: He is a fabricator!

Sen. The Hon. Dr. B. Tewarie: I have raised that issue only to raise one point, which is that the essential pillars of a democracy of the kind that we have are the Executive, the Judiciary, the parliamentary system. In the parliamentary system that we have, we have two Houses and in one House you have Government and Opposition and Parliament governs its own business—it conducts its own business—and, in our House, you have Government, Opposition, Independents.

The shared responsibility of these entities that constitute the Parliament for making sure that at least one pillar of the democratic process has the necessary sustainable integrity for going forward in a sustainable fashion, it is something that we have to guard and exercise very carefully and, therefore, I want to say that what has happened within the last few weeks in this country should cause us to pause a little bit and to think about what we might do to improve this process rather than to bring the whole process into disrepute.

This is a young democracy. This is a young democracy and it is a country poised for great things, not only in economic terms, but because of the talent of its people, and the talent of its people is not determined by political allegiance, or by religious affiliation, or by genetic inheritance; but we are poised for something that is great.

People are seeing Trinidad and Tobago as a little country that has a place in the world that is significant. I do not think we can underestimate the significance of the Vice-President of the United States coming to these shores [*Desk thumping*] and engaging us on matters that are critical, as partners in the hemisphere, that is the Western Hemisphere.

I do not think the President of a country like China, which is poised to become the economic giant in the world, I do not think the President of that country—you hear China going here, there, everywhere and you hear Vice-President or you hear this one or that one and that one. The President himself came to Trinidad and Tobago, [*Desk thumping*] it must tell you something about where Trinidad and Tobago is, at least, perceived—how it is perceived in the world—and I think it is important to understand that.

I think our hon. Prime Minister has to be given a lot of credit for the manner in which she has managed the three years that she has been here, not only internally in this country because it has been a difficult time—2010 saw this country moving out of a decline in 2009 of -4.6 per cent—not only internally, but the international relations as well through her Minister of Foreign Affairs and with her Minister of Foreign Affairs, and operating in her Prime Minister's office dealing in international matters, so that this country becomes a place that has significant value in the world and brings significant value in the world.

I think that not only has she done that at an international level and done what she has done in this country together with her team in Trinidad and Tobago, both on the economic sphere, the political sphere—I did not talk about economic issues because the focus was on democracy, but you can see in the policy what the objective is. Today, inflation is low; food inflation is single digit; [*Desk thumping*] unemployment is just under 6 per cent, close to 5 per cent. [*Desk thumping*] The construction sector is moving—I will not say it is booming, but it is moving; [*Desk thumping*] the services sector is growing; the non-energy sector—you are beginning to see an economy beginning to move. You are beginning to see an economy diversifying and you are seeing the transformation beginning to take place as you drive around the country and you see what is happening throughout the country. You are seeing the international relations landscape also changing in Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Therefore, we need to strengthen the democracy of Trinidad and Tobago and the Opposition has to play its role, yes, that is true, and in a competitive political system such as Trinidad and Tobago, the Opposition has many, many options to do a lot of things, but there is a time when you have to put Trinidad and Tobago first. [*Desk thumping*]

I would like to close on that note, which is that whatever our political affiliation and however angry we might be about individual things that might happen that you can pluck out of the group and talk negatively about it, or see something negative about it, or be sceptical about it, let us always remember that we are here now and there will come a time when we will not be here—and I do not mean politically, I mean we may not be here on this earth—but the country will be here and, therefore, the time that we spend here has to be spent building things for the future of democracy in a world in which democracy and freedom are severely threatened. I thank you very much, Mr. President. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. President: Sen. Al-Rawi.

Sen. Faris Al-Rawi: Thank you, Mr. President. [*Desk thumping*] Thank you, Mr. President. I rise to contribute to an excellently-positioned Motion before this honourable Senate, one under the Private Business of this Senate. The debate is our Motion, that essentially the Government reaffirm its commitment to principles and practice of democracy in Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. President, it is convention that we usually stop at 4.30 on Private Members' Day and the hon. Senator, Dr. Tewarie, raised a short while ago his inability to appreciate a Motion of privilege raised in this House. [*Desk thumping*] He said that he found it improper and he reflected upon it, so it behooves an answer.

It strikes me as rather curious that Senators opposite cannot appreciate that there is in fact a privilege in the House—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Hinds: Oh yes, oh yes! [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. F. Al-Rawi:—that the concept of privilege is born as a right in Parliament, proceeding out of the Bill of Rights in 1688, coming out of England—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Senator: “Yeah, yeah.”

Hon. Senator: Tell them! Tell them! [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. F. Al-Rawi:—moving next, Mr. President—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: Teach them!

Sen. F. Al-Rawi:—into the Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago in section 55; coming next into the Standing Orders of our House, in 2000, on October 30, 2000, specifically for the Senate. So I find it rather curious that Members opposite cannot reflect upon the fact that under our Standing Orders we have the ability, particularly under Standing Order 26(5)—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Hinds: Quote it for them.

Sen. F. Al-Rawi:—to raise a Motion of privilege at any moment in time without notice, and that one has that option—any Member of this House has the option—to raise with the Presiding Officer, a Motion of privilege at any point in time and that what Mays on parliamentary practice or McGee on parliamentary practice tells you is that you must put that Motion of privilege to the House for a vote. It is well open to any Senator of this House to say that to drawl along in a statement under Standing Order 10—two statements in this Senate—consuming the valuable time of Private Members' Day—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Singh: Not if you ask; not if you ask—[*Desk thumping*]

Sen. F. Al-Rawi:—which can really go to any point in time, Mr. President, but consuming that valuable time so that you leave but a mere 17 minutes on the clock to talk to the democracy in Trinidad and Tobago, that it is a matter of privilege to be chosen by any Senator at any point in time. It is to be put to the vote.

Sen. Singh: It has no privilege in this.

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: So it causes me great concern that the Leader of Government Business can in crosstalk across this Senate say that there is no matter of privilege, but that does not surprise me about the UNC.

Sen. Singh: There is no merit in your privilege Motion. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. George: No merit.

Sen. Singh: No merit occurred.

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: It surprises me that the new politics of the COP cannot understand privileges in this House. [*Desk thumping*] Privileges are securely anchored into the concept of democracy [*Desk thumping*] because democracy in its root and meaning—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Dr. Tewarie: There is a particular way to—

Sen. F. Al-Rawi:—“demos” meaning the people of a particular area—

Sen. Singh: That is why your leader is before the Privileges Committee.

Sen. F. Al-Rawi:—defined and “kratos” referring to power. It is the power of the people—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Mohammed: Fabricator!

Sen. F. Al-Rawi:—through the representatives of this House—

Sen. George: Show me it in the Standing Orders.

Sen. F. Al-Rawi:—to stand and deal—it is in Standing Order 26(4), my friend. Look at it and read! [*Crosstalk*]

Sen. Cudjoe: Do not be distracted.

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: Mr. President, the fact is this Government is intent on breaching privileges any which way it can. [*Desk thumping*] Sometimes one gets that impression and the impression can be given when one takes hypothetical instances in discussions of the kind that my learned colleague Sen. Tewarie has put.

Sen. Dr. Tewarie: What is hypothetical about it?

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: Mr. President, it is certainly not a matter for the Government to decide on merit or lack of merit in any Motion. It is for the House to decide that, particularly when put under Standing Order 26(5).

Hon. Senator: No!

4.15 p.m.

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: But, Mr. Speaker, the hon. Sen. Dr. Tewarie raised a position in relation to the discussion in the national community which is on emails and which is on a Motion of no confidence brought into the Lower House. [*Desk thumping*] He raised it a little while ago. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Hinds: Oh yes! Oh yes! He imported it into this House.

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: He said it in the context of the Opposition as an institution, having in his point of view, a responsibility in respect of bringing Motions. They termed it for weeks—for days which seem like weeks—to be a waste of time. “Why bring another Motion of no confidence?” they said, from pillar to post in the country. But, Mr. President, when you reflect upon the role of the Opposition as one of the pillars of our society standing as an element described with specificity in the Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago, as it does, then one ought to consider, as Sen. Dr. Tewarie puts it to us, the context of that discussion. And it is critical that we remember that it is the Opposition’s role to raise issues and to advocate them in the Parliament in the best interest of the citizens of this country.

Sen. Mc Knight put it to us a little while ago; the concept of the Executive and the power given to an Executive, and the unbridled power that an Executive may enjoy, and then you look to the translation of that into a Motion of no confidence brought by an Opposition, and you understand the potency of a Motion like that—
[*Interruption*]

Sen. Singh: How you waste it!

Sen. F. Al-Rawi:—which can go from: it should not be brought; it is a waste of time, into yes we require an investigation of issues brought to Parliament.
[*Crosstalk*]

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: Mr. President—

Sen. Hinds: Be courteous and allow the Senator to speak.

Sen. George: “You saying that!”

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: Mr. President, if I may point to the Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago—because in 17 minutes you have a very short opportunity to present your position, [*Crosstalk*] the fact is that our Constitution is comprised of 12 chapters. In those 12 chapters, Mr. President—I am not surprised that Sen. Moore who has just joined us would be tired. I do not know where she was before—
[*Interruption*]

Hon. Senators: “Ohooo!” [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Senator: And we do not wish to know.

Sen. F. Al-Rawi:—but the fact is, Mr. President, that when you are dealing with the democracy of this country [*Crosstalk*] you ought to never be tired to listen.

Sen. Dr. Tewarie: You just made my whole point. [*Crosstalk*]

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: So, Mr. President, the fact is, in these 12 chapters of the Constitution, [*Crosstalk*] when we reflect on 12 chapters of the Constitution, Mr. President, we note that the preamble speaks to the issue of democracy. It is the Preamble in paragraph (c) which speaks to the people of Trinidad and Tobago:

“have asserted their belief in a democratic society in which all persons may, to the extent of their capacity, play some part in the institutions of the national life and thus develop and maintain due respect for lawfully constituted authority;”

The preliminaries in sections 1 to 3 state that the Constitution is the supreme law. It establishes the concept of the State, Mr. President. Our fundamental rights are set out in Chapter 1—as Sen. Mc Knight reflected upon certain institutions of State, and as Sen. Dr. Tewarie called upon them, the pillars of our democracy—the President is referred to in Chapter 3.

Chapter 4 deals with the Parliament, Mr. President; Chapter 5 deals with Executive powers; Chapter 6 deals with the DPP, Mr. President; the Judicature, in Chapter 7; the Police and Police Service Commission in Chapter 9 and the Integrity Commission in Chapter 10.

Sen. Moore: What about Chapter 8?

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: Mr. President, I have reflected upon those chapters because in each limb of those chapters stands our democracy, and it is only when they are drawn together and strings are pulled, Mr. President, and you understand the fabric of where we are in the context of our Constitution that you ask yourselves: how could we in Trinidad and Tobago find ourselves as we do today with a 14-year-old boy dead at the hands of a 16-year-old—
[*Interruption*]

Sen. Hinds: Sen. Dr. Tewarie did not deal with that.

Sen. F. Al-Rawi:—where we can deal, Mr. President, with Trinidad and Tobago being blacklisted by the Government of France for lack of transparency today—[*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Singh: And we are together with Switzerland.

Sen. F. Al-Rawi:—when, Mr. President, we can deal with cries opposite of making great manoeuvres. Sen. Dr. Tewarie said a short while ago: sometimes we take liberties without thinking about the consequences, words to that effect. I wonder, Mr. President, in his glorification of the Government's work, whether there was a moment's thought in the proclamation of a state of emergency; whether there was a moment's thought in the arrest of 8,000 people [*Desk thumping*] under that state of emergency; whether there was a pause when 14 people were detained under a detention order, Mr. President; when the Government of Trinidad and Tobago announced an assassination plot against the Prime Minister and other Members, was there a moment of thought then, Mr. President?

Sen. George: When Occah Seapaul—

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: Was there a moment of thought—

Sen. Singh: When you hanged Glen Ashby!

Hon. Senator: Break the rule!

Sen. Moore: When you imprisoned Occah Seapaul?

Sen. F. Al-Rawi:—Mr. President, when attacks were made on sitting Members of the then Government through parliamentary procedures? I am speaking to Franklin Khan and Eric Williams. Was there a moment of thought by the Member who ran to the House with a warm hot letter and read into the record of *Hansard* something which turned out to be completely and totally false? [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Hinds: Tell us!

Hon. Senators: Like emails? [*Crosstalk*]

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: Was there a moment of thought when two good men's reputations were destroyed in the national community?

Sen. Moore: By email?

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: Was there a moment of thought when an apology was due when it turned out that there was a fabrication—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Senators: “Ahhh!” [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: Was there a moment of thought to the Leader of Government Business in the Lower House in pulling out props in Parliament? Was there a moment of thought in breaching the rules on publication in this House in having CNMG play live the Prime Minister's supposed response to the Leader of the Opposition in the Motion of no confidence?

Hon. Senators: Why did you not stay in the Parliament?

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: Did the Minister of Communications stand once to explain that move? Second time, Mr. President, in this Parliament in this session—*[Interruption]*

Sen. Hinds: Hitler, right!

Sen. F. Al-Rawi:—that we have a Minister of Communications sitting amongst us in this Senate—*[Interruption]*

Sen. Hinds: That little Hitler, right!

Sen. F. Al-Rawi:—who did not spare a moment of thought, as Sen. Dr. Tewarie put it, to admit that the Government breached the rules of publication, Mr. President? And then he has the temerity to call across the floor in the Parliament as to fabrication!

Sen. George: Temerity, big word!

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: Mr. President, “methink that they doth protest too much” *[Desk thumping]* and that the platitudes offered by this Government—Mr. President, I am not quite sure what progress the hon. Minister, Sen. Dr. Tewarie, is talking about, you know. *[Crosstalk]* In the context of \$208 billion of approved budgets, I am not quite confident that this Government is demonstrating the production of resources of the kind that they need to account for. I hear the Minister of National Security chuckling glibly opposite me.

Sen. Singh: He is your good friend.

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: My good friend—

Sen. George: Your friend?

Sen. F. Al-Rawi:—no doubt chuckling in acknowledgement of the truth that I am talking to, Mr. President. *[Crosstalk]* I was not your good friend when I stood up and defended your name in the House then. I see, I see.

Sen. George: You were my friend.

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: “Methinks that meh friend doth protest too much again.” But, Mr. President, the fact is, you cannot have it both ways, Mr. President.

Sen. Hinds: Correct!

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: Mr. President, was a second of thought poured into the Special Anti-Crime Unit when it was cancelled? [*Desk thumping and crosstalk*] Mr. President, it would be surprising for the people of this country to understand that the statistical information of detection in Trinidad and Tobago stands at 7 per cent today.

The last time that it stood at 7 per cent, Mr. President, was prior to SAUTT coming into office, in fact, in the year 2008. And do you know what, Mr. President? When you pulled the statistics from the police website, do you know what the statistical detection rate was and conviction rate? Under SAUTT period, it was 40.85 per cent. So we have gone from 40.85 per cent detection rate to 7 per cent detection rate.

Sen. Hinds: What? So bad!

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: And my learned colleague tells me to spare a thought, when his Government has dealt with the dismantling of security services mechanisms— [*Interruption*]

Sen. Dr. Tewarie: That is not true.

Sen. F. Al-Rawi:—which attacked, Mr. President, the very democracy upon which we stand. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Dr. Tewarie: That is not true. That is an interpretation.

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: That is not an interpretation. But do you know what, Mr. President? [*Crosstalk*]

Sen. Dr. Tewarie: Your convenient interpretation.

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: The fact is, Mr. President, you are five times more likely today to get away with crime of murder than you were in 2009.

Sen. Hinds: Yes!

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: Five times more likely. [*Desk thumping*] Because when you appreciate the fact that there are less murders today—

Sen. George: Fewer!

Sen. F. Al-Rawi:—and, therefore, more resources available for the investigation of murders and serious crimes—

Sen. Hinds: Even in schools!

Sen. F. Al-Rawi:—then you appreciate that a 7 per cent detection rate means that you are five times more likely to get away with the crime of murder now. So, how does my learned colleague, Sen. Dr. Tewarie, expect us to take him seriously at all [*Desk thumping*] in saying, we must pause to think about the consequences in respect of liberties which we take? Well, it was a liberty that the Government took in dismantling services.

Sen. Dr. Tewarie: Just go on!

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: So, Mr. President—yes, I will go on, and unbridled at that, because it is my privilege to go on. [*Crosstalk*] I enjoy, as every Senator in this Senate does, the privilege of freedom of speech and the more they groan, Mr. President, the more I know I am doing my job right. [*Desk thumping*]

When you listen to the groans opposite, the protestations of my learned colleagues opposite [*Crosstalk*] it means that something right is going on. Why would one sit so uncomfortably in painful groans like my learned colleagues, Mr. President? Why? [*Crosstalk and interruption*] So, Mr. President, sometimes when you want to cry, “yuh does laugh dey say”.

Sen. George: “Yuh turn it around now.”

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: And the Minister of National Security may very well be in the position where he wishes to cry but he is, in fact, laughing. But, Mr. President, on the issue of thought, in the two minutes that I have, where is the thought into the fact that there has been a newspaper report in this country speaking to the bugging of the Office of the DPP. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Hinds: “Oh my God!”

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: And the Minister of National Security sits opposite me today, the Minister of Justice and the Attorney General who is not here, and not a single word or action on the fact that the DPP’s office can be compromised.

Mr. President, before they cut me off, what greater threat of democracy could there be [*Desk thumping and crosstalk*] Mr. President, than the potential that the DPP’s office was bugged? What greater threat to democracy can there be in that allegation? My colleague is correct! But who is hot and sweaty in the Government trying to disprove that allegation? [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Senators: “Ahhh!” [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: Who in the Government is telling us who actually has the contract for [*Crosstalk*] the security in the DPP’s office and the AG’s office?

Sen. Deyalsingh: SIS!

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: Who is telling us who has the contract for security in the DPP's office?

Sen. Hinds: "Mamu?"

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: Not a "man jack" opposite.

Sen. Singh: Well, you tell us!

Sen. George: "Yuh bussing mark; buss mark!"

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: Mr. President, nobody opposite is telling us that SIS has that. Nobody opposite is telling us they have the contract for—

Sen. Hinds: The same SIS!

Sen. F. Al-Rawi:—for national security—for security services in the Ministry of the Attorney General—*[Interruption]*

Sen. Hinds: The same SIS!

Sen. F. Al-Rawi:—as I am advised.

Sen. Hinds: Of 23 Rivulet Road?

Sen. F. Al-Rawi:—and in the DPP's office. Nobody opposite!

Sen. George: "Ah hope yuh check it out!"

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: Members of the National Security Council in this country are deafly silent—not a word, Mr. President.

Sen. Hinds: "Mamu" is a security officer too?

4.30 p.m.

Mr. President: Senator, it is now 4.30 p.m.; Member of Government Business.

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of the Environment and Water Resources (Sen. The Hon. Ganga Singh): Mr. President—*[Interruption]*

Sen. Hinds: "Doh run—"

Sen. The Hon. G. Singh:—before I beg to move the adjournment—you know it is an agreed 4.30, so stay quiet. Stay quiet! Stay quiet!

Sen. Hinds: We can continue you know.

Sen. The Hon. G. Singh: Mr. President, I beg to move the adjournment of the House, but before you move the adjournment we have certain observations having regard to the fact that the Vice-President of the United States is here, the President

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of China is coming over the weekend, and then we have indicative of the cosmopolitan and cultural tapestry in this country, we have both the Corpus Christi public holiday and Indian Arrival Day.

In order to bring appropriate greetings, my colleague, the hon. Minister of Justice would bring Corpus Christi greetings, and my colleague, the hon. Minister of Food Production will bring Indian Arrival Day greetings on behalf of the Government.

Corpus Christi/Indian Arrival Day (Greetings)

The Minister of Justice (Sen. The Hon. Christlyn Moore): Thank you so much, Mr. President. On behalf of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and indeed this honourable House, it gives me great pleasure to bring Corpus Christi greetings to the nation of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

The institution of Corpus Christi as a feast in the Christian calendar resulted from approximately 40 years work on the part of one humble woman, Juliana Liège. It is not well known that this feast really is the result of her laborious work and visions over 40-odd years. She was a 13th Century religious woman from an unrecognized religious order. She was orphaned and placed in a convent at an early age, and she developed a special veneration for the Blessed Sacrament, and always longed for a feast day outside of Lent to its honour.

“Her vita reports that this desire was enhanced by a vision of the Church under the appearance of the full moon having one dark spot, which signified such solemnity. In 1208, she first reported her vision of Christ in which she was instructed to plead for the institution of the feast of Corpus Christi. The vision was repeated for the next 20 years but she kept it secret. When she eventually relayed it to her confessor, he relayed it to the bishop.”

The celebration of Corpus Christi soon developed and it became widespread only after Juliana, then sainted, and Bishop Robert de Thorete, whom she had confessed to, had died.

In Trinidad and Tobago Corpus Christi is celebrated both by the Anglican and the Catholic Churches. On this day, members of the Catholic and Anglican Churches, and some Pentecostal churches, pay homage to Christ in the form of a Mass followed by a public procession in which the Blessed Sacrament is carried through the street in a public statement that the sacrifice of Christ was for the salvation of the whole world. This is an event which is also mirrored in other parts of the world.

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In Trinidad and Tobago observances take place in Port of Spain, San Fernando, Scarborough, and other parishes. Roman Catholics usually attend church services on Corpus Christi morning before attending processions in various communities.

In Trinidad and Tobago Corpus Christi is also synonymous with planting, and there usually is a great deal of rainfall around this time. Gardeners consider it a time that is favourable for planting, and it is believed, of course, that anything planted on this day will thrive.

For decades the celebration of Corpus Christi has been one of the most significant displays of Catholic culture and identity in Trinidad and Tobago. The large procession with the Blessed Sacrament in downtown Port of Spain has always attracted not only Catholic worshippers but persons of other religious persuasions.

In 2007, Archbishop Edward Gilbert captured the significance of the procession when he said, and I quote:

“The procession that will follow the mass is an interesting symbol of God’s presence among us. The procession is a sign of witness to our faith in the Eucharist, but it is not a sign of triumphalism. A procession is a symbol that we understand that we are pilgrims in this world. We are people on the move.”

He added, and I quote:

“Our response to the presence of God in the Eucharist must be conscious and explicit. Usually, we respond through prayerful silence or culturally acceptable forms of reverence eg. through posture and gesture. The most common forms of reverence are genuflecting, kneeling and bowing. Each is a sign that we understand we are in the presence of the sacred.”

Continuing, Archbishop Gilbert said, and I quote:

“We are on a journey, but we are not alone. As the Ark of the Covenant was a symbol of God’s presence to the Israelites as they journeyed through the desert, so the Blessed Sacrament is present for us not only during the procession, but also during life’s journey.”

This all-inclusive procession sees members of various Catholic groups including boy scouts and cadets, and has become over the years a spectator’s joy.

Once again, on behalf of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, and indeed this honourable Senate, it is my pleasure to bring Corpus Christi greetings to members of the celebrating community. I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. President: Who is going to speak next? Sen. Cudjoe.

Sen. Shamfa Cudjoe: Thank you, Mr. President. I too would like to join the rest of the Senate, and on behalf of the Opposition Bench, extend Corpus Christi greetings not just to our Anglican and our Roman Catholic brothers and sisters in Trinidad and Tobago, but to the entire Christian community. [*Desk thumping*]

The celebration of Corpus Christi symbolizes the body and the blood of Christ as we celebrate the presence of God among us. I am not Roman Catholic or Anglican, but I have fond memories of planting on Corpus Christi Day. On Corpus Christi Day anything your mother, or your parents, or your family plants is sure to flourish as Sen. Moore would have mentioned. I find it very pleasing to live in Trinidad and Tobago where at this time of year and throughout the year different celebrations, different holidays would arise and we live here in a multicultural community in one peace, unity and understanding. Though it is true that a recent report on the study of religions in the region show that there is still some bias to some of the faiths, like Rastafarianism and Muslim communities, but I think we live here pretty much in one love, unity and understanding, and I am pleased to be a part of that.

So with that said, Mr. President, I want to say, happy Corpus Christi. A happy holy Corpus Christi holiday to each and every one of us and to those of you travelling to Tobago, or whatever you plan to do in your long weekend, make sure that it is safe and that we all get back to Parliament or to work, or to school in one piece next Monday. Thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. President: Sen. De Freitas. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Rhonda Parris-De Freitas: Thank you. Mr. President, I am pleased to bring greetings on behalf of the Independent Bench to the Christian community in the celebration of Corpus Christi, the body of Christ, wishing all a holy and reflective day to continue in giving love to all mankind as sisters and brothers. Thank you, Mr. President. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. President: Sen. Maharaj.

The Minister of Food Production (Sen. The Hon. Devant Maharaj): Mr. President, I rise to bring greetings on behalf of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago on this observance of Indian Arrival Day, 2013. This year the nation celebrates or commemorates the 168th anniversary of the arrival of Indians to Trinidad and Tobago. On this occasion it is mostly observed with the contributions and reflections of the Indian community during that period to now, as well as the trials and tribulations of that community, that they faced under indentureship.

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Artefacts are most often displayed as a form of the observance at various venues throughout the length and breadth of the country. In this regard, I wish to commend the Minister of National Diversity and Social Integration, Minister Clifton De Coteau, for the restoration of Nelson Island [*Desk thumping*] off the coast of Trinidad and Tobago, which served as a quarantine depot for immigrants to Trinidad and Tobago from 1867; prior to that the quarantine facility was located at Fort San Andres, off the lighthouse. That became a jail in subsequent years for the likes of George Weekes, Tubal Uriah “Buzz” Butler, and Makandal Daaga, but from 1867 onward it was our version of Ellis Island of New York. It was the first point of entry for the East Indian immigrants to Trinidad and Tobago where they were quarantined over a period of time.

The tremendous work done by Minister De Coteau and his team has transformed Nelson Island as far back as possible to its 1867 state—buildings were restored. I understand the oldest concrete building in Trinidad, built by the African community, is on Nelson Island; and throughout the exhibition there are displays that depict the various aspects of indentureship and indentured life on the island, as well as on the mainland, by and large.

That visit on Saturday as the Nelson Island site was inaugurated—I know Sen. Shamfa Cudjoe tried unsuccessfully to attend—I reflected on a similar exercise which I undertook. In 2006, I was made the Chairman of the Indian Caribbean Museum located in Waterloo, Carapichaima, and that museum was established for the sole purpose of preserving the historical record of the Indian community in Trinidad.

It is open from Tuesday to Saturday from 10.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. every day. We allow in the museum, weekends, where families and schools and so on can visit. In that museum there is a Ramayana that is over 125 years old; there is a Qur’an over 100 years old; there are artefacts which are no longer in use but have been brought here by the indentured, such as the “lorha” and “sill”, which are used to grind garlic and so on; the “jata”, which is used to grind pulses and so on, and many other artefacts that the indentured used as a matter of their everyday life, which have fallen by the wayside.

The board of the museum comprised members of the Maha Sabha, which piloted the project, and members from ASJA, as well as members of the Presbyterian board, because we recognize that in this country diversity is our strength and we cannot [*Desk thumping*] repose it in one group.

These artefacts are normally the physical manifestation of Indian Arrival Day. However, I would like to turn our attention to the date itself, the history; how are we—where we are today in recognizing this as a public holiday.

Indian Arrival Day can be said—the first major celebration in Trinidad took place in Skinner Park, San Fernando in 1945, and that marked the centennial observation of the arrival of Indians to Trinidad. It was done with great pomp and ceremony. The Governor General representing the Government of the United Kingdom was there attending. Other local dignitaries who addressed the crowd included Timothy Roodal, George Fitzpatrick, one of the earliest East Indians in the Legislative Council of the day, Adrian Cola Rienzi, Murli Kirpalani, and greetings were read from Mahatma Gandhi, Lord Wavell, C.F. Andrews, who was Gandhi's emissary to the west, Colonel Stanley, who was the Secretary of State to the colonies.

I have put together the history of Indian Arrival Day; in my years of research and so on, I have seen it now replicated in other places. After the 1945 centenary celebration, a publication was done which attempted to document the “who is who” in the Indian community at that time, and it was subsequently reproduced in 1995, in a book done by Dr. Brinsley Samaroo and Diane Seukeran, I believe. I think Faris may remember that book. But after the celebration of 1945, the centenary celebration, the observance dwindled somewhat. Very few organizations kept the tradition of the observance, but most notably was the Devine Life Society, they kept the memory of Indian Arrival Day going on in their various temples and units and so on, and that continued until the '70s.

At that point in time NJAC—Sen. Moheni and his organization also joined in the observance of Indian Arrival Day with the likes of Ramdath Jagessar who formed part of the their core committee, and they started with small observances at their Duke Street office in Port of Spain. Again, the observance was small and not national in scope.

4.45 p.m.

In 1976 an organization was formed called the Indian Revival Reform Association, and they were concerned with the Indian situation. They wrote pamphlets to bring about greater awareness and decided to focus on things that were good from the community.

In 1977 they formed a committee to revive the memory of 1945. That committee comprised of Rameshwar Singh, Khaliq Khan, Ramdath Jagessar, Rajiv Sieunarine, Azumudeen “Danny” Jang, Michael Sankar, Rajesh Harricharan, and in the following year they were joined by Rajnie Ramlakhan, Anand Maharaj and Ashok Gobin.

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The first active step this organization took was in 1978 when they produced and distributed a magazine entitled *Indian Emigration Day, May 30, 1978*. It was called Indian Emigration Day up to that point in time, because Indians were émigrés here. The names of the first pioneers were listed, the ship and so on.

The *Trinidad Express* and the *Trinidad Guardian* carried releases on the observance. Mastana Bahar dedicated its first show to Indian Emigration Day, at that point in time. The San Fernando Secondary School also had a presentation and organized a celebration at that time. The major turning point that took this small observance from a small group occurred in 1979, when the group approached the Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha with the idea of carrying it on a national scale. They agreed to organize a major celebration at the Lakshmi Girls Hindu College on May 27, 1979.

During these early discussions as to formulate how the day would have been celebrated and observed between the two groups, they decided at that point in time to change the name to Indian Arrival Day, because it was felt at that point in time that Indians were citizens and no longer immigrants to the country. So that is it.

The 1979 celebration no doubt was a great success, with the presence of several government Ministers present, including Sham and Kamal Mohammed, who attended, and was very much present. The Indian High Commissioner also was present as well as the moderator of the Presbyterian Church, Idris Hamid. It took a few years following that for the event to slowly build momentum. Groups such as the Hindu Seva Sangh, led by Harry Kissoon and including Doolarchan Hanomansingh, sought the guidance of the Indian Review Committee, and slowly this observance took root in different parts of Trinidad.

By 1980, Indian Arrival Day celebrations were being observed at Spring Village, Cedros, Penal, San Juan and Chaguanas. Other groups such as the Catholic Church, mosques, libraries and mandirs joined in the observance. In such a short space of time, the observance was seeing 10 significant observations by 1985.

In 1991, Trevor Sudama and Raymond Pallackdarrysingh first introduced to the House of Representatives the concept of Indian Arrival Day being made a public holiday. From then to 1995, that call remained unheeded. In 1995, the then Prime Minister, the Hon. Patrick Manning, declared that the 150th anniversary of Indian arrival to Trinidad would be called Indian Arrival Day public holiday, but thereafter it was to be called Arrival Day.

In 1995 the major celebrations took place throughout Trinidad and Tobago, some saying even causing the change in administration. With the change in administration in 1995, the name of Indian Arrival Day stuck permanently to the holiday, which it is now at this point in time.

Today, we take for granted the observance of Indian Arrival Day, but we remember at this point that the observance as a national holiday endured a very arduous journey to where it is today, and paved the way for the recognition of Indian Arrival Day; whereas today, all citizens of Trinidad and Tobago participate and enjoy the holiday.

Thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Terrence Deyalsingh: Thank you, Mr. President, for allowing me the opportunity to bring greetings on behalf of the Opposition Bench on the occasion of Indian Arrival Day. I associate myself fully with the historical data given by my colleague, Sen. Devant Maharaj, well put together and well appreciated.

Celebrations, whether it is birthdays or anniversaries are times for both celebration and reflection, and whilst we celebrate these days, I would like to turn the House into a more reflective mode, because if we take Indian Arrival Day as it is, as an event to be celebrated in a silo, I think we will be doing us in Trinidad and Tobago a disservice, because whilst we may have arrived and whilst different groups may have arrived over the years, be they the Portuguese, the Syrians, our black brothers and sisters and the Chinese, we have all arrived, but the question is: have we reached as a society?

I question this because when I picked up the *Sunday Guardian* recently and read a poll put out by the ANSA McAl Psychological Research Centre, it told me that on many levels we have reached as a society, whether we are East Indian, African, Indian, Chinese, whatever, but on other levels we have not yet reached.

In celebrating Indian Arrival Day, I would like to take the conversation forward, building on Sen. Devant Maharaj's historical exposé, to ask: what will we do with opportunities like Indian Arrival Day to make sure that Trinidad and Tobago reaches somewhere as a society? Celebrate we must, and after Thursday and Friday when the candles have been blown out, the cake has been eaten and we take out the garbage from the celebration and we reflect on that ANSA McAl poll, would we say that we have reached as a society?

When the celebration is finished and I pick up a newspaper 20 years from now, a *Guardian* 20 years from now in my rocking chair, with dentures and a plastic hip, the question has to be asked, if the same poll is taken which was taken

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last week and published in the newspaper, if that same poll is taken 20 years from now, could I lean back in my rocking chair and say, “Yes, we have arrived and yes, Trinidad and Tobago has reached as a society,” when the decisions that we make are based on us as a society and not how we see ourselves in silos?

So, Mr. President, in bringing the Indian Arrival Day greetings, as I said, I associate myself with Sen. Devant Maharaj’s historical exposé, but I think as a Senate we need to reflect a little more sincerely on the matter. I hope my little intervention forces us as a country, as a Senate, to so reflect after the day has come and after the day has gone.

Mr. President, I thank you.

Sen. Prof. Harold Ramkissoon: Mr. President, it is an honour for me on behalf of the Members of the Independent Bench to extend warm Indian Arrival Day greetings to the members of the East Indian community, on this special occasion which is, as we know, celebrated on May 30.

It commemorates the arrival of East Indians to our shores on May 30, on that famous ship the *Fatel Razack*. They came, not as free men and free women, but as indentured labourers to work on the sugar plantations. Today, not only are their offspring free men and free women in a democratic society, but they like others are making a significant contribution to the development of our Republic. May we continue to do so and may we continue to be good citizens in this Republic as we celebrate our special occasion.

Thank you very much.

Mr. President: Hon. Senators, it gives me great pleasure to join with you. I am privileged and honoured to share with you and to share with the community at large greetings on Corpus Christi day and Indian Arrival Day.

When I reflect on the question of Corpus Christi, it reminds me, and at the same time the way in which we internalize the question of Corpus Christi by recognizing that it is a time for planting the seed, the seed, that will grow. It also sends a sign that it is in death that the seed bears fruit as it were. In the same way of course, the Catholic community shares with Corpus Christi, body of Christ, which is the literal meaning of Corpus Christi.

So we too as Christians believe that in feeding on the body of Christ, we are transformed and become more like him, unlike the food that we eat, where the food becomes part of us. On the other hand, when we feed on the body of Christ, we become like Christ and are transformed. So we thank the Catholic community, and celebrate with them Corpus Christi and the way in which it has participated in the building up of our community.

At the same time, I would like to extend greetings to the Indian community in terms of Indian Arrival Day. Of course, no one can gainsay the fact that the arrival of Indians within Trinidad and Tobago added to the rich tapestry of our society and produced new life as well and was transformative. So it is good that these two events come together, because I believe that in the migration and ultimate earning of citizenship in Trinidad and Tobago of the Indian community, they have helped to transform Trinidad and Tobago. That transformative power has lent to our diversity, and by virtue of that diversity it has enriched Trinidad and Tobago and added to the potential for the greatness of Trinidad and Tobago in the very diversity that we have. Ours is the job to bring that diversity together in order to make good the potential that lies within us.

So on this Indian Arrival Day we thank the Indian community and, by extension, all of Trinidad and Tobago, for the Indian arrival, recognizing how they have added to the community and how they have added to the richness of our society.

So to both of those bodies, the Catholic Christian community and to the Indian community, we offer blessings and thank you for being part of our society.

Sen. The Hon. G. Singh: Mr. President, in keeping with the noble traditions of this House, I beg to move that this Senate do now adjourn to Tuesday, June 04 at 1.30 p.m., when we will debate item No. 1 on the Order Paper, a Bill to amend the Customs Act, Chap. 78:01.

Question put and agreed to.

Senate adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 4.58 p.m.